THE NOVEL OF TRANSLATION: MULTILINGUALISM AND THE ETHICS OF
READING

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

written under the direction of

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New Brunswick, New Jersey

May 2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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In nineteenth-century Europe, the nation emerged as the dominant organizing structure
for cultural community. Languages became national languages and prominent
intellectuals began to understand translation as a nationalist enterprise. But novelists
increasingly used translation in another way: as a means to invite readers into potential
group affiliation beyond national borders. The legacy of this challenge to national
identification is the structural transformation of the novel's address to its audience. My
dissertation locates this transformation in the works of four major novelists who begin
their careers as critics and translators but turn to narrative as the mode best suited to their
examination of political and ethical sociality. I move from Thomas Carlyle's fictional
translation and Germaine de Staël's Romantic-era theories of national character to George
Eliot's narratives of cosmopolitan sympathy and Virginia Woolf's interrogation of the
communicative potential of private or, as she calls them, "little" languages. In each case,
I reveal how translation is central to the writer's specifically narrative intervention in

their readers' conception of community, and I demonstrate that the novel's turn to translation radically reorients the genre. Finally, I show that the novel's investment in a newly sensitive reader anticipates the concerns of later translation theory, which also hinges on the capacity of its audience to be changed through encounters with unfamiliar words and stories.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my dissertation directors, Rebecca Walkowitz and David Kurnick, for taking on a comp lit dissertation and for being so generous with their guidance and encouragement as I found my way towards an argument. I am grateful to Rebecca for sparking my interest in translation and then making me believe my ideas were worth pursuing and even publishing. I thank David for all those clarifying and motivating discussions of my drafts and for pushing me to make the more ambitious claim, no matter how nervous I might be about it. Both have helped me tremendously to grow as a thinker, writer, and speaker.

I thank Richard Serrano for his unfailing support, his confidence in my French language skills, and especially for his willingness to revisit so many long nineteenth-century French novels on my behalf back in 2010. I am grateful to Nicholas Dames for generously agreeing to read this work and participate at the defense. I thank Elin Diamond for bringing me to Rutgers and for believing so fiercely and warmly in my potential as a scholar. Her help navigating my graduate career has been invaluable. I would also not be where I am without Kenyon professors Sarah Heidt, Mortimer Guiney, and Raji Vallury, who showed me how exciting scholarship can be and inspired me to continue mine.

My friends and family have made it possible for me to finish this long and winding degree. I thank Sarah Rodgers, my oldest friend, for being the best company I could ask for even in the hardest times. I thank Debapriya Sarkar, for her kindness, humor, and timely reminders that everything takes as long as it needs to. I thank my parents, for giving me wheels and understanding why I needed to be so far away, and my sisters, Sarah and Maggie, for loving me even when I get weird and bossy. And I thank Michael Friesenhahn, for everything he has done to keep me going—in short, for the pangolin, which I will not ever delete.

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Introduction

This dissertation examines works by four novelist-translators in order to make a larger argument about the shared history of the novel and translation theory. That argument relies on a series of four claims: first, the novel, even the monolingual novel, has been shaped by its use of multiple languages; second, novelists have used multilingualism and translation in an effort to reconceive of their audience as the pluralized subject of a collective, ongoing cultural development; third, these efforts brought about a structural transformation of the novel's address to its audience; and fourth, the novel's investment in a newly sensitive reader anticipates the concerns of contemporary translation theory, which also hinges on the capacity of its audience to be changed through encounters with unfamiliar words and stories.

My argument, in both its historical and conceptual dimensions, points back to the literature and culture of Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century. A brief overview of some important intellectual trends of that period will illuminate the stakes of my own intervention. Inspired by the landmark works of Voss, who translated Homer, and A.W. Schlegel, who translated Shakespeare, German thinkers in this period began to understand translation as central to the movement to strengthen and define Germany's emerging national literature. The embrace of translation as a particularly German enterprise was a deliberate rejection of the domesticating practices of French translations, known as "les belles infidèles." Antoine Berman opens his history of German romantic translation theory with a list of quotes from Leibniz, Goethe, Schlegel, Novalis, Schleiermacher, and Humboldt, all articulating a fundamental connection between the practice of translation and German cultural identity; Berman concludes that translation

was an "acte générateur d'identité" ["activity that has generated an identiy"] and an "auto-affirmation de la langue allemande" [self-affirmation of the German language"].[1] This affirmation began with Luther's translation of the Bible and reached a culmination in the romantic reassessment of the meaning of literature in general and the place of German literature in particular within "l'espace de jeu de la literature européenne" (28) ["within the space of European literature" (13)]. For Susan Bernofsky, another translation historian, the major achievement of German Romantic theorists of translation is a new model of "service translation," in which "the translator strives to subjugate his own authorial intention to that of the author of the original text, a mode of translation that had not previously been practiced."[2] This way of translating, Bernofsky explains, marks a move away from translation as a kind of paraphrase and manifests a new conviction that "the essence of a literary text is inextricably tied up not only with its form […] but also with its style, tone, and syntax and with the way in which these attributes figure within the text's original language."[3]

Two of the most important theorists of translation in this period were Johann von Goethe and Frederich Schleiermacher. Both valued translation as a means not only to enrich their national culture with outside influences but also to promote respect for other nations as equal contributors to Europe's confederation of distinct yet interconnected national literatures. And for both, as Berman puts it, translation works to "montrer l'œuvre 'telle qu'elle est,' est telle qu'elle peut être 'pour nous,'" such that "la fidelité à

[1] Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger: culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 27. English translations are by S. Heyvaert, in *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 12. Further citations to both editions appear in the text.
[2] Susan Bernofsky, *Foreign Words: Translator-Authors in the Age of Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 2005. *ix.*
[3] Ibid., 10.

l'individualité de l'œuvre est immédiatement productrice d'élargissement linguistique et culturel" (70) ["The work must be shown 'such as it is,'and such as it may be 'for us,'" such that "the fidelity to the individuality of the work is the direct productive agent of linguistic and cultural expansion" (41)]. Schleiermacher advanced a method that has come to be called "foreignizing" translation, which ensures that readers experience translated language as different from their own; in turn, readers can adopt and circulate innovations of style they encounter in translation in a way that ultimately serves their own native language. He outlines this position in his 1813 lecture "On the Different Methods of Translating." The key concept is the distinction between a practice in which "the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him" and one in which the translator "leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him."[4] Schleiermacher argues in favor of the first method, which gives readers a "sense of encountering the foreign" and results in language "bent to a foreign likeness" (53). Anticipating the critique that such translations threaten the purity of the translating language, Schleiermacher finds the notion of purity itself to be the more damaging influence. The German language, he says, can "most vigorously flourish and develop its own strengths only through extensive contact with the foreign" (62). Translations that allow for this kind of contact stand to "influenc[e] the entire intellectual development of a nation" (55). And in the case of translation into German, the benefits extend beyond a single nation to all of Europe: the German people, he conjectured, "because of its esteem for the foreign and its own mediating nature, may be destined to unite all the jewels of foreign science and art together with our own in our

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[4] Schleiermacher, Friedrich. "On the Different Methods of Translating." trans. Susan Bernofsky, in *The Translation Studies Reader*. Second Edition. (New York: Routledge. 2004), 49.

own language, forming, as it were, a great historical whole that will be preserved at the center and heart of Europe" (62).

Schleiermacher's universalist translation, imagining the German language as a repository for masterpieces in many languages and of many historical moments, anticipates the ideal of "world literature" that Goethe famously articulated near the end of his life. The most frequently quoted statement of this vision is part of the *Conversations* collected by Eckermann, where Goethe says to his protégé, "National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World literature is at hand, and every one must strive to hasten its approach."[5] But, as Franz Stritch's influential account shows, Goethe's use of the term carries broader implications than a simple opposition between "national" and "world" might suggest. More than just a negation of the category of national literatures, Goethe's world literature is, Stritch summarizes, "the intellectual sphere in which, through the voices of their writers, the peoples speak no longer to and of themselves but to each other. It is an international conversation, an intellectual interest in each other, a mutual helping and supplementing of each other in the things of the mind."[6]

The sort of exchange he calls for requires high volume and high quality translation. Goethe's translation theory, which he articulates in 1819 in the preface to his poetry collection, *West-östlicher Divan*, elaborates a progression of three "epochs" towards a translation practice that resembles Schleiermacher's preferred method. In the final stage, a translation that "attempts to identify itself with the original ultimately comes close to an interlinear version and greatly facilitates our understanding of the original. We are led, yes, compelled as it were, back to the source text: the circle, within which the

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[5] *Conversations with Eckermann*. trans. John Oxenford (London: Dunne, 1901), 165.
[6] Franz Strich, *Goethe and World Literature*. 1945, trans. C.A.M. Sym (New York: Greenwood, 1971), 6. Further citations in text.

approximation of the foreign and the familiar, the known and the unknown constantly move, is finally complete."[7] So, like Schleiermacher, Goethe prizes translation that moves readers as close as possible to the foreignness of the translated text. Goethe's vision of translation in world literature also values movement back and forth between cultures translating each other's works; as Stritch explains, "Goethe's idea, as new as it was stimulating, was that translations confer benefits in both directions; on the people into whose languages the works are translated, and on those from whose language they come" (21). Berman highlights Goethe's notion of "participation" as the defining orientation of the "third epoch" of translation; he explains that for Goethe, "La participation indique un certain type de rapport qui est à la fois d'intervention active et d'engagement, à l'inverse de l'influence, *Influenz*, rapport passif que Goethe a toujours sévèrement jugé, en le rapprochant de la maladie du même nom, l'*Influenza*" (105) ["Participation indicates a certain type of relation which is both active intervention and engagement, the reverse of influence, *Influenz*, a passive relation always severely judged by Goethe, connecting it to the disease of the same name, *Influenza*" (65)]. The most productive translation is one that promotes the reader's ongoing active interpretation and that, like Schleiermacher's method, uses foreignness to create new forms, to influence rather than to be influenced.

Both Schleiermacher and Goethe conceive of translation as a process of intersubjective communication. This is the innovation Berman highlights when he names Schleiermacher as the translation theorist whose work most thoroughly enacts *Bildung*. Comparing the two writers, Berman finds the "même emphase sur la loi de la *Bildung* qui

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[7] Johan Wolfgang von Goethe. "Translations." trans. Sharon Sloan, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, Second Edition. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 64-66.

veut qu'on n'accède à soi que par l'expérience de l'autre. Et c'est même Schleiermacher

qui a su probablement formuler cette loi de la manière la plus précise, en évoquant

'l'étranger et sa nature médiatrice'" (230) ["the same emphasis on the law of *Bildung*

claiming one can only have access to oneself through the experience of the other. And it

is even Schleiermacher who probably managed to formulate this law in the most precise

way, mentioning 'the foreign and its mediating nature'" (143)]. The alignment in

Schleiermacher's work between translation and *Bildung* proceeds from his hermeneutics,

which understands literary and philosophical language as rooted in individual

subjectivities. This is a hermeneutics opposed to older modes of usually religious

exegesis that take language as an objective manifestation of things in the world. His

subjective hermeneutics leads Schleiermacher to conceive of acts of translation as what

Berman calls "un processus de rencontre intersubjectif" (235) ["a process of

intersubjective encounter" (147)], or as instances of communication among differently

positioned subjects: translator, reader, and writer. This way of imagining translation

informs his summary of possible methods, so that, as Berman points out,

Schleiermacher's descriptions lend themselves to a kind of simple plot summary: either

the translator brings the author to visit the reader or the translator takes the reader to visit

the author. Thus, though Berman's account is focused on translation, he is led to suggest

an intersection with narrative when he points out the novelistic logic inherent in the

concept of *Bildung*, explaining that "en tant que chemin du même vers lui-même, en tant

qu'expérience, la Bildung revêt la forme d'un roman" (75) ["As the way of the same to

itself, as experience, *Bildung* takes on the form of a novel" (45)]. This insight is

tangential to Berman's history of translation theory, but it points to the importance of

foreign languages and ideas of foreignness in the novel.

From the perspective of novel history, the connection between the *Bildungsroman* and translation is most provocatively suggested by Franco Moretti in his study of the genre, *The Way of the World*. Though his book considers the *Bildungsroman* as "symbolic form" in its diverse manifestations across the nineteenth century, Moretti gives a fairly narrow definition of the "classical *Bildungsroman*" of Goethe and Austen, a model that allows us to perceive innovations across the many varied examples of the genre. In Moretti's classical *Bildungsroman*, it is the representation of youth as "dynamism and instability" that makes the genre into the "symbolic form of modernity" (5). But in order to function as form, the novel of youth must constrain this dynamism and enforce narrative closure. The tension between movement and closure is one of many analogous dialectical oppositions that govern the classical *Bildungsroman* and make it an "intrinsically contradictory" form.[8] Just as Schleiermacher's hermeneutics roots meaning in subjectivity, so the narrative events in the *Bildungsroman* acquire meaning through the protagonist's reading, his or her transformation of events into "experience." Moretti explains, "the episode becomes an experience if the individual manages to give it a meaning that expands and strengthens his personality" (46). The period of youth and experience is necessary to the "process" of "modern socialization," a process defined by the tension between movement and closure. He summarizes: "By no means must it be suggested that individuality is an ephemeral and unappealing detour—quite the contrary: it is a journey that risks being too long, too rich in attractions, too stimulating. The individual must grow weary of his individuality: only thus will his renunciation be a

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[8] Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. Albert Sbragia (New York: Verso), 1987. 6. Further citations in text.

reliable one" (59).

Moretti's key insight for my purposes is his recognition of the *Bildungsroman* protagonist as a reader and of this protagonist reading as the engine of narrative. Narrative in the classical *Bildungsroman* requires closure, as we have seen, and the price of that closure is the end of reading that is personality-driven, both particular and particularizing. For "the symbolic totality of the classical *Bildungsroman* does not allow for interpretation. To do so would be to recognize that an alterity continues to exist between the subject and his world, and that is has established its own *culture*: and this must not be" (63). In Moretti's scheme, it is not only the protagonist but also the novel reader who "grows weary" of individuality. The two are in parallel — "since the protagonist is undergoing the experience of formation, and the reading too is intended to be a formative process"—but as experience proceeds, the analogy becomes oppressive: "In the long run, the reader will inevitably desire the disappearance of those attributes of the protagonist that hinder a clear perception of the text and threaten to have it go on forever" (62).

The kind of *Bildungsroman* I'm identifying as the novel of translation works like Moretti's classical *Bildungsroman* in that it relies on the analogy between the protagonist-as-reader and the novel reader. But where Moretti describes a dynamic in which the *Bildung* of character and reader coincide completely—the character renounces individuality and interpretation, the reader welcomes that closure—the pattern I have found works differently. Instead of moving with the protagonist towards assimilation into a dominant culture, the reader has the opportunity to take over the kind of interpretation the protagonist gives up. This opportunity for a new reader function opens where

narratives construct a space for it, whether in the paratextual regions of epigraphs and footnotes, the representations of audiences within the world of the novel, or character-readers who straddle the boundary between the diegesis and the extra-diegesis.

George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda*, which I discuss at length in chapter three, illustrates the possible coexistence of classical *Bildungsroman* closure alongside this transfer to the reader of the protagonist's interpretive energies. Moretti takes Eliot's final novel, which ends with the protagonist's embrace of his Jewish heritage through marriage and emigration to Jerusalem, as an example of overdetermined closure or "classification." In it, Moretti argues, "marriage will even be disembodied into an abstract principle [when Daniel Deronda] marries not so much a woman, as a rigidly defined normative culture" (8-9). But while Moretti highlights the final event of the plot, another event takes place across the border between plot and paratext. Daniel's marriage and departure are final, but his communication with the novel's non-titular protagonist, Gwendolen, is left open, as she predicts "our minds may get nearer" through writing and pledges to remember Daniel's words to her though she does not yet see their meaning.[9] These gestures towards a future-oriented textual exchange connect Gwendolen's reading to the repetition, deferral, and layered commentary that have all along populated the novel's multilingual footnotes and epigraphs. With her ascendance to the ongoing interpretive space of the paratext, Gwendolen becomes emblematic of the reader-character interplay that creates the novel of translation.

The category I'm proposing, the novel of translation, emerged from my observations of a few striking features that recur in novels across the long nineteenth century. These novels are usually, though not always, explicitly concerned with

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[9] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Terrence Cave (New York: Penguin, 2003), 806.

foreignness, cultural hybridity, or national identities, and they explore these concerns through a deliberate inclusion of translated language and foreign words. The simple presence of foreign words, for example non-English words in an otherwise Anglophone novel, already changes a novel's address to its readers. As Theodor Adorno claims, "With the foreign word [a writer] can effect a beneficial interruption of the conformist moment of language, the muddy stream in which the specific expressive intention drowns." Furthermore, foreign words disrupt categories of originality and secondariness, since, as Adorno continues, they "demonstrate the impossibility of an ontology of language: they confront even concepts that try to pass themselves off as origin itself with their mediatedness, their moment of being subjectively constructed, their arbitrariness."[10] The converse strategy is the use of text in the novel's main language that is marked as translated—this might work like Corinne's improvisations, which the narrator gives in a French prose acknowledged to differ meaningfully from the poet's Italian verse or, to take an example outside the set of novels I will discuss in detail, the dialogue in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, which is given mostly in English but with a few foreign words throughout that signal the text's overall status as a rendering of spoken French.

These textual strategies, significant enough on their own, appear across novels in recognizable patterns and with consistent narratological consequences. Foreign languages often proliferate at or near the margins of the text, in the footnotes, titles, epigraphs, and other features of the paratext.[11] These elements also unsettle the location of the narrative

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[10] Theodor Adorno, 1958. "Words from Abroad," in *Notes to Literature*. Vol. 1. trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (University of Columbia Press, 1991), 189.

[11] Here and throughout I'm using Gerard Genette's concept of the paratext, which he defines as "what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public." It is, he goes on, "a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more

voice by implying an encyclopedic and multilingual narrator, as in Eliot's fiction, or by adopting the pace and focus of non-narrative genres, as we find in the travelogue-like chapters of *Corinne* or the disembodied lyricism of the interludes in *The Waves*. The multilingualism of these narratives, then, pushes against the conventional spatial and temporal organization of the novel. The result is a sort of generic hybridity, a leaning toward poetry or essay, which suggests the novelists' bid for a broader audience not circumscribed by genre expectations.

The effect of this restructuring is the novel's reimagination of its readership. Rather than a stable, individual reader who necessarily has both language and culture in common with the world of the narrative, the novel of translation posits a pluralized and potentially multilingual audience. This audience occupies a space of commentary and responsiveness forged by devices that connect characters and readers in a shared attitude that novelists variously term "enthusiasm," "sympathy," or "attachment." The first novel I consider, Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, builds this reponsiveness into the persona of the Editor, a character who reads and comments on a difficult foreign text. Even in novels without a framing reader-character like the Editor, the revised reader function persists, signaled by a series of spatial metaphors all evoking a robust yet non-binding attachment between novel and audience. Where *Sartor Resartus*'s Editor envisions bridges between his readers and his biographical subject, Woolf orchestrates several related rope images that connect characters laterally while also reaching out from text to readers. Such metaphors explicitly figure connection across space, while, in other cases, narratives like Eliot's emphasize shared textual histories across moments in time as a grounds for

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pertinent reading of it." In *Paratext:Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 1-2.

engagement with multiple literary traditions. Yet even in these instances, the repetition of the same foreign and translated words suggests a structural undergirding that places the reading of translation in the space where novel reading is ongoing, where collective *Bildung* can continue even after novel plots bring a protagonist's *Bildung* to a close. The desire for a plural, intensely present readership registers a nostalgia that writers of the novel, a genre formed for individual solitary reading, hold for the immediate and receptive audience of oral literature and drama. Woolf articulates this nostalgia in her late essay "Anon," where she looks back to Elizabethan drama, which obliged playgoers of several classes to "sit together in one house listening to a play" and kept the playwright "attached to his audience [,] tethered to one spot and played upon by outside influences."[12]

It is one of my central claims that these novels' address to a re-sensitized body of readers suggests an affiliation between novel writing of the long nineteenth century and translation studies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Like the novel of translation, a major current of recent translation studies takes a clear position on the ethics of translating and reading translation, though it is a more explicitly political position preferring translation that challenges the reader to confront and ultimately accommodate foreign, and often initially alienating, modes of experience. The key point of connection here is the work of Lawrence Venuti, who strategically appropriates Schleiermacher's translation theory and uses it to issue a call for "foreignizing" translation in his 1993 *The Translator's Invisibility*. Foreignizing translation for Venuti works as Schleiermacher describes, by bringing the reader to the foreign text, rather than

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[12] Woolf, Virginia. "Anon," in *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 686.

the reverse. Venuti sees in this method the potential for translators to resist the

"ethnocentric violence"[13] of domesticating practices and to intervene in the power

imbalances of the international literary marketplace. In repurposing Schleiermacher's

theory, Venuti emphasizes just as much as his predecessor the effects of foreignizing

techniques on the readers' experience of the text and, by consequence, on those readers'

likelihood of influencing usage and meaning in the translating language. Though he is

more interested in readers' experience and influence on the broad scale of social and

cultural change, Venuti's understanding of the mechanics of foreignizing translation link

his work to the German tradition of *Bildung* as the intersection of individual and

collective cultural development.

The transformative reader address of the novel of translation anticipates other

contemporary theorists' radical revisions to our understanding of the dynamics of

translation and cross-cultural literary exchange. Naoki Sakai outlines an illuminating

opposition between two modes of representing translation, the "homolingual" and the

"heterolingual." In the former, "the addresser adopts the position representative of a

putatively homogeneous language society and relates to the general addressees, who are

also representative of an equally homogeneous language community."[14] Heterolingual

address, however, assumes that "every utterance can fail to communicate because

heterogeneity is inherent in any medium, linguistic or otherwise," and as a result,

"translation must be endless."[15] In fact, in this mode, address is to communication as

aiming is to striking, and a translator's work is not a form of communication; instead, it is

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[13] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), 16. Further citations in text.
[14] Naoki Sakai , *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 4.
[15] Ibid., 8.

poietic social practice that institutes a relation at a site of incommensurability" (13).

     Sakai's move to name translation as a kind of "poiesis," and specifically a kind of poiesis that does not erase its own failures, anticipates Gayatri Spivak's resolutely anti-utopian vision for comparative literature in *Death of a Discipline*. In order to imagine a comparatism that truly breaks with Eurocentrism, Spivak mobilizes Derrida's concept of "teleopoiesis," which she defines as an "imaginative making" through which "the task of reading" becomes "imperative yet indecisive."[16] Considered alongside Woolf's call in a *A Room of One's Own* for a literary practice that works for the possibility of female genius—Woolf asserts "she would come if we worked for her"—teleopoiesis is a reader-centered concept because, Spivak says, "In literature as in law, language lives in the reader, who is just as precarious an 'I,' with the liberty granted by Woolf's text, by *any* text, to move it along elsewhere, by a provisional surrender in the self's stereotype, never complete. This precarious and temporary transfer of agency, earned through imaginative attention, is how the habit of reading and writing as robust allegories of knowing and doing may come to supplement, fill a hole in as well as add to, the decision-making authority of the social sciences."[17] Taken together, Spivak and Sakai illustrate contemporary translation studies' investment in a heterogeneous and endlessly incomplete reader. Their elevation of this reader is prefigured by two centuries of translation theory in novel form.

     In my first chapter, I expand on the central themes I have enumerated here, including the relevance of the *Bildungsroman* tradition and the intersection of nineteenth-century narrative practices with recent work on the ethics of translation. When French

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[16] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 31.
[17] Ibid., 42.

and English writers, especially Staël and Carlyle, began to promote German literature and philosophy in the early nineteenth century, they took up the theories of culture, education, and translation that link Berman's "experience of the foreign" to the process of self-formation narrated in the *Bildungsroman*. This importation of German theories of language and literature gives rise to the distinct tradition of novels that use foreign languages to narrate cross-cultural communication and theorize translation, remaking generic conventions in the process. In the century following Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, an ironic homage to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahr*, such novels make use of the Bildungsroman's analogy between novelistic character and national character. But they unsettle this analogy by shifting the emphasis from character and plot to a space where a multilingual reader might emerge. Following this overview, I examine *Sartor Resartus* more closely and show how the framing device of an editorial persona, along with Carlyle's use of German words and strategic allusions, invite a new mode of reading translation.

The second chapter argues that Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, ou l'Italie* is an early example of the novel of translation. Though it predates *Sartor Resartus* by two decades, *Corinne* is some ways a departure from Carlyle's template for cross-cultural reading because it dispenses with the explicit editorial frame in favor of other devices for, as Venuti puts it, "staging an alien experience" for its readers. The novel uses a romance narrative to pursue theories of cultural exchange like those Staël herself undertakes in her works of non-fiction, especially the hugely influential *De l'Allemagne* and other essays advocating for translation as a source of new forms for national literatures. *Corinne* includes several scenes that dramatize Staël's preferred mode of reading translation, a

radical openness to cultural difference that in her theoretical writings she calls

"enthusiasm." In fact, the centerpiece of the novel is the heroine's successful staging of

her translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* into Italian, a move that is presented as

a restoration of the English playwright's text to its rightful status in Italian literature. But

the central translation project of the novel is the English-Italian heroine's unsuccessful

attempt to make herself understood to her English lover Oswald. Just as *Sartor Resartus*

reconfigures the Bildungsroman by transferring narrative change from character to

reader, *Corinne* reimagines the romance plot by inviting readers to succeed where its hero

has failed. It is this breakdown of the romance plot and its methods of characterization

that transfers to the reader the opportunity to read the heroine, and translation generally,

with enthusiasm.

The third chapter traces translation's restructuring of plot at the height of the

realist novel, moving from Staël's enthusiasm to Eliot's use of foreign words to make

"impressions" on her readers. I use this keyword, which recurs in her narratives and in

the title of her final work, to refer to the repeated reinterpretations of translated quotes

that undergird each work's central narrative. The moral transformation of the central

characters, especially Daniel and Gwendolen in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, initiates

them into the practices of the "good translator" as Eliot defines them in her early writing

on translation. Meanwhile, the increasingly frequent confrontation with foreign words

prompts readers towards a more sophisticated understanding of the networks linking

textual histories across cultures and nations. In the infrequently studied essay collection,

Impressions of Theophrastus Such, Eliot takes this strategy further by shifting the burden

of her argument about national belonging from the novel's plot to the paratextual space of

epigraphs and footnotes. The essays interweave multiple textual traditions and use translation to enact for readers a recognition of the shared impressions left as texts and languages change.

In the final chapter, I connect Eliot's foreignizing impressions to moments of "attachment" in Woolf's writing, places where movement between languages models for readers a transferable relation to group affiliations. I argue that Woolf's body of work is consistently anti-nationalist and outward-looking, her narrators and characters cycling between extremes of connection and isolation through acts of literal and metaphoric translation. I first consider *Three Guineas* and essays from the *Common Reader* series to illustrate that her ideal of collaborative common reading builds reader attachment in the spaces of uncertainty that persist in translated language. I then turn to *Orlando* and *The Waves* to show how the essays' stance on translation informs Woolf's experimental novels. While *Orlando*'s self-styled "biographer" appeals directly to readers as participants in the text's experiments with history and character, *The Waves* invites readers to experience meaning-making as a process of translation, a process that structures what little plot the book does offer. The language of the novel works as a sort of poetic "translatese" that communicates multiple perspectives because of its partial infidelity to each single perspective. Not through any one character, but through the characters' exchanges viewed from the reader's position, the novel employs a kind of translated language to restructure the relation between author and reader.

The novels I include stretch across a vast historical span, at least in terms of conventional literary periodization. I find similar strategies for narrative theorizing of translation in the works of a solidly Romantic novelist—indeed, Staël in a sense wrote

the book on European Romanticism—in an early Victorian "sage," a high Victorian

realist, and a quintessentially English modernist. Indeed, I don't propose the term "novel

of translation" as a period-bound classification, and I will suggest that the use of

translation from the early nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries in Europe

prefigures the even more central role translation will play in the fiction of later novelists,

especially writers typically considered in the context of postcolonial or francophone

literatures. These writers foreground an experience of the foreign that is a permanent

condition rather than a step in the progress towards self-cultivation, and so their

narratives of migration and cultural hybridity push the template of the Bildungsroman to

its limits and draw on translational narrative forms to address audiences already

characterized by linguistic diversity

Translation as Foreign Experience in Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*

The aim of this dissertation is to trace the passage of translation theory into the novel. The point of entry I identify is Thomas Carlyle's importation of German aesthetics by way of the *Bildungsroman*, the novelistic form that attempts to give an account of its protagonists' assimilation into a social world. After having worked for years as a translator and critic of German literature for a British audience, Carlyle turned to fiction to voice his mixed impressions of the risks and rewards of cultural exchange. His *Sartor Resartus* takes up the *Bildungsroman*'s investment in a pluralized readership as an ethically fraught space where those risks and rewards play out. In this chapter, I draw on translation theorist Antoine Berman's insight that *Bildung* as foreign experience is a narrative concept as well as literary historian Franco Morretti's suggestion that the *Bildungsroman* conceives of its protagonists as readers. Once we see how the imagined audience of German Romantic translation theory is reconceived in the *Bildungsroman*'s transfer of foreign experience from character to reader, we can take Carlyle's book as a clear early example of a novel of translation. *Sartor Resartus* repositions its reader as a participant in a collective *Bildung* by framing the biography of one foreign subject with the interpretation of a first-person Editor. That Editor is both reader and character, so that his voice establishes a space where multilingual jokes, allusions, and fictional translations become the currency of an exchange between readers and characters generally.

Literary critics for the past century have defined and redefined the *Bildungsroman* so relentlessly that Marc Redfield concluded in 1996 that "The *Bildungsroman*

exemplifies the ideological construction of literature by criticism."[18] Misgivings about ideology aside, most literary histories agree that the term "*Bildungsroman*" was coined in Karl Morgenstern's lectures on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* novels in the 1820s but was not fully codified until its use by Wilhelm Dilthey in his 1913 *Das Erlebnes und die Dichtung* (*Poetry and Experience*).[19] Since Dilthey, critics have debated the usefulness and application of the term, but most discussions nonetheless identify several key characteristics that make the genre conducive to theorizing translation: cosmopolitanism, a focus on the individual's compromises on the path to socialization, a self-consciousness about failures to conform to generic conventions, and an investment in influencing the "*Bildung*" of either the individual reader or a broader group of readers.

The *Bildungsroman*, though it develops within a few distinctly national literary traditions, is in a sense always cosmopolitan. This is first of all because its conventional narrative requires its protagonist to venture abroad, or at least to leave a rural/provincial space for an urban/metropolitan one; as I will explain more fully below, this element of "foreign experience" is the link Antoine Berman finds between translation and the classical German concept of *Bildung* as an ideal of humanist education. The genre also prompts critics to adopt a transnational, or at least pan-European, perspective because its history spans multiple languages and literatures. They most often perceive national differences in the degree of emphasis on either the individual's development or on the individual's integration into a social whole. As Thomas Jeffers, with a distinct preference for the Anglo-American tradition, summarizes,

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[18] Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman* (Cornell UP, 1996), vii.
[19] The standard English translation of Dilthey's title reverses the order of the two terms. This convention dates from, or is at least preserved by, the 1985 Princeton University Press edition of Dilthey's work in English.

Very simply, the Germans tended to focus attention on the individual's

cultivation, while neglecting responsibility for the national culture. The English

tried, with marked success, to be attentive toward both: one's development as *I*

depended not only on the richness of one's inner life, but on the affiliations one

had with the people—family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers—who

constituted and shared one's social environment.[20]

The *Bildungsroman* by definition tells the story of individuals who are trying to create

new versions of themselves by moving into and out of social groups. The genre's

geographic range appears to follow from its ambition to educate its audience alongside its

protagonists; just as it follows its heroes' journeys abroad, it wants to show readers new

places, too. The pedagogical impulse of the *Bildungsroman* is in part what prompts Tod

Kontje to read the novels in its tradition as "metafictional commentaries on the changing

public sphere,"[21] commentaries that seek to *intervene* in the public sphere, since, as

Kontje rather grandly summarizes, literature "neither repeats nor does it escape reality;

instead, it *transforms* reality, and the *Bildungsroman* is the genre that examines this

transformation."[22] Following this logic, the novel's hero learns the value of foreign

experience through his or her travels abroad. Likewise, the reader of this story not only

learns the value of foreign experience through identification with the hero but also comes

to understand reading itself as a kind of enrichment akin to foreign travel. And at the

broadest level, individual heroes and readers stand in for national cultures that learn the

value of the collective travel abroad that is international intellectual exchange. Thus we

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[20] Thomas L Jeffers, *Apprenticeships: The Bildungsroman from Goethe to Santayana* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 35.
[21] Todd Kontje, *Private Lives in the Public Sphere: The German 'Bildungsroman' as Metafiction*. Penn State Press, 1992. 17.
[22] Ibid., 11.

can consider the genre through a series of analogies: the move from country to city is likened to the journey from homeland to foreign country, and the protagonist's travel in the foreign country is likened to the reader's experience with the narrative of that travel, especially, as we will see, with whatever literally foreign language is part of that narrative.

The *Bildungsroman*'s self-prescribed history of travel and reinvention has obliged critics to read to it comparatively and has situated it within the same problematic of difference and identity in which the theorizing of translation has often developed. This intersection between *Bildung* and translation is apparent in Friederich Schleiermacher's canonical treatise "On the Different Methods of Translating," in which the description of the individual's position in language begins to resemble a recognizable narrative of moral and cultural development:

It is the living force of the individual that causes new forms to emerge from the tractable matter of language, in each case with the initial aim of passing on a fleeting state of consciousness, but leaving behind now a greater, now a fainter trace in the language that, taken up by others, continues to have an ever broader shaping influence. Indeed, one can say that only to the extent that a person influences language in this way does he deserve to be heard outside his immediate sphere of activity, whatever it may be. Every utterance will quickly pass away if it is such that any one of a thousand voices might reproduce it; only that one is able and entitled to endure which constitutes a new moment in the life of language itself. For this reason, every nobler, free utterance must be grasped in two different senses, first in terms of the genius of the language from whose elements

it was derived, as an expressive means tied to and determined by this spirit that

brought it to life within the speaker; yet it must also be understood in terms of the

speaker himself, as an act that can only have emerged out of, and be explained as

a product of, his particular being.[23]

Schleiermacher measures the individual's "living force" as the extent to which that

individual "influences language" by forging new and persistent forms of expression. Yet

he also acknowledges that even these new original forms are "tied to and determined by"

the "spirit" of the particular language the individual uses. He goes on to explain why

translators should systematically "leav[e] the author in peace as much as possible and

mov[e] the reader toward him" (49), rather than the reverse. As he does so,

Schleiermacher's translation theory grounds itself in the tension between the agency of

the individual reader, writer, and translator and the diffuse shaping forces of a culturally

embedded language.

The emphasis on processes of becoming—the emergence of linguistic forms, the

multiple reproductions of those forms, the gradual expression of both the individual and

the collective "spirit"—suggests an affinity between Schleiermacher's theory and the

concept of *Bildung*. Both embrace the notion that each person's "particular being" must

find "free utterance," for its own sake and for the sake of the wider sphere it stands to

enrich through its expression. The productive tension between agency and subjection in

language is at the heart of German cultural and translation theory in the early nineteenth

century, and it is this tension that drives the archetypal narrative of the *Bildungsroman*.

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[23] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating." trans. Susan Bernofsky. *The Translation Studies Reader*. Second Edition (New York: Routledge. 2004), 46-47.

I.　　Foreignizing translation and the *Bildungsroman*

Berman's *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, published in 1984, combines history and theory to elaborate an ethics of translation for the twentieth century. Berman's understanding of *Bildung* as a mode of experience allows him to situate translation theory in German intellectual history at the turn from classicism to Romanticism. This historiographic work, he says, is vital to any "théorie *moderne* de la traduction" (12); the critic must take stock of the ways translation has participated in literary cultures of the past in order to evaluate its place in contemporary literary cultures. As he pursues a history of European translation, Berman takes Schleiermacher's essay as the fullest demonstration of "la loi de la *Bildung* qui veut qu'on n'accède à soi que par l'expérience de l'autre"[24] ["the law of *Bildung* claiming one can only have access to oneself through the experience of the other"].[25] As his title, "The Experience of the Foreign," makes explicit, Berman understands translation as central to the "experience" an archetypal *Bildungsroman* narrates. He explains that "la traduction (en tant que mode de rapport avec l'étranger) est structurellement inscrite dans la *Bildung* " (72) ["structurally inscribed in *Bildung*" (43)]. Furthermore, "en tant que chemin du même vers lui-même, en tant qu'expérience, la *Bildung* revêt la forme d'un roman" (75) ["As the way of the same to itself, as experience, *Bildung* takes on the form of a novel" (45)]. Drawing in particular on Schleiermacher's essay, Berman further defines translation in this tradition as "un processus de rencontre intersubjectif" (235) ["a process of intersubjective encounter" (147)].

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[24] Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 230. Further citations in text.
[25] Translations of Berman are from *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, trans. S. Heyvaert (SUNY Press, 1992). 143. Further citations in text.

Berman uses Goethe's "epochs of translation" to make his point about *Bildung* as a translation-centered developmental process. In a much-discussed preface to his later work *West-östlicher Divan*, Goethe outlines his vision of translation as a multi-step introduction of a foreign-language text into a new culture. The first epoch introduces a foreign work with "a plain prose translation" that "neutralizes the formal characteristics of any sort of poetic art" but nonetheless conveys at least some of the work's "power."[26] The second epoch is "parodistic": the translator more closely approaches the foreign text but ultimately "only appropriates the foreign idea and represents it as his own" (65). In the third and final epoch, however, the translation's "attempts to identify itself with the original ultimately comes close to an interlinear version and greatly facilitates our understanding of the original. We are led, yes, compelled as it were, back to the source text: the circle, within which the approximation of the foreign and the familiar, the known and the unknown constantly move, is finally complete" (66).

The organization of these steps as successive moments in a historical process aligns, for Berman, with the crucial moment of experience of the foreign that characterizes *Bildung* and its narrative form, the *Bildungsroman*. For Berman, after an initial period of "cloture sur soi," the individual progresses into a relation of "interaction vivante" that is exemplified by translation (95). Because Goethe's theory of translation emphasizes the "interaction" between languages, it offers "une vision globale des rapports *mutuels* du propre et de l'étranger, où il est aussi question de ce qu'est pour l'étranger son propre, et donc de *son* rapport avec cet étranger que notre propre est pour lui" (104) ["a global view of the *mutual* relations of what is one's own and what is

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[26] Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, "Translations," trans. Sharon Sloan. *The Translation Studies Reader*, Second Edition. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 64-66.

foreign, and thus of *its* relation to that foreignness which what is our own self is for the foreigner" (64)].[27] Goethe calls this kind of mutually foreign experience "participation," and names his most celebrated British reader Thomas Carlyle as an exemplar of this mode of reading.[28]

The understanding of translation practices as a series of historical steps also aligns to an extent with the narrative patterns of the *Bildungsroman*. Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World* traces the genre of the *Bildungsroman* from its early manifestations as the symbolic form that captures modernity's characteristic tension between "self-determination and […] socialization."[29] In his discussion of the logic of the "classical *Bildungsroman*," Moretti asserts that the "the final stage of *Bildung* […] is the disturbing symbiosis of homeland and prison" (55) and that the protagonist "must learn first and foremost, like Wilhelm, to direct 'the plot of [his own] life' so that each moment strengthens one's *sense of belonging* to a wider community. Time must be used to find a homeland. If this is not done, or one does not succeed, the result is a wasted life: aimless, meaningless" (19). The assimilation of the protagonist into a wider community represents his or her willing surrender of individual difference, and this willingness is achieved through the potentially transformative influence of "experience." Moretti explains the genre-defining term this way:

> [Experience] now refers to an acquisitive tendency. It implies growth, the
> expansion of self, and even a sort of 'experiment' performed with one's self. An
> experiment, and thus provisional: the episode becomes an experience if the

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[27] I have changed the translation of the second phrase to clarify the pronouns.
[28] Goethe's nod to Carlyle as a practitioner of "participation" is quoted by Berman from among the excerpts collected in Franz Strich's *Goethe und die Weltliteratur*.
[29] Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. Albert Sbragia (New York: Verso), 1987. 15. Further citations in text.

individual manages to give it meaning that expands and strengthens his

personality……. but also manages to put an end to it before personality becomes

unilaterally and irrevocably modified. (46)

Here the limiting of the effects of experience is the crucial factor that guarantees the

protagonist's necessary assimilation into a "homeland," while the threat of irrevocable

modification works on the level of the individual protagonist; it's not the homeland or

community that must resist change, but rather the individual who must accept the terms

of belonging to a community figured as static. In terms of Goethe's "epochs" of

translation, the classical *Bildungsroman* protagonist must end his or her participation and

lively interaction with the foreign and return to a home where all traces of outside

influence have been erased.

Moretti understands the *Bildungsroman* as symbolic form according to its

movement between two poles of "individuality and socialization, autonomy and

normality, interiority and objectification" (16); for him, the narrative of individual

development resolves these binaries so that the cultivation of self is achieved through

integration into the whole. And while the protagonists are tested through experiences "all

resulting from their desire to be […] in alterity with the world" (61), that alterity emerges

from the characters' particular personalities. The "World" of Moretti's English title, "The

Way of the World," is aligned with the pole of assimilation and socialization, and the

narrative's movement of the characters from one to another requires that we conceive of

Bildungsroman characters as readers. Between the extremes of individualism and

assimilation, Moretti identifies two modes of reading, one active and one passive, that the

classical *Bildungsroman* places in tension until the narrative inevitably moves the

protagonist towards passivity. As opposed to "suspicion," which sees the world as a "conflictual system" where meaning is "composite" and must be reconstructed, protagonists come to adopt a "willing[ness] to listen" that takes "the world as a product of an emanation" and "allows for *one* meaning only, one truth" (61). The protagonist's embrace of the epiphany that reveals this singular symbolism is what allows "our doubts [to] be resolved and our reading [to] achieve the certainty of meaning," and in the end, "[t]he symbolic totality of the classical *Bildungsroman* does not allow for interpretation. To do so would be to recognize that an alterity continues to exist between the subject and his world, and that it has established its own *culture*: and this must not be" (62). Narrative closure in this scheme demands the end of reading on the part of both audience and protagonist.

According to the logic of Moretti's classical *Bildungsroman*, an individual character develops through the same process as does the collective character of a "culture," and any persistent difference between the protagonist and the dominant culture poses the threat of heterogeneity, a threat is perpetuated by "suspicious" modes of reading that resist single meanings. So though it requires the protagonist to venture beyond his or her homeland, the reading of foreign texts and cultures must never open the possibility for multiple coexisting readings of one personality or culture. Reading must remain, or return to, a process that produces single meanings, and so narratives in the *Bildungsroman* tradition move their protagonists through a dialectical structure of which the foreign experience is just one term, and the negative one, at that. As Gregory Castle explains, the hero's "life and ambitions are gathered into a coherent story that subsumes and resolves all contradictions in a harmonious and dialectical process that follows an

inexorable pattern."[30] Castle argues of the modernist *Bildungsromane* he studies that their

narratives "cannot be locked into the binomial opposition success/failure, because the

social conditions in which success and failure make sense are themselves foreclosed—or,

to put my point another way, the binomial categories collapse, and failure becomes an

index of successful alternative representations of social and cultural subjectivities" (71).

In his argument, the modernist versions of the genre take a "turn toward nonidentity" by

rejecting its totalizing structure and "discover[ing]" its "principles of disharmony" (27).

This productive resistance to narrative closure is not, however, exclusive to modernist

Bildungsroman but in fact drives the development of the genre in the century preceding

the appearance of recognizably modernist novels.

  The "binomial categories" that structure the *Bildungsroman*—Moretti's

"individuality and socialization" and others—also structure the translation theory Berman

links with the genre. And the suspicious reading that Moretti sees as a stage in the

protagonist's progression towards social integration works like the participation in

foreignness that Goethe encourages in his writings on translation. Goethe, though, gives

this mode of reading a positive name and takes it as a desirable final stage of translation

practices, not, as in Moretti's description of the classical *Bildungsroman*, as a negative

term to be transcended by the narrative's drive to integration. In the versions of the

Bildungsroman I will consider, translation signals a narrative's resistance to generic

conventions. With this resistance, novels escape the dialectic of assimilation—the return

home after the foreign experience—and instead make gestures outward to readers, who in

becoming readers of translation also become subjects of a kind of collective *Bildung*.

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[30] Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. 10.

These gestures range from direct address, like the appeals the Editor of *Sartor Resartus* makes to his "band of readers," to more subtle techniques, like the use of foreign words to remind readers of the text's status as fictional translation, a status that only carries meaning outside the world of the novel. Such gestures keep the reader engaged in the participatory reading of Goethe's final epoch of translation and the "suspicious" interpretation of the protagonists who stubbornly remain abroad, effectively forestalling the narrative closure that would bring their reading to an end. The suspension of that closure holds open a space for ongoing reading that is "suspicious" both in terms of the protagonists' skeptical outsider perspective on known and unknown cultures and in terms of the protagonists' potential to commit egregious misreadings. Whatever the risks, however, that potential for good and bad reading is given over to the novel's audience, now reconceived as a pluralized protagonist for a collective *Bildung* that recurs in the movement "abroad" between text and audience.

The transfer from character to readers is the point of connection between nineteenth-century German cultural theory and contemporary translation studies. This link is deliberately forged in Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility*, which calls for foreignizing translation that "seeks to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation" and works as "a strategic cultural intervention in the current state of world affairs."[31] When Venuti in 1995 turns to Schleiermacher's 1813 lecture as his source for this new ethics of translation, he adopts the "foreignizing" model only after thoroughly acknowledging and contextualizing Schleiermacher's ideological goals. He explains that Schleiermacher advocates foreignizing practices as a means to shore up a German literary

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[31] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), 16. Further citations in text.

culture he finds overly reliant on French models, especially during a period of struggle

under Napoleonic occupation; furthermore, Schleiermacher clearly states his ambition for

the German language to become a universal repository for all European literatures, and

his framing of translation as an intersubjective exchange among author, translator, and

reader obscures what Venuti calls the "transindividual" determinants of culture

production. Yet for all that is problematic in Schleiermacher's treatise, Venuti finds that

"it does contain the (inadvertent) suggestion that foreignizing translation can alter the

social divisions figured in these ideologies, can promote cultural change through its work

on the translating language" (96).

The passage from Schleiermacher where Venuti sees the transformative potential

of foreignizing translation is the moment I quoted above, in which Schleiermacher

situates translation at the intersection of individual and collective *Bildung*. Describing the

mutual influence of the two, Schleiermacher registers both the "living force" of a single

speaker or writer and the momentum of new linguistic forms as they move through and

shape a language. Venuti uses this point to argue that "the discursive innovations and

deviations introduced by foreignizing translation are […] a potential threat to receiving

cultural values, but they perform their revisionary work only from within, developing

translation strategies from the diverse discourses that circulate in the translating

language" (96). His reading of Schleiermacher repurposes foreignizing translation,

locating its radical possibility in the continual shift of agency from the figure of a single

author-translator or protagonist to the space of a diverse cultural field.[32] As Venuti puts it,

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[32] Venuti's language as he defines foreignizing translation is explicitly political and referential, as befits his project to change the cultural norms of translation into English. While I am fully sympathetic to his aims, my work is less concerned with measurable effects on individual readers and circulation patterns and more

foreignizing translating "stage[s] an alien reading experience," in which, to extend his metaphor, readers as a heterogeneous group play a role that necessarily exceeds any single language user. Novels in the tradition of foreignizing narration, beginning with *Sartor Resartus* and extending to the moment of the modernist *Bildungsroman*, also stage an "alien reading experience" and activate the radical possibility opened by Schleiermacher's translation theory. In the move from protagonist to reader as the subject of *Bildung*, these works resist generic conventions and forge new narrative structures. While contemporary foreignizing translation aims to unsettle the "invisibility" of the translator's work and to change the balance of power among discourses in a receiving culture, foreignizing narration as pioneered by Carlyle unsettles the distinction between character and audience, between the diegetic and the extra-diegetic. In doing so, it imagines reading as a foreign experience and the text as a space "abroad."

II.   Carlyle's German criticism: from translator of fiction to fictional translator

At the center of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, the mysterious German philosopher Diogenes Teufelsdröckh explains how he has moved from spiritual renunciation to spiritual affirmation, and that move involves a crucial act of self-translation. He says, "For the God-given mandate, *Work thou in Welldoing*, lies mysteriously written, in Promethean, Prophetic Characters, in our hearts; and leaves us no rest, night or day, till it be deciphered and obeyed; till it burn forth, in our conduct, a visible, acted Gospel of Freedom."[33] This statement, full of the "figurative crotchets" that irritate Teufelsdröckh's

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interested in the ways novels have imagined their readers and those readers' interactions with translated language.

[33] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*. 1836. eds. Kerry McSweeny and Peter Sabor (Oxford University Press, 1987), 139. Further citations in text.

Editor (140), is nonetheless one of the book's most direct formulations of Carlyle's version of the German concept of *Bildung*. As Teufelsdröckh struggles to interpret the prophetic code of his vocation and his Editor struggles to translate and organize Teufelsdröckh's life and work, both confront problems of translation that challenge their notions of individual genius and national culture.

Having translated Goethe's famous *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* early in his period of engagement with German literature, Carlyle uses this novel of individual development as a template for his only major work of fiction, *Sartor Resartus*. The resulting English *Bildungsroman* uses the narrative of individual cultural development as a medium for his larger project of cultural importation. His German philosopher Diogenes Teufelsdröckh voices the key tenants of German literature and criticism that Carlyle hopes to introduce to British audiences. But Teufelsdröckh's biography, which includes much wandering, alienation, and deciphering of the strange "prophetic characters" of his own genius, also enacts the "experience of the foreign" that Berman identifies as the animating idea behind German Romantic translation theory; furthermore, the British Editor's translation, organization, and presentation of the convoluted records of Teufelsdröckh's life and work mirror the readers' experience of a challenging foreign text. In its collapsing of character and reader, Carlyle's engagement with *Bildung*-as-translation in his narrative of cultural importation serves as an early example of a distinct tradition of novels. *Sartor Resartus* and other novels in this mode explore how translation practices can shape new stories about cultural exchange.

Carlyle published *Sartor Resartus* in 1833 in installments in *Fraser's Magazine* ten years after his translation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. His most enduring

statement from a decade of translation and criticism aimed at importing German literature is his 1827 essay "The State of German Literature." Here he identifies and addresses the two most common British misconceptions about German philosophy and literature: that they display "bad taste" and that they engage in "mysticism." He attributes the charge of bad taste largely to the overgeneralizing tendency of British critics familiar only with a few disproportionately circulated specimens. His key move is to redefine the notion of taste so that it is no longer a means of exclusion but instead encourages an open-mindedness "kindled into love and generous admiration";[34] in this more cosmopolitan mode, "Taste, if it mean anything but a paltry connoisseurship, must mean a general susceptibility to truth and nobleness; a sense to discern, and a heart to love and reverence, all beauty, order, goodness, wheresoever or in whatsoever forms and accompaniments they are to be seen" (34).

Despite Carlyle's calls for open-minded reading in the 1827 essay, in *Sartor Resartus*, the mode of reading practiced by the English Editor only intermittently lives up to this ideal. The most frequently stated goal of Carlyle's fictional Editor, like that of Carlyle himself in his criticism, is to "master the significance" of Teufelsdröckh's life and thought and then to ensure that "this acquired good be imparted to others, perhaps in equal need thereof" (8). But what the Editor imparts above all is his own sense of the impossibility of his task as he confronts his subject's difficult style, obtuse ideas, and fragmentary biographical material, which reaches him in the form of "Six considerable PAPER-BAGS" containing "miscellaneous masses of Sheets, and oftener Shreds and Snips" (60). As he works to "collate" and "delineate" (61) some readable truth from the

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[34] Thomas Carlyle, "The State of German Literature," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1839), 34. Further citations in text.

masses of text through which he can access Teufelsdröckh, the Editor's frustrations recall

Carlyle's warnings in "The State of German Literature" about the dangers facing the

reader of foreign texts:

> To seize a character, even that of one man, in its life and secret mechanism,
>
> requires a philosopher; to delineate it with truth and impressiveness, is work for a
>
> poet. […] How shall a man, to whom all characters of individual men are like
>
> sealed books, of which he sees only the title and the covers, decipher, from his
>
> four-wheeled vehicle, and depict to us, the character of a nation? He courageously
>
> depicts his own optical delusions; notes this to be incomprehensible, that other to
>
> be insignificant; much to be good, much to be bad, and most of all indifferent; and
>
> so, with a few flowing strokes, completes a picture which, though it may not even
>
> resemble its possible object, his countrymen are to take for a national portrait.
>
> (28)

The critic Carlyle portrays here is faced with an impossible task: if reading another

person is itself too difficult for all but a few genius philosophers and poets, how can we

expect an average reader to even approach the truth? This passage registers some

sympathy for the overburdened critic, but what dominates is Carlyle's anger over the

flippant attitude this typical intermediary takes toward his task. His sense of his own

"courage" is disproportionate to the true worth of his contributions, which amount finally

to mere tourist's "notes" made in passing. And his confident "flowing" style betrays his

lack of self-awareness about the stakes of his work.

Carlyle's fictional Editor, faced with the "sealed books" of Teufelsdröckh, often

seems poised to enact the failures Carlyle warns of in this passage rather than

demonstrating a more effective method for producing accurate national or biographical portraits. He tries to manage the proliferation of texts and possible meaning by reading Teufelsdröckh's writings as an emanation of his essential nature; he also tries at times to impose the classical *Bildungsroman* narrative, in which a hero ventures abroad in order to better assimilate into his homeland, to both Teufelsdröckh and his readers. But the book's use of fictional translation and its framed structure, which ultimately prioritizes the experience of reading over the biography of any single writer or reader, point the way out of these generic conventions.

The key to the seeming contradiction between Carlyle's call for open-minded reading and his narrative in the voice of a sometimes close-minded Editor, is the difference of genre: His essay is a work of criticism persuading readers to a favorable reevaluation and his novel is the fictional counterpart of such an essay. Rosemary Ashton suggests that in *Sartor Resartus*, "Carlyle is […] released from the responsibility of endorsing and can use the editorial framework to express a little incredulity with impunity,"[35] and therefore "[his] first original work, contains […] the expression of his desire to be free from the secondary work of explaining the Germans and is the first fruit of that desire."[36] The doubleness of the book's structure is enabling, but rather than offering "freedom" from "secondary" literary activities, the framing of the German Philosopher by an Editor gives Carlyle freedom to comment more directly on the difficult yet necessary work of translation and criticism. Where in the 1827 essay he had used individual "character" as an analogy to illustrate the problems of reading another's culture's literature, he now creates fictional characters who embody the limits of the kind

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[35] Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and The Reception of German Thought, 1800-1860*, (Cambridge UP, 1980), 102.
[36] Ibid., 103.

of open-minded reading and criticism he advocates in his own essays and reviews. The translational frame of *Sartor Resartus* is not a way out of his earlier work of cultural importation; in fact, by using narrative to demonstrate the process of translation and criticism, the frame invites the reader further into a collaborative role in the experience of understanding foreign texts.

To understand how Carlyle's fictional critical biography of a German philosopher theorizes translation in narrative, we should first consider how his work participates in the particular narrative genre it deploys. Carlyle is directly referencing the same "classical" *Bildungsroman* that Moretti takes as his central example, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, but the end of *Sartor Resartus* finds neither Teufelsdröckh nor his Editor any more assimilated into their respective homelands than they began. Rather than settling into any one community, Teufelsdröckh, still of unknown parentage and always an international "wanderer," ends up "lost in Space" (223), leaving no biographical traces for the Editor to piece together. Instead, the last chapter leaves the reader to confront the pervasive and potentially uncontainable influence of the German thinker, whose style, biography, and philosophical systems all remain difficult to discern from his fragmentary textual legacy:

> To cure [Teufelsdröckh] of his mad humours British Criticism[37] would essay in
> vain: enough for her if she can, by vigilance, prevent the spreading of such among
> ourselves. What a result, should this piebald, entangled, hyper-metaphorical style
> of writing, not to say of thinking, become general among our Literary men! As it
> might so easily do. Thus has not the Editor himself, working over Teufelsdröckh's

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[37] Interestingly, the Editor's phrasing here creates a collective, feminine-gendered (and domesticating) readership out of an assembly of "literary men."

German, lost much of his own English purity? Even as the smaller whirlpool is

sucked into the larger, and made to become portion of the greater, and, like it, see

all things figuratively: which habit time, and assiduous effort, will be needed to

eradicate. (221)

The Editor's anxiety in the face of his foreign subject's overwhelming "madness" is

palpable and, it appears, not unfounded: like his subject, he begins to mix metaphors,

speaking of Teufelsdröckh's influence as a disease to be contained and also as a physical

force that overpowers his own "English purity" of expression.

Both Teufelsdröckh and his Editor undergo Moretti's "expansion of self" over the

course of the book, but "experience" for them differs from the template of his "classical

Bildungsroman" because it produces potentially lasting change; Teufelsdröckh moves

through a three-part spiritual and philosophical evolution that leaves him less, not more,

integrated into a community, and the Editor finds himself distanced from his English

audience without having embraced his German subject. In both cases, influential

experiences take the character (or reader-as-character in the case of the Editor) through

prolonged encounters with a world of foreign languages and cultures. Teufelsdröckh

"must […] over the whole surface of the Earth (by foot-prints) write his *Sorrows of*

Teufelsdrockh" (120), and his Editor must grapple with the strange, heterogenous writing

that results as he "struggl[es] […] to build a firm Bridge for British travelers" seeking to

understand Teufelsdröckh's philosophy (61); though his account of his "Editorial

Difficulties" only sometimes mentions translation directly, the Editor's bridge-building is

primarily a task of translation. In this way, Carlyle's version of the *Bildungsroman* seems

in line with Berman's understanding of translation as a kind of foreign experience necessary to the idea of *Bildung*.

The analogy between individual and national character—between Biography and Translation—governs the structure of *Sartor Resartus*, but Carlyle's textual practices also promote more "suspicious" modes of reading that recognize uncertain meanings. The Editor strives to understand Teufelsdröckh's strange, fragmentary text as an emanation of a single meaning; he maintains hope that all will become clear and that interpretation will reach its natural end despite clear evidence to the contrary. But the multiple frames around the philosopher's translated writings undermine the Editor's efforts to maintain the individual life as the only explanatory framework for cultural change. Teufelsdröckh's *Bildungsroman* defies the narrative of assimilation by refusing to resolve his foreign wanderings into a single message; the Editor gradually realizes the insufficiency of the narrative frame he wants to impose, and as he does so, he has his own "experience of the foreign" that interrupts his sense of belonging within the English culture he has been attempting to benefit.

III.   The risks and rewards of foreign influence

The Editor claims throughout *Sartor Resartus* that his highest aim is to enrich British culture by importing valuable work from abroad, and often his translation project appears to have nationalist motivations. In his "Preliminary" chapter, for example, he asks, "how could the Philosophy of Clothes and the Author of such Philosophy be brought home, in any measure, to the business and bosoms of our own English nation? For if new-got gold is said to burn the pockets till it be cast forth into circulation, much

more may new Truth" (8). The analogy between cultural enrichment and literal gold

persists throughout the book and usually figures new and valuable ideas as gold to be

mined: the Editor says early on of Teufelsdröckh's work that "there is much rubbish in

his Book, though likewise specimens of almost invaluable ore" (22). Later instances of

the mining analogy emphasize the work of readers, as when the Editor takes pains to limit

his own responsibility for the results of Teufelsdröckh's introduction to a British

audience: "We are to guide our British Friends into the new Gold-country, and shew

them the mines; nowise to dig out and exhaust its wealth, which indeed remains for all

time inexhaustible. Once there, let each dig for his own behoof, and enrich himself"

(157). These comparisons position readers' work as a crucial step in a process of

interpretation much like the "suspicious reading" of "composite" truths that Moretti finds

to be disallowed by the classical *Bildungsroman*. Yet interpretation serves "each"

reader's individual enrichment as an intermediary step towards the general "circulation"

of valuable, new ideas in the readers' "English nation"; that is, each reader's own culture,

the circulation analogy implies, matters only insofar as it serves a unified English culture.

The Editor's comparison of reading to gold-digging grants readers their own separate and

possibly conflicting interests and therefore poses more of a threat to unified culture than

Moretti's classic *Bildungsroman* allows for, but the Editor is not consistently willing to

invite the risks that a thorough reading of Teufelsdröckh could present.

So in this case, as often throughout the book, the Editor's position on the value of

foreign texts is ambiguous. Most often, he argues for the benefits of cosmopolitan

reading and makes appeals to his audience's open-mindedness, as when he exhorts, "Let

the British reader study and enjoy, in simplicity of heart, what is here presented him […]

Let him strive to keep a free, open sense; cleared from the mists of Prejudice, above all

from the paralysis of Cant" (10). His use of the mining analogy, however, betrays his fear

that his British readers of Teufelsdröckh will fall prey to the damaging influence of the

"rubble" as they search for "ore." He shudders at the "result, should [Teufelsdröckh's]

piebald, entangled, hyper-metaphorical style of writing, not to say of thinking, become

general among our Literary men!" (221). But in order to import the valuable ideas, he

must expose his audience to elements of foreign texts whose influence may work in ways

he finds undesirable.

The Editor attempts to manage his anxiety over cultural influence by amplifying

the explanatory power of the author's life, as if to balance the importance his model of

interpretation necessarily grants the individual reader. As he describes his own anxious

reading experience, the Editor clings to Biography as the lynchpin that can prevent

misunderstanding and guarantee that Teufelsdröckh's ideas affect British culture only in

proportion to their true value. He asks, "To state the Philosophy of Clothes without the

Philosopher, the ideas of Teufelsdröckh without something of his personality, was it not

to insure both of entire misapprehension?" (9). One allusion in particular connects the

Editor's ambivalence about foreign reading to his increasingly unwarranted faith in

Biography. As he awaits the arrival of biographical materials from Germany, he asks,

> what reader expects that, with all our writing and reporting, Teufelsdröckh could
>
> be brought home to him, till once the Documents arrive? His Life, Fortunes, and
>
> Bodily Presence, are as yet hidden from us, or matter only of faint conjecture. But
>
> on the other hand, does not his Soul lie enclosed in this remarkable Volume, much
>
> more truly than Pedro Garcia's did in the buried Bag of Doubloons? To the soul

of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, to his opinions namely on the 'Origin and Influence

of Clothes,' we for the present gladly return" (21)

Here, first of all, the "bringing home" of foreign texts depends on their grounding in

verifiable biographical facts—that is, on their transparency of origin. The Editor's

continual lamenting of his lack of concrete information suggests his strong belief in the

explanatory power of Biography. In the very next sentence of this important quote,

however, the Editor attempts to rationalize his decision to carry on reading in the absence

of Biography. He questions whether any facts or external material evidence could say

more about Teufelsdröckh than is already apparent in his philosophy; perhaps, he

speculates, the writer's "soul" is already legible, if we know how to read for it.

The second part of the Editor's claim refers to an anecdote from the preface to the

French picaresque novel *Gil Blas*, first published in 1715 by Alain-René Lesage. Lesage

opens the novel with a parable already in the voice of the protagonist Gil Blas; it is

meant, he says, to admonish his audience to "read attentively" and look for "the moral

inscriptions enclosed in" his adventures.[38] In the parable, two schoolboys find a stone

with an inscription promising that "here lies the soul of the licentiate Pedro Garcia." The

younger boy dismisses the inscription as a meaningless joke, but the wiser boy goes

digging for the "soul" and uncovers a bag of coins along with a note in Latin praising his

intelligence and declaring him the heir of Pedro Garcia. The patient reader who persists

despite apparent contradictions gets a clear material reward, and what Gil Blas calls the

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[38] The preface ends with this warning, which I've translated and paraphrased above: "Si tu lis mes aventures sans prendre garde aux inscriptions morales qu'elles renferment, tu ne tireras aucun fruit de cet ouvrage; mais, si tu le lis avec attention, tu y trouveras, suivant le précepte d'Horace, l'utile mêlé avec l'agréable. " In Alain-René Lesage, *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*. 1715 (Paris: Genets Jeune, 1818).

"fruits of the labor" of reading are literalized when the "soul" reveals itself to be actual gold.

Carlyle's text situates the allusion within the Editor's musings on the relative importance of Biography and textual interpretation. So he seems to be simply importing it as an allegory for the rewards of careful reading, consistent with his ongoing analogy in which readers mine foreign texts for the gold of valuable new forms and ideas: readers who look for enrichment can expect to be rewarded. For the Editor, however, the "soul of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh" is "more truly" present in his writing than the soul of Pedro Garcia is in a bag of gold because no literal gold is present in Teufelsdröckh's text; his "soul" really is just his soul, and the Editor's dilemma is precisely the lack of material evidence that would provide a fuller understanding of Teufelsdröckh's life in the world. In a way, then, *Sartor Resartus* undoes the surprise literalizing move of the *Gil Blas* parable, returning the gold to its metaphorical status. In doing so, it raises the stakes of the reader's investment in a mysterious foreign text. The guarantee of Biography is removed by one further level of metaphor, and the best readers can hope for is the figurative gold of indirect biographical knowledge and the much less certain inheritance of individual or collective enrichment.

Carlyle's choice of allusion resonates even beyond the Editor's immediate concerns in this passage, however. The legacy of Lesage's novel is fraught with translation controversies that were still open even as Carlyle was writing *Sartor Resartus*. *L'Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* was published in French and written by a French writer, but in keeping with picaresque genre conventions, it is about Spanish characters and set in Spain. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, prominent Spanish intellectuals

began to claim that Lesage's work was not original and that he had merely translated an existing Spanish novel into French and passed it off as new work. For the Spanish writers, their reclaiming of what they considered a truly Spanish work, which included a translation titled as a "restoration," became an assertion of Spain's literary vitality and independence; Lesage's French advocates, meanwhile, defended his original authorship as a natural consequence of his general credibility and France's cultural superiority. Nancy Vogley's account shows how the debate about *Gil Blas* centers on "the question of translation. Recovery of this historical controversy lays bare not only Spanish-French antagonisms and literary competitiveness throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but also the growing sense in Europe of a national language's uniqueness and an emerging critical awareness of the vagaries of translation."[39]

In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle invokes Lesage's novel and by extension the ongoing debate about its status as a work of Spanish or French authorship. Tellingly, however, he invokes them just where his fictional Editor is hesitatingly attempting to assert the irreducible, recoverable presence of an author's "soul" in his works. In place of a mode of reading that grants the reader full interpretive agency and relinquishes control over the consequences of that interpretation, the Editor appeals to a mode of biographical reading. But he makes his case—that every text is its author's biography—through allusion to a text of uncertain authorship and cultural origin. Since he hazards such an argument in order to ease his fear of the "entire misapprehension" that he assumes will follow from a reading unanchored in the facts of an author's life—the kind of reading of Teufelsdröckh that circumstances have compelled him into—the context of the *Gil Blas* allusion upsets

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[39] Nancy Vogley, "Two Arguments for the Spanish Authorship of *Gil Blas*," *PMLA* 125.2 (March 2010), 455.

his strategy for persisting with criticism in the absence of external Biography. The Editor desperately hopes that careful reading can yield material, biographical facts and will eventually make visible the referents even of Teufelsdröckh's opaque words. This hope comes to seem laughable, however, because it relies on an allusion to a text whose authorship and material circulation history he apparently has not discerned through reading alone.

The layered commentary accomplished through this allusion is typical of Carlyle's use of multiple frames in *Sartor Resartus*. Just as the *Gil Blas* allusion refers to a scandal of translation, many of the book's jokes at the expense of the Editor occur across language barriers and expose the limits of his ability to manage the uncertain influence of his foreign subject, either through suspicious reading or grounding in biography. Perhaps the most obvious, and the most damning, joke is Diogenes Teufelsdröckh's name itself, the first name meaning "born of god" and the surname "devil's shit." Though the implication—that the philosopher's ideas are just as likely to be divine as to be both worthless and dangerous—is clear to any reader with knowledge of Latin and German, the Editor never comments on the name, despite presenting himself as educated in the Classics and fluent in Teufelsdröckh's language. He reads the name as a name only, not as a referential description of a character—that is, he does not go digging for the meaning behind the name as a word, like the good reader of the Pedro Garcia parable would. The Editor's refusal to read Teufelsdröckh's name is most directly ironized when he promises to maintain impartiality despite having once met and visited with Teufelsdröckh during a trip to Germany. Making use of a Latin citation that he *does* read and adapt to his own purposes, the Editor asks, "But what then? *Amicus Plato, magis*

amica veritas; Teufelsdröckh is our friend, Truth is our divinity. In our historical and critical capacity, we hope, we are strangers to all the world; have feud or favour with no one, – save indeed the Devil, with whom as with the Prince of Lies we do at all times wage internecine war" (11). The one exception to his editorial impartiality, "the devil," points back to the very subject he most desperately hopes to portray impartially. Teufelsdröckh's name, then, works as a commentary on the futility of the Editor's efforts: he undertakes an enormously difficult task of translation and encourages us to read for the gold ore of Teufelsdröckh's soul, but Teufelsdröckh's own name suggests that what we will find is at best a paradox and at worst precisely the opposite of gold. And the Editor, despite all his exhortations to us to read thoroughly and with courage, never mentions this contradiction.

IV.   Teufelsdröckh's elusive biography

It is the devil himself, finally, who makes the book's strongest statement in favor of a mode of reading that achieves certainty through biography. Just before the turn in his three-part spiritual journey from the "Center of Indifference" to the "Everlasting Yea," Teufelsdröckh, whose own slipperiness frustrates the Editor's attempts to understand his life and work, outlines the high stakes of reading works of genius:

> Great Men are the inspired (speaking and acting) Texts of that divine BOOK OF REVELATIONS, whereof a Chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named HISTORY; to which inspired Texts your numerous talented men, and your innumerable untalented men, are the better or worse exegetic Commentaries, and wagon-load of too-stupid, heretical or orthodox, weekly Sermons. (135)

Teufelsdröckh's proposition here conflates text and author altogether. Such a conflation serves his self-mythologizing because it downplays the importance of verifiable biographical facts while still elevating the individual genius. And for Teufelsdröckh, the individual genius guarantees transcendent meaning to the extent that it comprises a "book of revelation." The "commentaries" of non-genius readers, presumably including the Editor and his audience, are dismissed as distractions from the truth of revealed "history," which is now synonymous with biography.

Teufelsdröckh wants readers to accept the revelations of genius writers, whose lives are texts and whose texts reveal their souls. Teufelsdröckh's Editor, however, only sometimes takes the philosopher on such terms. As biographer and translator, the Editor tries to guide readers through their experience of a foreign text, and he often calls for an openness to the enrichment such reading can provide. But as we have seen, he also demonstrates ambivalence about whether he wants the changes wrought by such an experience to permanently affect readers, either individually or as a collective English culture. One strategy for managing this uncertain foreign influence is to anchor readers' interpretations in stable biographical facts; when such facts prove unreliable, he takes the text itself as a revelation of the author's soul, in a way that precludes any conflicting meaning that might arise from readers' individual interpretations. Given his shifting position, we, the Editor's readers, are thrown not into the "total misapprehension" that he fears but into uncertainty about whether and how biographical reading can protect us from any such misapprehension.

Attempts to anchor Teufelsdröckh's mystical philosophy in any recognizable biographical narrative fail because what the Editor knows of his life can't be made to fit

into available templates.[40] He relates his subject's departure from home and failed

romance and then presents what Teufelsdröckh himself organizes as a three-part spiritual

development through "The Everlasting No," "The Center of Indifference," and "The

Everlasting Yea." But the writings that Teufelsdröckh's reawakening inspires are, as the

Editor continually points out, abstruse and fragmentary. Furthermore, Teufelsdröckh does

not achieve the reintegration into a community that Moretti identifies as the conclusion of

the classical *Bildungsroman*. At the end of the book, the Editor learns from

Teufelsdröckh's German publisher that the philosopher is "again to all appearance lost in

Space" and rumored, but not certain, to be involved in vague revolutionary activity in the

wake of France's 1830 uprising. Rather than assimilate into the conventional bourgeois

life of his hometown, Teufelsdröckh vacillates between an individualism verging on

alienation and a utopian vision of collective power. These two extremes are evident in the

last quote the Editor gives from Teufelsdröckh: "'How were friendship possible? […] A

man, be the Heavens ever praised, is sufficient for himself; yet were ten men, united in

Love, capable of being and of doing what ten thousand singly would fail in. Infinite is the

help man can yield to man'" (223).

Even if we could map his philosophical development onto the *Bildungsroman*'s

narrative of foreign experience brought home again, much of Teufelsdröckh's writing

complicates any assumption that he has thoroughly mined the ore of his own wanderings

abroad. Though his moments of insight do occur outside Germany, in the Hagia Sophia,

for example, or on the road in Scotland, Teufelsdröckh's prose suggests that he is not

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[40] The clearest statement of the Editor's desire to fit Teufelsdröckh's life into an available narrative is his direct reference to Goethe in describing the young philosopher's romantic struggles, which I quote above in another context: "Thus must he, over the whole surface of the Earth (by foot-prints), write his *Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh*; even as the great Goethe, in passionate words, must write his *Sorrows of Werter*, before the spirit freed herself, and he could become a Man" (121).

always the most sensitive reader of foreign words. He claims to learn languages without effort and at one point brags, "Unknown Languages have I oftenest gathered from their natural repertory, the Air, by my organ of Hearing" (125). This facility with languages might prove his genius, but it also betrays an arrogance in tension with the difficult, humbling work that characterizes the foreign reading experience for the Editor and in Berman's conception of *Bildung*.

Indeed, several instances of bad reading demonstrate that Teufelsdröckh uses foreign languages as a means to remove himself from new and potentially painful experiences. When he puts his "*Discourse on Epitaphs*" into practice and writes the Latin epitaph for a prominent nobleman's tombstone, he measures the man's life by the number of beasts he has killed and the volume of "dung" he has produced; in the end, though, it is because of "an alleged defect of Latinity, a defect never yet fully visible to myself" that the epitaph "still remains unengraven" (101). The use of an academic foreign language furthers the distance he takes from his subject, and the "defect" of his Latin compounds his inappropriately impersonal perspective; when he fails to see his own defect, he fails to learn anything at all from his attempts to write up another life in another language. All told, his epitaph, which the text includes in full and in Latin, betrays Teufelsdröckh's inability to participate, as Goethe's translation theory would have him do, in an exchange with characters and cultures outside himself. In his portrait of his own cultural and spiritual education, Teufelsdröckh arrives at understanding only once he has achieved the "Everlasting Yea," and so moments of failure or incomplete communication cannot contribute any meaning at all.

In the case of the epitaph, Teufelsdröckh demonstrates his tendency to subordinate the details of a particular individual life to his "grand principle" (101) of composition of the individual life in general. He again relies on the distancing effect of a foreign language and an impersonal philosophy as he describes his friendship with "Herr Towgood […] a young person of quality (*von Adel*), from the interior parts of England" (90). He dismisses the possibility of true intimacy with Towgood through an ironic endorsement of extreme utilitariansim (which *Sartor Resartus* continually mocks): "By degrees, however, I understood the new time, and its wants. If man's *soul* is indeed, as in the Finnish Language, and Utilitarian Philosophy, a kind of *Stomach*, what else is the true meaning of Spiritual Union but an Eating together? Thus we, instead of Friends, are Dinner-guests; and here as elsewhere have cast away chimeras" (91). The recourse to Finnish idiom[41] works like his use of impersonal Latin in the epitaph: both times, he relies on an external system in his refusal to read another person—a person literally foreign to him in the case of Towgood. As we have seen, the Editor appeals to an allegory of careful reading from *Gil Blas* to motivate his audience to persist in their task of excavating the "soul" of Teufelsdröckh's texts. Teufelsdröckh himself, however, avoids such a task by importing a foreign metaphor that empties the soul of meaning. He speaks in the abstract about the revelations to come from the "inspired texts" that are great men, but his reading practices defer or even actively block revelations. This tendency to evade local, single interactions reinforces his preference to look to the "infinite help" of "ten thousand men" before admitting the possibility of one particular friendship.

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[41] McSweeney and Sabor explain in their note to this passage that the "suggestion that 'soul' and 'stomach' are related in Finnish is a hoax" (254). It's not clear whether the hoax originates with Carlyle, or whether Carlyle is repeating a (mistaken) received idea about Finnish.

V.   The Editor's elusive translation

So, what we learn of Teufelsdröckh's biography and intellectual development frustrates our view of him as a typical *Bildungsroman* protagonist: he does not learn from his foreign experiences, and he does not surrender his "alterity," to use Moretti's term, in order to rejoin a community. Without a character to anchor a *Bildungsroman*, the narrative of development is transferred onto the Editor and, by extension, onto the reader, and the book shifts focus to the Editor's experience reading and translating Teufelsdröckh's atypical life and work. Instead of tracing a character's development towards integration in a community, *Sartor Resartus* follows the Editor's changing relation to his foreign subject, whom he encounters almost exclusively as a foreign text. In a way, then, Carlyle's rewriting of the *Bildungsroman* amplifies the "experience of the foreign" that Berman shows to be an essential aspect of the genre's archetypal narrative, so that the grappling with a foreign text takes over the entire story. And, importantly, this story now occurs at the level of the reader rather than at the level of character. This transfer becomes explicit in *Sartor Resartus* because Carlyle uses the figure of the Editor to put the reader in the structural position of a character. With this space for readers-as-character, the narrative allows for a sort of multiplied protagonist, a national character composed of the multiple potential individual characters of its readers.

But just as Teufelsdröckh's story resists the *Bildungsroman* pattern, so does the Editor's trajectory as a reader. As we have seen, he wrestles with many "Editorial Difficulties" and worries he has lost much of his "English purity" of written style by the end of the book. Still, the significance of his struggles ultimately remains unresolved, their payoff deferred. Instead the Editor's interactions with Teufelsdröckh's text are

recorded in his commentary on and translations of that text. The Editor speaks often of the complexity of Teufelsdröckh's ideas and the strangeness of his style, but he rarely mentions translation problems directly. Nonetheless, the traces of his work as translator persist as he frequently includes original German words and phrases parenthetically in his English versions. These interspersed words of the "original" remind readers that they are reading Teufelsdröckh mostly in translation, though they do not often provide any explanation of the differences between the two versions.

One example, in which the Editor *does* mention the possibility that a particular term is untranslateable, provides an illustration of his general strategy. Here, he gives a long quote from Teufelsdröckh's "Miscellaneous—Historical" chapter on clothes:

'Rich men, I find, have *Teusinke*' (a perhaps untranslateable article); 'also a silver girdle, whereat hang little bells; so that when a man walks it is with continual jingling. Some few, of musical turn, have a whole chime of bells (*Glockenspiel*) fastened there; which especially, in sudden whirls, and the other accidents of walking, has a grateful effect. Observe too how fond they are of peaks, and Gothic-arch intersections. The male world wears peaked caps, an ell-long, which hang bobbing over the side (*schief*): their shoes are peaked in front, also to the length of an ell (and laced on the side with tags); even the wooden shoes have their ell-long noses: some also clap bells on the peak. Farther, according to my authority, the men have breeches without seat (*ohne Gesäss*): these they fasten peakwise to their shirts; and the long round doublets must overlap them.' (38)

In this early passage, the Editor's translation of Teufelsdröckh's German is characteristic in a few important ways. He draws attention to the fact of translation by retaining a

German word that he finds untranslateable; he does not choose to attempt some equivalent, but rather imports the foreign word into his English text. But, then, after drawing the readers' attention to problems of translation in this way, he does *not* give German words for what appear to be very specific and culture-bound terms, like "peaked caps" and "Gothic-arch intersections." Instead, the other German words given, "*schief*" and "*ohne Gesäss*," are more or less straight-forward counterparts of his English translation; they seem comparatively less useful than words he might have but does not give in German.

The effect of these choices is to make the fact of the text's translation continually present to readers without giving them any information about the Editor's translation practices. The parenthetical German words do provide a reminder of the fictional status of the entire philosopher-Editor apparatus of *Sartor Resartus*: if the Editor were translating a German text, the original terms would point out for the reader moments of difficult transmission or non-equivalence, gaps in the English lexicon where German words already exist. But since what the narrative presents as translation is really Carlyle's original fictional composition, the supposed original terms do not refer to problems of translation. Instead they are inserted at moments of seamless equivalence, as we have seen, almost as if to prove Carlyle's basic proficiency in German: if the Editor gave German terms for seemingly obscure phrases like "ell-long peaked caps," Carlyle would likely have to generate more made up words of the "Teufelsdröckh" variety, and the premise of translation would become merely an excuse for satirical wordplay. As it is, though, the insertion of obvious German vocabulary forces us to take translation seriously; Carlyle uses it as a narrative technique reminding us that the Editor's otherwise

invisible act of translating is a necessary event in the narrative of *Sartor Resartus* and that

translation is a key part of his work telling Teufelsdröckh's life story and explaining his

philosophy.

The Editor's translation practices at this early moment in his presentation of

Teufelsdröckh are typical of the optimism and good faith he initially brings to his

reading, when he still believes his "Editorial Difficulties" are temporary setbacks and not

permanent obstacles to an inevitable fullness of meaning. His parenthetical German

words here suggest a similarly faith-based position on translation; they are not there to

help reach across vast gaps in meaning between languages because the Editor has not yet

fathomed those gaps. Early on, he is still hopeful enough about Teufelsdröckh's

assimilation into English intellectual culture that he proposes translation projects pitched

toward particular audiences, suggesting "that it may be thrown out as a pertinent question

for parties concerned, Whether or not a good English Translation thereof might

henceforth be profitably incorporated with Mr. Merrick's valuable Work *On Ancient

Armour*?" (37). The extreme, even ironic, specificity of this recommendation—a certain

passage for readers of a certain author's narrowly specialized work—does not line up

with the Editor's claims in less optimistic moments to leave open to his readers the

general responsibility to "mine" Teufelsdröckh's texts for whichever "ore" might prove

valuable to them individually.

The Editor's increasing suspicion about the value of Teufelsdröckh's ideas peaks

near the end of the book in a chapter on the "sects" that the German philosopher has

observed in English society: the "Dandiacal Body" and the "poor slaves." In this

moment, where suspicion nearly becomes outright rejection, Teufelsdröckh's position as

a reader of English cultural artefacts places him in a direct, and unflattering, parallel with the Editor as a reader of Teufelsdröckh himself. The conceit of the chapter is a vision of class markers as elaborate and mysterious religious practices. Just as the Editor finds his subject resistant to interpretation, Teufelsdröckh posits that the "fashionable novels" he takes as the "Sacred Books" of the dandies have an inherent repellent force designed to keep outsiders from understanding them. When he finds that "the tough faculty of reading […] was here for the first time foiled and set at nought," he asks, "Was there some miracle at work here; like those Fireballs, and supernal and infernal prodigies, that, in the case of the Jewish Mysteries, have also more than once scared back the Alien?" (210). The framework of mysticism and cultish rituals that Teufelsdröckh uses to organize his critique of English class divisions further reinforces the parallel with the Editor's task: as a translator and explicator of German thought, the Editor is working against the stereotypes of mysticism that Carlyle rejects in "On the State of German Literature." But while Carlyle works against generalizations about the inaccessibility of German writings and the Editor at least begins with the intention to demystify his subject, Teufelsdröckh's presentation of the dandies perpetuates assumptions about their strangeness. He discourages further reading when he concludes they have "published books that the unassisted human faculties are inadequate to read" (212).

Such a dismissive attitude also marks Teufelsdröckh's descriptions of the dandies' opposites, the "poor slaves." While the language of religion and ritual mocks the self-seriousness of the fashionable rich, the same language pokes fun at the miserably poor by deliberately mistaking the homogenizing effects of poverty—limited food sources and repetitive daily labor—for meaningful spiritual practices. And the same conclusion of

incomprehensibility prevails: the poor slave's dress, for example, "by the imperfect organ of Language […] seemed indescribable" (213). Teufelsdröckh in his satirical reading of class differences as differences of language and culture goes so far as to classify the "sect" of the poor slaves both ethnically—he identifies Ireland as "their grand parent hive" (212)—and in terms of race—they are called, he says "White Negroes" (212). And, given his corresponding claim that the dandies speak "some broken *Lingua-franca*, or English-French" (210), Teufelsdröckh effectively envisions the divide between "dandies" and "poor slaves" as an internal language barrier: "These two principles of Dandiacal Self-worship or Demon-worship, and Poor-Slavish or Drudgical Earth-worship […] extend through the entire structure of Society, and work unweariedly in the secret depths of English national Existence; striving to separate and isolate it into two contradictory, uncommunicating masses" (216). He predicts that "that the two Sects will one day part England between them" (216).

Teufelsdröckh elaborates on his vision of an internally divided England, imagining the two sects as "two bottomless boiling Whirlpools that had broken out on opposite quarters of the firm land," which will grow until "there is but a foot-plank, a mere film of Land between them" (217). This image sees the same power in English cultural divisions that the Editor fears in Teufelsdröckh's contagious metaphorical style, which, as we have seen, the Editor believes affects him "as the smaller whirlpool is sucked into the larger, and made to become portion of the greater, and, like it, see all things figuratively" (221). Here the Editor understands languages as competing forces, the stronger of which inevitably subsumes all divergent influences, and he considers his own voice as writer and translator as one such weak force to be overtaken. In this

moment, he has lost sight of any but the largest scale of cultural change, and the individual language users who make up the "whirlpools" of dandies and poorslaves, German writers and English readers, have blurred out of focus. Teufelsdröckh, by contrast, views the two (metaphorical) languages of England's "sects" as equally repellent—both in the sense that they push away outsiders who attempt to read them and in the sense that they are distastefully strange. This claim that diversity necessarily produces total mutual incomprehensibility, and also forecloses all exchange with other languages and cultures, is, as we will see, the shock that unsettles, if it does not decisively change, the Editor's position on the nature of cultural change.

Even while admitting to his difficulties reading the "dandies" and the "poor slaves" in their own languages, Teufelsdröckh confidently offers third-party readings of them as a means of direct access. From Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Pelham*, he lists what he names the "Seven Articles of Faith" of the dandies. And to round out his presentation of England's poor, he excerpts passages from the memoir of actor John Bernard that give almost anthropological descriptions of Irish families in their homes, promising that, "Thereby shall my German readers now behold an Irish Poor-Slave, as it were with their own eyes; and even see him at meat" (214). From here, Teufelsdröckh spins a prophecy of England's impending bifurcation, which eventually leads him to reduce the two "sects" to competing cosmological forces of "Money" and "Hunger." It is at this moment that the Editor abruptly cuts off the excerpt and declares his indignation with Teufelsdröckh's excessive "likenings and similitudes": "Never perhaps did those amaurosis suffusions so cloud and distort his otherwise most piercing vision, as in this of the *Dandiacal Body*! Or was there something of intended satire; is the Professor and Seer

not quite the blinkard he affects to be? […] Does your Professor take us for simpletons? His irony has overshot itself; we see through it, and perhaps through him (217)"

The Editor's break, then—the moment he finally "sees through" Teufelsdröckh—comes just as the Philosopher claims to give his German readers an unobstructed view of English culture, "as it were with their own eyes." The Editor is only able to detect the satire, finally opening his eyes to the doubleness all along implied by the transparent meaning of Teufelsdröckh's name ("gift of god/devil's droppings"), once the Professor directs that satire at the Editor's own situation as an intermediary between two cultures. The uncomfortably close parallel—between the Philosopher decoding England and the Editor decoding the German Philosopher—forces the Editor to grapple with the crisis of translation implicit in Teufelsdröckh's position in this chapter: in the terms set forth in his "dandies versus poor slaves" framework, either the foreign culture is impenetrable (as when the dandies' fashionable novels repel all reading) or its meaning is transparent (as when a second-hand outsider account is assumed equal to direct experience). In both cases, the translator devalues the foreign subject, either by refusing to read it or by denying its complexity, and, faced with Teufeldröckh's bad translation, the Editor is prompted to admit to the "clouding" and "distortion" of his "vision." Teufelsdröckh may fall into the traps of the critic Carlyle admonishes in "On the State of German Literature"—one who "courageously depicts his own optical delusions," which "his countrymen are to take for a national portrait"— but here, at the moment of his own disillusion, the Editor characterizes himself as a different sort of translator and reader.

If the parenthetical German words of the early chapters serve primarily to establish the Editor's act of translation as a recurring event in his narrative of foreign

experience, then this moment of disidentification marks another important turn in that story. For the Editor, the rejection of Teufelsdröckh's authority is also a defense against the philosopher's vision of England as a dangerously heterogeneous and unstable national culture, a culture whose unpredictability might complicate a translator's attempts to assimilate a foreign writer into it. This negative satirical reading of England's internal cultural differences forces the Editor to acknowledge both Teufelsdröckh's bad faith as well as the element of truth in Teufelsdröckh's vision. In response, the Editor adopts a positive version of the philosopher's unproductive extreme of suspicious reading. Just as he himself can now read the meaning of Teufelsdröckh's name, so he comes to rely on his audience to practice a mode of reading that remains sensitive to gaps in meaning without despairing that no communication is possible. He introduces Teufelsdröckh's last chapter on "Tailors" with the intention to "Let him speak his own last words, in his own way" (218).

The mode of reading the Editor moves toward is akin to Moretti's "suspicious" reading, where interpretation allows for "composite" meanings, and Goethe's "participation," which requires readers to imagine themselves as foreign subjects to be translated. Like these positions, the Editor's stance in these last chapters of *Sartor Resartus* can accommodate a foreign text, or a foreign Philosopher of Clothes, that is neither wholly comprehensible nor wholly closed to interpretation. It does not demand a single, final meaning, and it can find value in reading a foreign text not only despite but because of the possibility of that text's uncontained influence. And this mode of reading does not require that foreign text's complete assimilation into a receiving culture; indeed,

it welcomes the foreign text's capacity to make visible the particularities and internal diversity of that receiving culture.

This mode of reading, however, is not the culmination of the Editor's mission to bring Teufelsdröckh to a British audience. Even after his moment of disillusion with his subject, the Editor still expresses concerns about his readers' reception of Teufelsdröckh and anxiety about the philosopher's influence among them. Just as Teufelsdröckh's biography departs from a narrative of reintegration into his homeland, so the Editor's experience of his subject as a foreign text resists any straightforward plotting. He quite often clings to the notion that a more solid grounding in biographical facts—that is, a stronger assertion of Teufelsdröckh's individual genius and its expression in language— will protect readers from any unforeseen negative influences of a too-thorough involvement with foreign texts. But he often, especially at this crucial late moment in the book, exhibits a positive Goethean "participation" with Teufelsdröckh's life and work. It is in these moments that the Editor's work enacts something like Venuti's foreignizing translation practice by "staging an alien reading experience" and leaving his audience a space to find meaning in that experience.

This chapter has argued that Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* experiments with the *Bildungsroman* by framing a story of individual education (Teufelsdröckh's) with a story of foreign reading (the Editor's). This structure creates an analogy between two modes of experience: first, what we would now colloquially call "life experience," which is central to the very concept of *Bildung*, and second, the experience of interpreting a text across barriers of language and culture. In Carlyle's book, the reader is invited into participation with a foreign text through identification with the Editor, who overtly attempts to guide

his audience in the navigation of that text, all the while grappling with its difficulties himself. The Editor's work as a translator become visible where he allows German words to interrupt his English text, and his evolving reading practices can be measured by the gaps between those foreign words and his efforts (or refusal) to read them. The Editor's subject Teufelsdröckh resists the template of the *Bildungsroman*, and likewise the Editor's own non-linear movement through biographical and suspicious modes of reading suggests but ultimately unsettles the notion that readers can be predictably educated by the texts they experience.

In the chapters to follow, I will consider other novels that adhere more or less faithfully to a *Bildungsroman* narrative. Staël's *Corinne*, which predates *Sartor Resartus* by twenty years, similarly follows an orphaned writer with a strong literary vocation. Staël's text, however, situates the language barrier differently: the novel itself does not present itself primarily as a work of translation and intentional cultural importation; rather, the difference of language resides within the protagonist, and the plot concerns Corinne's attempts to translate herself to various audiences, among them her potential husband. Because of this structural difference, Staël's novel invites the reader's participation just as urgently but through different means. *Sartor Resartus* satirizes the conventions of Goethe's *Bildungsroman* and the very German philosophy that Carlyle elsewhere defends against charges of "mysticism," prodding the Editor and reader into more cosmopolitan reading practices through disidentification with Teufelsdröckh's bad reading practices. In *Corinne*, the conventions of travel and romance narratives are put in the service of the heroine's self-translation, and rather than identifying with or rejecting

any single figure, the reader is invited into a pluralized audience, whose enthusiastic

response to the heroine's bilingual poetry is staged in several of the novel's key scenes.

Translating with Enthusiasm in Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, ou l'Italie*

Though I began with a chapter on Carlyle's novel of translation, *Sartor Resartus*, this chapter will consider an earlier example of the phenomenon, Germain de Staël's *Corinne*. I've chosen to present the two in this reversed order because, despite its much earlier date of publication, Staël's use of translation is in many ways more akin to the later novels I discuss in chapters three and four. Her novel *Corinne* provides a narrative version of Stäel's translation theory, and it illustrates her ideas about foreignness and national literatures by, as Venuti would have it, "staging an alien experience" for readers. Where *Sartor Resartus* gives the reader a single figure to identify with, the Editor, Stäel's version of the *Bildungsroman* emphasizes the collective cultural progress she attempts to inspire. It does so by explicitly endorsing the notion of "national character" and by offering an enthusiastic audience as a more desirable alternative to a divisive, exclusionary single reader. Because of this approach, *Corinne* anticipates the increasing emphasis on the narrative text as a space of potential plurality, hybridity, and uncertainty. And in this way, the novel begins to work toward a new "discerning of collectivities" that contemporary theorist Gayatri Spivak sees in Virginia Woolf's textual practices and calls for in her own redefinition of comparative literature.

On one level, Staël's novel *Corinne* can be read as an allegory of European national characters. Staël embodies what she understands to be the spirits of England, France, and Italy in an Englishman, a Frenchman, and an Italian, respectively. Her heroine is, of course, established by the novel's title—*Corinne, ou l'Italie*—to be interchangeable with her homeland, so that the correspondence between national character and novelistic character is clear right away. *Corinne*'s plot soon reveals,

however, that the central representative of these national characters is of hybrid origin and remains importantly marked by a bicultural and bilingual education: Corinne is born in Italy to an Italian mother and an English father. After her mother's early death, Corinne lives in Florence with an aunt until at age fifteen she rejoins her father in his tiny Northumberland village. During her time in England, Corinne endures a life of loneliness and restriction in the company of her cold stepmother and timid younger half-sister; when her father dies unexpectedly, she uses her inheritance to return to Italy and establish herself as an independent artist in Rome. It is only after her experience with England that Corinne rises to prominence as a gifted improvisational poet and public intellectual; her years of dormancy and frustrated ambition in England seem to enable a fuller flowering of her artistic genius once it is transplanted to Rome. Yet just when she blossoms into the height of her artistic power and influence, she begins an ill-fated romance with the English Oswald, who eventually abandons her in favor of her purely English sister Lucile. This rejection causes her to wither both physically and intellectually and to die an early death before contributing all we are made to feel she could have given to Italian culture.

I.   National character and European literatures

It is not by accident that a plot summary of *Corinne* fits easily into a botanical analogy, as Staël's conception of national character emphasizes the effects of climate on cultural and political development. Indeed, her most celebrated contribution to literary history is her use of the concept of national character to gather several aesthetic currents together under the sign of "Romanticism." As recent work reclaiming Staël's founding

role in the definition of Romanticism has demonstrated, her monumental book *De L'Allemagne* identified the animating characteristics of recent German literature and philosophy and transformed them into portable principles that would be taken up by cultural leaders in several nations of Europe and beyond.[42] A key German romantic value that Staël exported is the investment in the irreducible individuality of national cultures who are nonetheless moved by a universal poetic spirit.[43] In this scheme, nations develop a culture consistent with their unique combination of climate, history, and political organization, and they interact with other equally singular members in a "federation of organic national cultures."[44] The Romantic celebration of national particularities is usually understood as a reaction against the universalism and the perceived erasure of local differences of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. But Staël's Romanticism, as Joshua Lambier has recently demonstrated, does not reject earlier models of cosmopolitanism out of hand; rather, it revises them by "challeng[ing] the closures of various cultural nationalisms and further problematiz[ing] the presupposition that cosmopolitanism implies the subsumption of cultural difference into a more universal ideal."[45] Staël's insistence on retaining particularity and foreignness in models of cultural translation, even models that still tend towards universalism, brings her project in line with those of her fellow early nineteen-century advocates for European literary exchange, including

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[42] For full accounts of Staël's work of cultural translation in *De L'Allemagne* see John Clairborne Isbell's *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne,' 1810-1813* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Kurt Mueller-Vollmer's "An American National Literature" in *Germaine de Stael: Crossing the Borders* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

[43] See Kurt Mueller-Vollmer's "An American National Literature" in *Germaine de Stael: Crossing the Borders* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 151.

[44] John Clairborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne,' 1810-1813* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

[45] Joshua. Lambier, "Citational Cosmopolitics: Staël, Byron, and the Foreignizing Effect of Cultural Translation," in *Spheres of Action: Speech and Performance in Romantic Culture*, ed.Angela Esterhammer (University of Toronto Press, 2009), 236.

Goethe, who called for "participation" as a mode of foreign reading that emphasizes mutual foreignness, and Carlyle, whose novel of translation revises the *Bildungsroman* into a statement about the difficult yet necessary work of translators and readers.

Staël's conception of Europe as a group of connected national cultures depends on open and accessible channels of communication among nations. As she puts it when exhorting French intellectuals to consider German literature as a viable and valuable source of inspiration, "nous n'en sommes pas, j'imagine, à vouloir éléver autour de la France littéraire, la grande muraille de la Chine, pour empêcher les idées du dehors d'y pénétrer"[46] ["We are far, I imagine, from wanting to erect a Great Wall of China around literary France to keep outside ideas from penetrating"].[47] For Staël here, cultural exchange becomes a key characteristic of European modernity, and the reluctance to engage with other national literatures is dismissed as an orientalized backwardness. And in keeping with her conception of national cultures as continually developing entities, she advocates a perennial incorporation of foreign literatures as a means of revitalization. In the case of France, she says in the introduction to *De l'Allemagne* (1810), "La stérilité dont notre littérature est menacée ferait croire que l'esprit français lui-même aurait besoin d'être renouveler par une sève plus vigoureuse" (12) ["The sterility that threatens our literature leads one to believe that the French spirit itself needs to be renewed by a more vigorous sap"].

This hope for revitalization informs Staël's advocacy for translation in her 1816 article *De l'esprit des traductions*, which was first published in an Italian periodical

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[46] Germaine de Staël. *De l'Allemagne* (Paris: Charpentier, 1839), 12. Further citations in text.
[47] Translations of Staël's theoretical texts and French literary criticism (Vallois, Amend) are my own.

called *Biblioteca italiana*.[48] Staël argues that Italy should renew its national literature by importing foreign works, and she grounds this argument in a statement about the universal value of translation:

> il n'y a pas de plus éminent service à rendre à la littérature, que de transporter d'une langue à l'autre les chefs-d'oeuvre de l'esprit humain. Il existe si peu de productions du premier rang: le génie, de quelque genre que ce soit, est un phénomène tellement rare, que si chaque nation moderne en était réduite à ses propres trésors, elle serait toujours pauvre. D'ailleurs, la circulation des idées est, de tous les genres de commerce, celui dont les avantages sont les plus certains.[49]

> There is no more distinguished service that can be rendered to literature than to convey the masterpieces of the human mind from one language to another. There are so few first-rate works, and genius of any kind is such a rare phenomenon, that if modern nations were limited to their own treasures, they would always be destitute. Furthermore, the circulation of ideas, among all kinds of commerce, is the one with the most certain advantages.

For Staël here, translation allows for the freer circulation of "genius" within the sphere of literary "commerce." In this way, translation into a national language, Italian for example, enriches cultural production at home by introducing innovative ideas and forms, and then translation from Italian into other languages allows for dissemination of the works of those geniuses themselves stimulated by these foreign imports. This system of continual growth and exchange is central to Staël's belief in "la perfectibilité de l'esprit

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[48] For the publication history of this essay, see Levien d' Hulst's *Cent ans de théorie française de la traduction: de Batteaux à Littré (1748-1847)* (Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1990), 85.
[49] Germaine de Staël, "De l'esprit des traductions," in *Oeuvres inédites de Mme la Baronne de Staël*. Vol. 3 (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1821), 335. Futher citations in text.

humain," which she clarifies in the Préface to the second edition of *De la littérature* as consisting of "les progrès successifs de la civilisation dans toutes les classes et dans tous le pays" (15) ["the successive progress of civilization in all classes and all countries"]. Staël's argument here aligns her with her German contemporaries, who during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had come to value translation for its potential contribution to what Schleiermacher calls "the entire intellectual development of a nation."[50] As I discuss in chapter one, Goethe schematizes this developmental narrative when he identifies translation as the key mechanism driving a recognizable progression of cultural relations. In *West-Öslicher Divan* (1819), he outlines three epochs of translation through which any configuration of source and target literatures must progress before achieving the "highest and final" epoch. In that last stage, for Goethe, "the aim is to make the original identical with the translation, so that one would not be valued instead of the other, but in the other's stead."[51] Like Schleiermacher and Goethe, Staël invests translation with the power to drive a nation's cultural development, but where she is innovative is in her understanding of pleasure as the hinge between singular and plural moral and political development.

The intellectual progress that Staël envisions takes place first of all on the level of nations and civilizations, but in her essay on translation she also identifies a certain individual pleasure to be had in reading foreign literature in one's own language:

> [L]ors même qu'on entendrait bien les langues étrangères, on pourrait goûter
>
> encore, par une traduction bien faite dans sa propre langue, un plaisir plus familier

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[50] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating," trans. Susan Bernofsky, in *The Translation Studies Reader*. Second Edition, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge. 2004), 55.

[51] Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, "Translations," trans. Sharon Sloan, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, Second Edition, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge. 2004), 66.

et plus intime. Ces beautés naturalisées donnent au style national des tournures nouvelles et des expressions plus originales. Les traductions des poètes étrangers peuvent, plus efficacement que tout autre moyen, préserver la littérature d'un pays de ces tournures banales qui sont les signes les plus certains de la décadence.

(337)

Even if one understands foreign languages well, a well-executed translation into one's own language can provide a more familiar and intimate pleasure. Its naturalized beauty gives a national style new turns of phrase and more original expressions. Translations of foreign poets, more effectively than any other method, can protect a nation's literature against those banal turns of phrase that are the surest signs of decadence.

Since the translation uses the native language in new ways, it can reveal aspects of that language once unfamiliar to the reader. And because it works to make the mother tongue new again, the individual reader's pleasure of discovery is not a superfluous one; rather, it is essential to the revitalizing force of translation. This seductive balance of the familiar and the unfamiliar maintains the educated reader's interest in his or her own national language by continually revealing its horizon of potential innovation. Reading in translation is thus an important supplement to reading in foreign languages because it drives the forward-thinking intellectual work necessary to a thriving national literature. The translated text, like the heroine who personifies it, connects the individual reader's personal pleasure in language to the larger enterprise of literary innovation; this movement beyond self is central to Staël's definition of "enthusiasm" as a collective aesthetic and emotional experience. Much as it will for later novelists, including George

Eliot, who take language difference as a crucially narratable difference, translation does its moral pedagogical work for Staël by appealing to the reader's social imagination.

For Staël literary innovation is fueled by the search for the aesthetic pleasures of variety and development, so her use of the novel in particular as a vehicle for her argument about the potential greatness of Italian literature is entirely fitting. The parallelism between the projects of *De l'Allemagne* (1810) and *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (1807) is apparent not only in the nation-centered titles but also in the chapter titles. *De l'Allemagne* consists of four sections: "De l'Allemagne et des moeurs des Allemands," "La littérature et les arts," "La Philosophie et la morale," and "La Religion et l'enthousiasme." The repetition of the early chapter titles of her novel is striking; *Corinne* includes chapters called "Les Moeurs et le caractère des Italiens," "La littérature italienne," "Les Tombeaux, les églises et les palais, "Les Statues et les tableaux," and "La Fête populaire et la musique." The encyclopedic conceit carries over from essay to novel and makes clear *Corinne*'s investment in introducing its readers to the breadth of Italian culture. This goal also shapes the novel's structure, as the chapters of interest here slow the narrative pace dramatically and diverge from the romance plot to offer detailed ekphrastic and historical lectures on Italy's cultural landmarks as the characters move among them.

The use of a representative individual's moral and intellectual development to comment on the workings of national culture is of course not unique to Staël's novel— this analogy, as I have discussed, structures the genre of the *Bildungsroman*. Nor even is *Corinne* Staël's first work to establish an explicit analogy between individual and nation; indeed, she had theorized as early as 1796 in *Sur l'influence des passions sur le bonheur*

des individus et des nations that the happiness of the individual and of the nation can be properly considered in a single work because "une nation présente le caractère d'un homme, et que la force du gouvernement doit agir sur elle, comme la puissance de la raison d'un individu sur lui-même" (15-16)[52] ["a nation represents a man's character and the force of the government acts on a nation as the power of the individual's reason acts on him"]. But *Corinne* marks an innovation in Staël's thinking about the individual as allegory for the nation because she for the first time uses fictional narrative as a framework for relating biography and history. Furthermore, *Corinne* immediately complicates the allegory by undoing the one-to-one correspondence between character and nation. When she makes Corinne both English and Italian, Staël designates language difference and cultural difference as conditions that require narration in some fundamental way, yet the narrative that Corinne's linguistic hybridity produces ultimately cannot provide closure without destroying Corinne herself. For D.A. Miller, the "narratable" designates "the instances of disequilibrium, suspense, and general insufficiency from which a given narrative appears to arise";[53] narratable differences, like Corinne's doubleness, are those "problems of closure" that themselves start the story going. Since her heroine has two homes, both partly foreign to her, Staël's narrative departs in its very conception from the classical *Bildungsroman* template that Franco Moretti outlines. Corinne cannot enact the genre-defining dialectic of travel abroad and return home. She seems ideally positioned, therefore, to offer an alternative to that

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[52] Germaine de Staël, *Sur l'influence des passions sur le Bonheur des individus et des nations* (Lausanne, Switzerland: Jean Mouret, 1796), 15.

[53] D.A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*. (Princeton University Press, 1981), *ix*.

narrative of assimilation and foreclosed reading. Instead, it is bad reading of translation on the part of others that kills her.

Yota Batsaki has recently addressed this question of language difference in *Corinne* and explains just how the novel's plot unfolds within the narratable problem of language difference: "One might sum up the erotic plot of Corinne in linguistic terms as follows: the love affair begins with a sentence of flawless English, rises in intrigue with Corinne's English-accented French, is thwarted by Corinne's perfect bilingualism in English and Italian, and reaches its climax in the native accent that reveals to Oswald her doomed pursuit."[54] Corinne's accent in spoken language—she sounds native in both English and Italian, the narrator tells us, but speaks French with an English accent—is essential to the romance plot because it both confounds and entrances her English suitor. Batsaki dwells on the moments that reveal Corinne's accent in order to demonstrate Staël's investment in her heroine's singularity as well as the reverse of that singularity, that is, Corinne's unrepresentable hybridity; the novel, Batsaki concludes, "can be read as an extended personification of the promise and failure of translation" (28).

Batsaki's treatment of the narration of language difference in *Corinne* shows how exile becomes productive for Staël as both an experience and a theoretical concept. Thus she does not have occasion to dwell on how language difference shapes the narrative of *Corinne* in ways that deviate from available generic models and create a reading experience as singular as the heroine whose strange story it tells. My own reading makes a more extreme claim about the importance of narrative structure to Staël's portrait of linguistic difference. *Corinne* asserts that the sustainability of productive hybridity—the

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[54] Yota Batsaki, "Exile as the Inaudible Accent in Germaine de Staël's Corinne, ou l'Italie," Comparative Literature 61, no.1 (Winter 2009): 38. Further citations in text.

opportunity for a national culture to benefit from its incorporation of the foreign—relies

on an openness to uncertainty, and *Corinne*'s narrative seduces readers into this openness

by continually revealing what is novel and pleasurable about its form. Corinne can

survive only where she is not forced to choose a single nationality to inhabit, and denied

this space, she can contribute to neither national culture to which she has access. Oswald

may fail to allow Corinne's difference to influence the direction of his own life story, but

the novel nonetheless offers the reader the opportunity to experience the pleasurable

unfamiliarity of the translated text.

II.   Corinne's charming self-translation

The linguistic texture of *Corinne* is most visible where the narrative interest is

highest, and at such moments the text draws attention not only to its own multilingualism

but also to its status as narrative. One key scene takes place as Oswald, newly arrived in

Rome, first glimpses Corinne during her coronation as poet laureate at the Capitol. As

Oswald absorbs the rumors circulating about Corinne in the crowd waiting for her to

arrive at the Capitol, the text compares his attitude of suspended judgment to the piqued

interest of a reader: "Il aurait jugé très sévèrement une telle femme en Angleterre, mais il

n'appliquait à l'Italie aucune des convenances sociales; et le couronnement de Corinne

lui inspirait d'avance l'intérêt que ferait naître une aventure de l'Arioste"[55] ["In England

he would have judged such a woman severely, but he did not apply any social

conventions to Italy. He looked forward to Corinne's coronation with the same

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[55] Germaine de Staël. *Corinne, ou l'Italie*, ed. Simone Balayé. (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), 51. Further citations in text.

expectation he would have brought to one of Ariosto's tales of adventure"].[56] At this early moment, before he has even seen her, Oswald's narrative interest in Corinne is impersonal and participates in the Roman public's celebration of her as their poet laureate. Described by an admirer as "un rejeton du passé, une prophétie de l'avenir"(57) ["an offspring of the past, prophet of the future"(25)], Corinne embodies Italy's potential restoration to a literary golden age. Her capacity to connect past, present, and future in the collective literary imagination of her Italian public, however, quickly becomes personal for Oswald, and her unaccented English inspires fantasies of continuity as he wonders, "que serait-ce donc s'il pouvait à la fois retrouver les souvenirs de sa patrie, et recevoir par l'imagination une vie nouvelle, renaître pour l'avenir, sans rompre avec le passé!" (69) ["what if he could recover memories of his native land and at the same time gain a new life through the imagination; what if he could be reborn to the future and yet not break with the past?" (33)]. Once she has been partly "naturalisée" (69) for him, Corinne's foreignness becomes newly attractive because it promises to revitalize what is already familiar to him in his own language and "patrie," from which he has been wandering alienated since the death of his father. Just as for Staël a translation can renew a national literature by introducing "de nouvelles tournures," so Corinne promises to renew Oswald's attachment to life in England, or so he here imagines when he "trouvait Corinne pleine de grace et d'une grace qui lui était nouvelle" (75) ["finds Corinne full of grace and of a grace new to him"].[57] From the beginning, relations between the two main characters depend on the balancing of foreign and familiar elements, and their particular

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[56] Germaine de Staël. *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. Avriel Goldberger (Rutgers University Press, 1987), 20. Further citations in text.

[57] This is my own deliberately literal translation of the French; Goldberger offers a translation that is more elegant if less attentive to the stylistic hiccup born of Oswald's mixed impressions: "Oswald found Corinne charming in a way entirely new to him" (38).

romance thematizes the capacity of romance narratives in general to create intimacy out of unfamiliarity.

Corinne's familiar novelty generates in Oswald an ambivalent desire to cultivate an intimacy that would introduce him into the narrative of her life. As he watches her perform the public ceremonies of her coronation, he finds himself strangely moved and inspired to extend this protective intimacy around her: "au milieu de tout cet éclat, de tous ces succès, il lui semblait que Corinne avait imploré, par ses regards, la protection d'un ami, protection dont jamais une femme, quelque supérieure qu'elle soit, ne peut se passer" (54) ["in the midst of all the splendor and all her success, Corinne's eyes pleaded for the protection of a friend, a protection no woman can ever do without, however superior she may be" (22)]. Furthermore, he resents the public's seemingly easy insertion of Corinne into existing cultural forms:

Tous [les poëtes] l'exaltaient jusques aux cieux; mais ils lui donnaient des louanges qui ne la caractérisaient pas plus qu'une autre femme d'un génie supérieur. C'était une agréable réunion d'images et d'allusions à la mythologie, qu'on aurait pu, depuis Sapho jusqu'à nos jours, addreser de siècle en siècle à toutes les femmes que leurs talent littéraires ont illustrées. Déjà lord Nelvil souffrait de cette manière de louer Corinne; il lui semblait déjà qu'en la regardant it aurait fait à l'instant même un portrait d'elle plus vrai, plus juste, plus détaillé, un portrait enfin qui ne pût convenir qu'à Corinne. (54)

[All of [the poets of Rome] lauded her to the skies, but the terms of their praise might have described any woman of genius just as well. There was a pleasant mixture of images and mythological allusions which could have been addressed

over the centuries to any woman renowned for her literary talent, from Sappho's

day to her own. Such praise of Corinne distressed Lord Nelvil, for already he

thought that just by looking at her he could have done a portrait more accurate,

ture, and detailed, a portrait that would fit no one but Corinne. (24)]

The coronation scene, in these passages and throughout, is narrated consistently from

Oswald's perspective, and the focalized narrator carefully marks the personal quality of

Oswald's attention to Corinne, distinguishing it as more authentic than the generalized

praise offered by Italian dignitaries. Again, his attitude towards Corinne recalls Staël's

argument that translations generate "familiar and intimate" pleasures in their readers.

Though Staël clearly values national "gloire" and the public recognition of talent,

she also privileges the pursuit of knowledge and understanding through personal over

impersonal means; this mode of learning sparks the imagination in a way that study alone

cannot, as the narrator claims during the scene of Oswald's first visit to the Roman ruins:

"Les souvenirs de l'esprit sont acquis par l'étude. Les souvenirs de l'imagination naissent

d'une impression plus immédiate et plus intime qui donne de la vie à la pensée, et nous

rend, pour ainsi dire, témoins de ce que nous avons appris" (111) ["The mind acquires its

memories through study ; the imaginations's memories are born of a mroe immediate and

deep-seated impression that gives life to thought and makes us into a kind of witness to

what we have learned" (64)]. In this account, emotional engagement transforms the

process of learning into a series of events to be witnessed and, potentially, retold. The

first half of the novel demonstrates Staël's privileging of the personal by weaving

together Oswald's romance with Corinne and his tourist's education in Italian art, culture,

and society; the landscape and cultural patrimony of her chosen homeland become

deliberate tools of seduction that Corinne employs in order to "fix" Oswald in Italy (90), and the narrator tells us that it is Corinne's letter inviting Oswald on a tour off Roman landmarks that establishes the couple's "intimité" (93).

In Oswald's case, the pleasures of familiar novelty give rise to a troubling confusion about the frameworks he habitually uses to understand his social surroundings. He bristles at the ritualized public praise of Corinne and wants to understand her singularity, which he senses requires a new interpretative frame "fitted [to] no one but Corinne." Yet though he can ask, "peut-on faire des lois pour une personne unique?" (86) ["can laws be made for a person is unique?" (45)]. Oswald's romantic interest in Corinne as a difficult hybrid text never truly breaks with his inherited generic models and moralizing aesthetics. As he takes in Italian art and culture, he is left dissatisfied because, as the narrator tells us, "Il cherchait partout un sentiment moral, et tout la magie des arts ne pouvait jamais lui suffire" (116) ["he looked for moral feeling everywhere, and all the magic of the arts could never satisfy him" (68)]. And during a long discussion of European literatures in Corinne's salon, we see that he persists in reading her as a lapsed heroine and in reading Italy as a nation incapable of producing novels: "dans cette nation où l'on ne pense qu'à l'amour, il n'y a pas un seul roman, parceque l'amour y est si rapide, si public, qu'il en prête à aucun genre de développement, et que, pour peindre véritablement les moeurs générales à cet égard, il faudrait commencer et finir dans la première page" (153) ["in a country where people think of nothing but love, there is not a single novel, because love proceeds at such high speed and is so public that it does not lend itself to any kind of development, and to portray truthfully the way people act, you would have to begin and end on page one" (96)]. Oswald fails to imagine sustainable

novelistic plots beyond those that narrate the redemption of virtuous love through marriage and domestication; he sees the possibility of restoration and continuity but cannot envision a novel that proposes any more fundamental transformation. In effect, he is incapable of imagining any development, any foreign experience that leads a protagonist elsewhere than back home. By so clearly revealing Oswald's limitations as a reader, Staël signals her own novel's investment in just the sort of narrative transformation that its flawed hero cannot accommodate.

Oswald's limited tolerance for difference and ambiguity in his love object recalls Staël's critique of specifically English translation practices in her 1816 essay. She finds English translators of classical literature superior to their French counterparts; French translators, she says, convey none of a text's "caractère étranger" and reap none of its potential "nourishment" because they cannot, or will not, allow another language to defamiliarize the structure or vocabulary of French poetic language. This dismissal on her part aligns with Schleiermacher's critique of French translation practices that produced "les belles infidèles," translations that neatly fulfill domestic aesthetic expectations but remain uninterested in unfamiliar elements that might complicate these conventions. The English, by contrast, manage to resist this sterilizing domestication of ancient poetic language; however they still fail, Staël says, to capture the strangeness born of the text's historical distance:

> Les Anglais […] auraient pu enricher leur littérature de traductions exactes et naturelles tout ensemble; mais leurs grands auteurs n'ont point entrepris ce travail; et Pope, le seul qui s'y soit consacré, a fait deux beaux poèmes de *L'Iliade* et de *L'Odyssée*; mais il n'y a point conservé cette antique simplicité qui nous fait

sentir le secret de la supériorité d'Homère. […] il y avait quelque chose de primitif dans les traditions, dans les moeurs, dans les opinions, dans l'air de cet époque, dont le charme est inépuisable, et c'est ce début du genre humain, cette jeunesse du temps qui renouvelle dans notre âme, en lisant Homère, une sorte d'émotion pareille à celle que nous éprouvons par les souvenirs de notre propre enfance […] Si vous ôtez à la composition la simplicité des premiers jours du monde, ce qu'elle a d'unique disparaît. (339-340)

The English […] could have enriched their literature with precise yet natural translations, but their great authors have not undertaken this task; and Pope, the only one of them who did devote himself to it, made two beautiful poems of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but he did not preserve that ancient simplicity that makes us feel the secret of Homer's superiority […] There was something primitive in the traditions, in the mores, in the opinions, in the air of that time whose charm is inexhaustible, and it is this beginning of humankind, this youth of ages that in reading Homer renews in our spirits the same kind of emotion we feel for our own childhood memories […] If you remove this simplicity of human origins from the composition, it loses what makes it unique.

For Staël here, the singularity of a text, the trace it registers of its time and place, inheres in the "emotion" it conjures, and the success of a translation depends on its reproduction of that same emotion. Pope's Homeric translations lack a necessary sensitivity to the "charm" that characterizes the poems' moment of composition, and English translation practices in general deny readers of translation an opportunity to imagine the sensibility of another age.

Oswald's failure to acknowledge the formal legitimacy of a sensibility unlike his own is akin to Pope's failure to acknowledge the "preserv[ation] of that ancient simplicity" as part of his task as a translator. But whereas Pope as translator misses his occasion to charm readers of his translation into the instructive analogy between biographical and historical narratives, that emotional spark that Staël insists unites childhood memories and ancient poetry, Oswald as a reader of Corinne *does* feel the novelistic interest in her that facilitates the nourishment through difference schematized in *De l'esprit des traductions*. He does not, however, ultimately allow his having known Corinne to alter the narrative trajectory of his own life, so that though he expects a specifically Italian superficiality of feeling in Corinne, Oswald himself is revealed as too weak-willed to act on emotions that threaten his allegiance to English social conventions and to his dead father.

This failure amounts to a refusal to acknowledge the coherence—the potential orderly narrative progression—of the cultural codes he witnesses in Italy. He continually suspects Corinne herself of "légèreté" and changeability, as when he hears in her conviction to enjoy their present happiness "la possibilité d'un demi-sentiment, d'un attrait momentané" (93) ["the possibility of superfical feeling, of momentary attraction" (52)]. This assumption that Corinne's love, as Italian love, cannot be plotted denies its potential to acquire meaning according to Peter Brooks' concept of "the anticipation of retrospection." This mechanism is, Brooks proposes, "our chief tool in making sense of narrative, the master trope of its strange logic" which is born of our assurance that "what remains to be read will restructure the provisional meanings of the already read."[58] When

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[58] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 23.

he suspects Corinne of being changeable, Oswald questions whether she can ultimately supply the fullness of meaning that her "charming" presence seems to promise. A failure on this score, that is a failure to become a recognizable English lady once married to him, would disrupt Oswald's eventual transformation into an English lord after the pattern of his father, whereas Oswald never doubts that his intended English bride Lucile will become the ideal domestic companion his father predicted her to be. For Brooks, narrative plotting always works toward "the restoration of the possibility of transmission, a goal achieved by […] successful transformations"; furthermore, "the translations of narrative, its slidings-across in the transformatory process of its plot, its movements forward that recover markings from the past in the play of anticipation and retrospection, lead to a final situation where the claim to understanding is incorporate with the claim to transmissibility."[59] Oswald's hesitation between the too-suitable Lucile and the perhaps-never-suitable Corinne reveals his anxieties about the stakes of this "transformatory" process. Ironically, it is his marriage to Lucile that, if left uncomplicated by Oswald's detours to the continent, would resist narration because it requires no processes of change to acquire meaning.

On the other hand, a union with Corinne threatens to transform not Corinne but Oswald into a monstrous expatriate, according to his father's warning in a letter left in the safekeeping of a family friend. In this letter, Lord Nelvil, Sr. envisions Oswald's fate as Corinne's husband in Italy: "'Quel sort pour un habitant de nos montagnes, que de traîner une vie oisive au sein des plaisirs de l'Italie! Un Écossais *sigisbé* de sa femme, s'il ne l'est pas de celle d'un autre ! Inutile à sa famille, dont il n'est plus ni le guide ni l'appui!'" (467) ["What a fate for a man from our mountain to drag out an idle life in the lap of

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[59] Ibid., 28.

Italy's pleasures! A Scotsman playing his wife's *cicisbeo*, if he is not dancing attendance

on some other man's wife! Of no use to his family, since he is no longer its guide or its

sustaining strength!" (330)]. The French word "sigisbé," used to encapsulate Oswald's

father's fears, is the French equivalent of the Italian "cicisbeo," which refers to a man

who fills the established role of devoted companion to another man's wife.[60] The word's

etymology is contested, but sources have variously traced its origins to the Italian "cece"

or "chickpea," to the French expression "chiche beau," or to the Venetian dialect's

onomatopoetic word "cici," which means "bavardage" or "chatter." Voltaire popularized

the French word "sigisbé" when he used it as an ironic definition for "amour" in his

Dictionnaire philosophique. As this loaded word suggests, the threat that Corinne

represents is one of miscarried transformation, of bad translation that confuses categories

and results in meaningless chatter.

The narrative voice clearly attributes the non-viability of the union between

Corinne and Oswald not to Corinne's failures as a translated text but to Oswald's

shortcomings as a reader. Indeed, from the beginning of their interactions, Corinne

invites Oswald to understand her multilingualism within the context of her particular

biographical experiences. When he exhorts her to address him in her perfect English, she

replies, "Je vous parlerai anglais quelquefois, mais pas toujours; l'italien m'est cher: j'ai

beaucoup souffert pour vivre en Italie" (74) ["I will speak English to you occasionally,

but not always; Italian is dear to me: I have suffered a great deal to live in Italy" (37)].

And when he questions what appears to him an arbitrary variability in her choice of

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[60] See Silvana Patriarca for an account of how the "cicisbeo" became "a symbol of the moral and political degradation that [Italian] patriots wanted to eradicate" ("Indolence and Regeneration: Tropes and Tensions of Risorgimento Patriotism," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 400.)

language, she explains, "quand on a comme moi parlé plusieurs années de sa vie deux ou

trois langues différentes, l'une ou l'autre est inspirée par les sentiments que l'on doit

exprimer" (73) ["when a person has spoken two or three different languages over a

number of years as I have, one or ther other is called forth by the feelings one wants to

express" (36)]. Like the successful translations that Staël praises, Corinne uses language

to convey a particular emotional experience, and she resists inflecting her style solely to

cater to the conscious preferences of her audience. Instead, she composes and behaves—

the narrator frequently stresses the union of her life and her art—in a way that

strategically introduces unfamiliar elements into her self-presentation and, in the case of

Oswald, her presentation of Italy. During the long travelogue chapters, we are told that

Corinne uses "ses innocents ruses pour varier les amusements d'Oswald" (215)

["innocent ploys […] to vary Oswald's diversions" (141)] and "voulut intéresser de

nouveau son esprit et son imagination par les merveilles des beaux-arts qu'il n'avait point

encore vus, et retarder ainsi l'instant où le sort devait s'éclaircir et se décider" ["decided

to engage his mind and imagination once more through the marvels of art he had not yet

seen, and so put off the moment when their fate must be decided and made clear"

(141)].[61]

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[61] On Corinne as "seductrice," see Marie Claire Vallois, who reads the novel's tragic outcome as punishment for her transgressive pursuit to make Oswald love her not only as a woman but as a woman-poet. Her revolt against paternal law is more extreme than Oswald's because "si Oswald transgresse la loi comme Oedipe, par ignorance, Corinne la provoque réellement. On voit donc s'esquisser un double scénario du conflit oedipien, dont la résolution, normale chez le héros masculin, se trouve remise en question par le comportement de l'héroïne" ["if Oswald transgresses the law out of ignorance, as Oedipus does, then Corinne challenges it more positively. We thus see outlined a doubled plot of Oedipal conflict, in which the masculine hero's normal resolution is called into question by the behavior of the heroine"]. In *Fictions féminines: Madame de Staël et les voix de la Sibylle*. (Saratoga, California: Anma Libri, 1987), 121.

Despite her efforts, Corinne knows Oswald is resisting her efforts to enter the narrative of his life. She grasps, along with the narrator, the strange alternate temporality of Oswald's love for her, which we are told "répand un tel charme sur chaque minute, que bien qu'il ait besoin d'un avenir indéfini, il s'enivre du présent, et reçoit un jour comme un siècle de bonheur ou de peine, tant ce jour est rempli par une multitude d'émotions et d'idées! Ah! Sans doute c'est par l'amour que l'éternité peut être comprise; il confond toutes hes notions du temps; il efface les idées de commencement et de fin" (215) ["casts such charm over each minute, that, requiring an indefinite future, it still revels in the present — welcoming a day as if it were a century of happiness or sorrrow, so full is that day of a host of feelings and thoughts! Unquestionably, it is through love that we can understand eternity! Love muddles all sense of time; it erases the notion of beginning and end" (141)]. Later, the same language of immediacy and deferral conveys Corinne's private doubts about the strength of Oswald's attachment to her: "Enfin elle sentait que tout son pouvoir venait de son charme, et qu'est-ce que ce pouvoir en absence? Qu'est-ce que les souvenirs de l'imagination, lorsque l'on est cerné de toutes parts par la force et la réalité d'un ordre social, d'autant plus dominateur, qu'il est fondé sur des idées nobles et pures?" (397) ["She sensed that in the long run, her charm was the source of all her power, and what power could it exert in her absence? What do memories and imagination mean when one is closed in on all sides by the force and reality of a social order that dominates all the more for being founded on noble and pure ideas? " (278).] The blurring of the narrative commentary with the free indirect discourse focalized through Corinne's character suggests the heroine's keen awareness of the limits of her power to influence Oswald's sense of his own proper "beginning and end." And

indeed, when Oswald leaves Corinne and returns to England to determine whether he can reconcile marriage to her with respect for his father's wishes, the narrator tells us:

> l'anné qu'il venait de passer en Italie n'était en relation avec aucune autre époque de sa vie. C'était comme une apparition brillante qui avait frappé son imagination, mais n'avait pu changer entièrement les opinions ni les goûts dont son existence s'était composée jusqu'alors. Il se retrouvait lui-même; et, bien que le regret d'être séparé de Corinne l'empêchât d'éprouver aucune impression de bonheur, il reprenait pourtant une sorte de fixité dans les idées, que le vague enivrant des beaux-arts et de l'Italie avait fait disparaître. (447)

> The year spend in Italy had no connection to any other period in his life. It was like a dazzling apparition that had struck his imagination without completely changing teither the opinions or the tastes that had shaped his existence until that time. He was himself again, and although he missed Corinne enouch to preclude any sense of happiness, he was recovering a rigidity of thought that had vanished under the intoxicating wave of Italy and the arts. (315)

As a sort of self-translating text, strategically mediating between the Italian and the English elements of her art and personality, Corinne adheres to the principles of translation that Staël advocates, yet her audience, Oswald, remains ultimately unaffected by the novelty she offers him.

III.   Italian enthusiasm and communal improvisation

The middle sections of the novel introduce the heroes' back-stories, which establish the paternal interdiction against their union. Oswald delivers a long speech to

Corinne about his failed engagement to a Parisian woman during his travels in Revolutionary France, and Corinne writes Oswald a confessional letter that details both her experiences in England as a teenager and her period of independence as a poet in Rome. Her uneasy and incomplete integration into the domestic life of her father's English family includes several scenes that characterize resistance to outside cultural influences as a particularly English attitude, rather than a trait unique to Oswald. When she attempts to explain to her step-mother Lady Edgermond and others in her milieu her decision against marrying an older English landowner, Corinne finds that, "Quelquefois je me faisais comprendre quand je parlais; mais dès que j'étais partie, ce que j'avais dit ne laissait aucune trace; car les idées habituelles rentraient aussitôt dans les têtes de mes auditeurs, et ils recevaient avec un nouveau plaisir ces anciennes connaissances que j'avais un moment écartées" (375) ["Occasionally I might make myself understood when I spoke, but as soon as I left, conventional ideas filed up my listeners' heads again, and what I had said left absolutely no trace ; indeed they took fresh pleasure in the old ideas I had momentarily displaced" (262).]. Here, it is Corinne's spoken language—precisely the gift most appreciated by her Italian audiences—that leaves no trace in the minds of her English interlocuters; whatever efforts she makes to be understood, her words are erased and replaced by substitutes that satisfy expectations and affirm prior assumptions, even giving pleasure in their pure familiarity.

When her words are too obviously different to be silently normalized in this way, Corinne herself is removed from the social situation whose conventions she implicitly challenges. In one instance, her attempts to enliven dinner conversation by reciting Italian verse meet with a strict reprimand from Lady Edgermond, who "knew a little Italian"

(253) and immediately calls for the withdrawal of the party's women from the dining room. In her letter to Oswald, Corinne recalls her naive surprise at this extreme reaction: "je citai dans la conversation des vers italiens très purs, très délicats, mais dans lesquels il était question d'amour" (362) ["I quoted a few verses in Italian; they were very pure, very elegant, but their subject was love" (253)]. From her perspective, love poetry could find no better-suited audience than the assembly of educated men and women at a dinner party, but her step-mother scolds her for not knowing that "les jeunes personnes […] ne devaient jamais se permetter de citer des ves où le mot d'amour était prononcé" ["it was improper for them to quote verse where the word love appeared" (253)]; her father prescribes a more general self-restraint, instructing her that "tout ce qui attire l'attention excite l'envie, et vous ne trouveriez pas du tout à vous marier, si l'on croyait que vous avez des goûts étrangers à nos moeurs" (363-4) ["whatever attracts attention stirs up envy, and you would never find anyone to marry you if people thought your tastes were foreign to our customs" (253)]. Both responses imply that Corinne's aesthetic sensibility and cultural norms cannot thrive in an English household and that literary representations of Italian "amour" cannot be accommodated by accepted narratives of life in England. The Edgermonds' familiarity with Italian language and culture—Corinne's father lived for twelve years in Italy—does not inspire them to greater tolerance for Corinne's differences; instead it makes them more effective guardians against any influence she may exert over the course of their lives. Despite his longer stay in Italy, Corinne's father proves hardly more willing than Oswald to integrate Italian customs or ideas into his English domestic life. Both her father and her lover follow the generic conventions of the classical *Bildungsroman*, in which the hero travels abroad and interacts with a foreign

culture, only to return home more willing to assimilate into bourgeois domesticity. In the case of Corinne's father, Corinne herself is the only permanent trace of his engagement with another culture.

The rejection of Corinne's Italian words and ideas by the English provincial class contrasts markedly with the warm reception of her work by her Italian audiences. Corinne voices Staël's conceptions of the two nations' characteristic orientation towards innovation in art when she explains to Oswald that her optimism about Italian culture is inspired by its "enthousiasme pour le talent" (165). In Italy, she says, "on n'y trouve point l'imagination blasée, l'esprit décourageant, ni la médiocrité despotique, qui sait si bien ailleurs tourmenter ou étouffer le génie naturel. Une idée, un sentiment, une expression heureuse prennent feu pour ainsi dire parmi les auditeurs (165). ["One does not find here any trace of the blasé imagination, the disheartening spirit, or the tyrannical mediocrity that so effectively torment or choke off native genius elsewhere. An idea, a feeling, a felicitous expression catch fire, if you will, among one's listeners" (104)]. Here the audience participates in artistic innovation by contributing to an atmosphere of "enthusiasm" that further stimulates the artist, and this conception of audience collaboration informs Corinne experience as a performer of poetry, which she explains in this way:

> l'improvisation est pour moi comme une conversation animée. Je ne me laisse
> point astreindre à tel ou tel sujet, je m'abandonne à l'impression que produit sur
> moi l'intérêt de ceux qui m'écoutent, et c'est à mes amis que je dois sur-tout en ce
> genre la plus grande partie de mon talent […] Je crois éprouver alors un
> enthousiasme surnaturel, et je sens bien que ce qui parle en moi vaut mieux que

moi même; souvent il m'arrive de quitter le rythme de la poésie et d'exprimer ma

pensée en prose; quelquefois je cite le plus beaux vers des diverses langues qui

me sont connues. Ils sont à moi, ces vers divins, dont mon âme s'est pénétrée.

(84-5)

for me improvisation is like a lively conversation. I do not let myself be bound to

any one subject; I go along with the impression my listeners' interest makes on

me, and it is to my friends that I owe most of my talent, particularly in this genre

[..] At such times it seems to me that I am experiencing a supernatural

enthusiasm, and I sense full well that what is speaking within me has a value

beyond myself. Often I happen to quit the rhythm of poetry and express my

thought in prose. Sometimes I quote the lovliest lines of the different languages I

am familiar with. They are mine, those divine verses pervading my soul. (45-6)

Enthusiasm is a communal enterprise that requires the sympathetic interest of an audience

and the willing self-expansion[62] of the speaker, who becomes a mediator for multiple

voices that speak in a variety of styles and languages.

With this understanding of literature and the arts, Corinne voices the vision for

Italy that Staël elaborates in her essay on translation, where she proposes the arts as a

source of national salvation for the country:

Les Italiens sont très-enthousiastes de leur langue; de grands hommes l'ont fait

valoir, et les distinctions de l'esprit ont été les seules jouissances, et souvent aussi

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[62] Staël emphasizes the idea of "expansion" when she notes the etymology of "enthousiasme" in *De l'Allemagne*: "Le sens de ce mot chez les Grecs en est la plus noble définition: L'enthousiasme signifie *Dieu en nous*. En effet, quand l'existence de l'homme est expansive elle a quelque chose de divin." Her discussion of this etymology is quoted in Anne Amend's "Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël," in *Le Groupe de Coppet et L'Europe, 1789-1830*. Ed. Simone Balayé and Kurt Kloocke. (Paris: Jean Touzot, 1994), 271.

les seules consolations, de la nation italienne. Afin que chaque homme capable de

penser se sente un motif pour se développer lui-même, il faut que toutes les

nations aient un principe actif d'intérêt: les une sont militaires, les autres

politiques. Les Italiens doivent se faire remarquer par la littérature et les beaux-

arts; sinon leur pays tomberait dans une sorte d'apathie dont le soleil même

pourrait à peine le réveiller (399)

The Italians are very enthusiastic about their language; great men have ennobled

it, and intellectual pleasures have been the only pleasures, and often the only

consolations, of the Italian nation. In order for every thinking man to feel the

importance of educating himself, all nations must have an active area of interest:

some are military, others political. Italians must distinguish themselves in

literature and fine arts; otherwise their country will fall into an apathy from which

even the sunshine cannot awaken it.

Staël suggests further that theater is the most effective venue for a revitalization of Italian

literature because it facilitates the communal enthusiasm that drives literary innovation.

Corinne explains in the novel's chapter on Italian literature, "La littérature dramatique

doit être populaire; elle est comme un événement public, toute la nation en doit juger"

(190) ["Dramatic literature must be popular; it is like a public event, and so to be judged

by the whole nation" (123)].

In keeping with this conviction, Corinne undertakes the staging of her own

translation into Italian of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in order to demonstrate,

through a sort of literary experiment, that "Loin de diminuer sur le théâtre italien les

plaisirs de l'imagination, il me semble qu'il faudrait au contraire les augmenter et les

multiplier de toutes les manières"(189) ["Far from diminishing the pleasures of the imagination in the Italian theatre, I think that, on the contrary, they should be increased and multiplied in every way" (122)]. Disposed to catch the spark of enthusiasm, the Italian public is ideally positioned to benefit from an importation of foreign drama, and indeed, Corinne's *Romeo and Juliet* inspires exactly the reception as a national cultural event that its translator hopes for: "Jamais tragédie n'avait produit un tel effet en Italie. Les Romains exaltaient avec transport la traduction, et la pièce, et l'actrice. Ils disaient que c'était là véritablement la tragédie qui convenait aux Italiens, peignait leur moeurs, remuait leur ame en captivant leur imagination, et faisait valoir leur belle langue par un style tour à tour éloquent et lyrique, inspiré et naturel" (200) ["Never had tragedy produced such an effect in Italy. Rapturously the Romans extolled the translation, the play, the actress. They said that this was truly the tragedy suited to Italians, portraying their ways, strirring their souls by enthralling their imagination, and making the most of their beautiful language with a style in turn eloquent and lyric, inspired an natural" (130)].

Beyond the response of its particularly Italian audience, which is easily predictable given Staël's ideological investment in translation as a means for enriching national literatures, the scene of the play's performance demonstrates, with its strange alternation of perspectives, the workings of "enthusiasm," the emotional response that so crucially influences the circulation of literature in Staël's scheme. Shakespeare as interpreter of Italy understands what his compatriot Oswald cannot, that the rapidity and multiplicity of aesthetic impressions Staël sees as characteristic of Italian sensibility is not evidence of a "légéreté" or "frivolité" of emotions but rather prove a "fécondité" and

a "développement" of mind and expression. Shakespeare's rare appreciation of the nature of Italian culture inspires a dramatic text of unusual vibrancy, whose style contains "un éclat d'expression qui caractérise et le pays et les habitants" (194) ["a brilliance of language peculiar to this country and its people" (126)]. Appropriated here as an adopted Italian artist, Shakespeare produces work that "traduite en italien, semblait rentrer dans sa langue maternelle" (194) ["translated into Italian, seemed[63] to return to its native tongue" (126)]. Just as Corinne's time in England informs her composition and performance of Italian poetry, Italy must see its national character reflected from the cultural, linguistic, and historical remove of Shakespeare's tragedy before it can produce its own national tragedy.

With her presentation of *Romeo and Juliet*, Staël attributes to Italy's national character a strength of enthusiasm she will go on to praise in German culture in 1810's *De l'Allemagne*. In this slightly later work, Staël devotes the final chapter to "L'Enthousiasme et la religion" of Germany, and defines enthusiasm as "l'émotion concentrée qui répond à toute une vie" (572) ["the concentrated emotion of an entire life"]. The emotional state of enthusiasm, for Staël, differs crucially from the less desirable "fanatisme;" she explains that "le fanatisme est une passion exclusive dont un opinion est l'objet; l'enthousiasme se rallie à l'harmonie universelle; c'est l'amour du beau, l'élévation de l'âme, la jouissance du dévouement, réunis dans un même sentiment qui a de la grandeur et du calme" (572) ["Fanaticism is a partisan passion with an opinion as its object; enthusiasm strives for universal harmony; it is the love of beauty, the elevation of the soul, the ecstasy of devotion, united into a single sentiment of calm and

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[63] I have maintained Staël's past tense here, though Goldberger translates "semblait" as "seems." Her shift to the present tense amplifies this already bold statement beyond even what Staël claims here as her narrator gives the impressions of the audience present at the translation's first performance.

grandeur."] This description corresponds startlingly with Corinne's experience on stage as an Italian-speaking Juliette. As she performs at once for Oswald as star-crossed lover and for her loyal Italian public, Corinne reaches what the narrator signals as the highest spiritual and aesthetic satisfaction she will ever achieve, an "emotional concentration" of her entire life's meaning: "Ah! Du moins un moment, Corinne a senti le bonheur. Un moment elle connut, au prix de son repos, ces délices de l'ame, que jusqu'alors elle avait souhaitées vainement, et qu'elle devait regretter toujours" (198) ["At least for a moment Corinne was happy. The price was her peace of mind, but for a moment she knew the soul's rapture that she had longed for vainly until this day, and that she would yearn for ever after" (129)]. And this satisfaction merges the same "grandeur" and "calme" that characterize Staël's ideal of enthusiasm. As Juliette, Corinne "ressentait tout le charme des émotions sans en avoir le trouble ni le déchirement réel! […] unir le calme à la sensibilité, quand trop souvent elle l'ôte; enfin exister pour un moment dans les plus doux rêves du coeur, telle était la jouissance pure de Corinne en jouant la tragédie" (198) ["experienced all the charm of emotion with none of reality's agonizing distress […] In playing tragedy […] Corinne knew the explicit pleasure of combining sensibility with the composure it too often dissipates, of living for a moment in the sweetest of the heart's dreams" (129)].

Corinne's ecstasy of collaboration and citation as an improvisatrice, which moves her to quote the whole world's poetry, is heightened as she performs on the level of collective culture the English-Italian union impossible in her own romance narrative. The *Romeo and Juliet* performance enacts, then, both the successes and failure of enthusiasm.

For Staël, enthusiasm guards against individual egotism and cultural provincialism, as her praise of enthusiasm in *De l'Allemagne* shows:

l'enthousiasme est tolérant, non par indifférence, mais parce qu'il nous fait sentir l'intérêt et la beauté de toutes choses. La raison ne donne point de bonheur à la place de ce qu'elle ôte; l'enthousiasme trouve dans la rêverie du coeur et dans l'étendue de la pensée ce que le fanatisme et la passion renferment dans une seule idée ou dans un seul objet. Ce sentiment est par son universalité même est très favorable même à la pensée et à l'imagination. (576)

[enthusiasm is tolerant, not out of indifference, but because it makes us feel the interest and the beauty in all things. Reason imparts no happiness in place of what it negates; enthusiasm finds in the heart's reverie and in the expansion of thought what fanaticism and passion confine within a single idea or object. This sentiment for its universality alone is quite favorable to both thought and imagination.]

This is clearly the enthusiasm that Corinne-as-Juliette accesses and whose fruits her translation brings to Italy, for Staël links enthusiasm explicitly to the capacity for understanding cultural difference when she asks of those who lack an "imagination enthousiaste," "Comprennent-ils la diversité des pays, l'accent et le caractère des idiomes étrangers? Les chants populaire et les danses nationaux leur découvrent-ils les moeurs et le génie d'une contrée?" (582) ["Can they understand the diversity of nations, the accent and character of foreign idioms? Can popular songs and national dances reveal to them the mores and the spirit of a nation?"].

IV.   French as a language of translation

  De l'Allemagne also outlines an emotional state adjacent to her ideal of

enthusiasm that, while it does not reach the spiritual grandeur of the most sincere and

self-aware enthusiasm, nonetheless provokes similar physical sensations. Speaking of the

exhilaration of battle, Staël claims, "c'est l'action de se risquer qui est nécessaire, c'est

elle qui fait passer l'enthousiasme dans le sang; et quoi qu'il soit plus pur au fond de

l'âme, il est encore d'une noble nature lors même qu'il a pu devenir une impulsion

presque physique" (573) ["It's the act of risking oneself that is necessary; this is what

carries enthusiasm into the blood; and whatever is purest deep in the soul is of a noble

nature when it can become a physical drive."] This physical enthusiasm characterizes

Oswald's experience watching Corinne's Italian Shakespeare production. As the narrator

summarizes the performance act by act, Oswald is increasingly affected both by his

pleasure in imagining himself as the object of her declarations of love and by his jealousy

of the Italian public's admiration for Corinne. When she is roundly applauded after a

moving speech, Oswald "begin to feel uneasy and hides behind a pillar; he "trembles"

(125) at lines that he senses Corinne applies to their situation. He "se sentait jaloux des

accents qui faisaient rentertir un autre nom dans les airs" (196) ["felt jealous of the

delightful accents that made the air echo with another name" (125), and then after a

loving look from Corinne he "se crut le roi du monde, puisqu'il régnait sur un coeur qui

renfermait tous les trésors de la vie" (197) ["[was] strong in the sense that he was

monarch of the world since he reigned over a heart filled with all of life's treasures"

(128)]. Finally, when he sees Corinne as the dead Juliette in the arms of her suicidal

Romeo, "Oswald se sentit ébranlé tout à la fois par les impressions les plus opposées. Il

ne pouvait supporter de voir Corinne dans les bras d'un autre; il frémissait en contemplant l'image de celle qu'il aimait ainsi privée de vie; enfin il éprouvait, comme Roméo, ce mélange cruel de désespoir et d'amour, de mort et de volupté, qui font de cette scène la plus déchirante du théâtre" (199) ["Oswald was shaken simultaneously by the most contradictory impressions.He could not bear to see Corinne in another man's arms ; he shuddered at the sight of the woman he loved thus bereft of life. For like Romeo, he felt the cruel mixture of despair and love, death and desire, that make this scene the most heart-breaking in the theater" (129-30)]. Having reached this paroxysm of emotion, Oswald stands up from his seat in the audience, cries out to Corinne/Juliet, faints, and is carried out of the room by concerned onlookers.

Oswald's bodily responses to Corinne's performance force him into identification with the Romeo character and subject him to the rhythms of a romance narrative out of his control. As the narrator puts his, "Dans l'excès de son trouble, il ne savait pas distinguer si c'était la vérité ou la fiction" (200) ["[he was] troubled and confused to such a degree that he could not tell whether he was seeing truth or fiction" (130)]. He not only loses hold of the "reason" he elsewhere prizes, he loses consciousness altogether. The hero's tumultuous passions here contrast sharply with the heroine's transcendent calm, so that the scene demonstrates Staël's investment in uniting Englightment rationality and what she comes to name Romantic enthusiasm. As Isbell explains it, "Staël saw no necessity for this divide—indeed, the point of her religion chapters [in *De l'Allemagne*] is to insist on its irrelevance. As Staël herself establishes by the example of her parallel discussions of philosophy and religion, there is no need to sever the two, keeping emotion

and reason in violent confrontation."[64] Indeed, severing the two has disastrous consequences, as Oswald's near-death in this early scene and Corinne's later withdrawal and death prove. Staël attributes these consequences to Oswald's failure to embrace enthusiasm as a driving force in his life. She asserts in *De l'Allemagne*, "Il faut choisir son but par l'enthousiasme, mais l'on doit y marcher par le caractère" (574) ["One must choose a goal out of enthusiasm but pursue it out of character"], but her hero in *Corinne* continues to choose his path based on his conviction that the only proper moral guides are reason and duty,[65] the values embodied by his dead father and most resistant to the transformative potential of the translations that Corinne performs.

Oswald's desire to reconcile paternal duty with enthusiastic love leads him into strange attempts to manipulate Corinne's voice. As he recovers from his weakness following the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, he impels her to participate in his therapeutic rereading of his father's letters on filial piety, and later he asks her to read aloud his father's final letter to him in the hopes that "votre douce voix me familiarisera peut-être avec ces paroles" (333) ["perhaps your sweet voice will help me get used to these words" (229)].[66] With this he forces Corinne to perform the condemnation of her own nature, for Oswald's father had, unbeknownst to his son, rejected Corinne as a future daughter-in-law on the grounds that her "ardent" character "se fait sentir dans toutes ses paroles" (466) ["[is] perceptible in her every word" (329)]. But Oswald's effort to control his experiences of the familiar and the unfamiliar prove unsuccessful, and in the *Romeo*

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[64] John Clairborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne,' 1810-1813* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 214.

[65] Madeleine Gutwirth, in a reading that sees England as an allegory for patriarchy and the politically oppressed Italy as an allegory for the situation of the woman writer, argues similarly that the novel "condemns the incapacity of men to integrate their emotional life and their moral imagination" (256).

[66] This is my own modification of the Oxford translation, which does not carry over the important connotations of "familiarity."

and Juliet scene, the two are reversed: while Shakespeare's narrative of tragic romance is necessarily familiar to him as an educated English reader, its language is made unfamiliar through its translation into Italian. Thus Oswald's position is the opposite of that of the pleasure-seeking readers of translations to whom Staël in the 1816 essay promises a treasure trove of novel usage of their native language. He must confront the possibility that English cultural patrimony exceeds his sphere of control and circulates independently of English interests, that, in short, it is also subject to translation.

This realization coincides with his increase in jealousy of Corinne's admirers, and just before he faints during the performance, Oswald imagines "que tout était prêt à se révéler, qu'on allait proclamer Corinne un ange parmi les femmes, l'interroger lui-même sur ce qu'il ressentit pour elle, la lui disputer, la lui ravir" (195) ["that everything would soon be revealed, that they would proclaim Corinne an angel among women, question him on his feelings for her, vie with him for her, tear her away from him" (127)]. Oswald is forced by the physical strength of his emotional identification with a familiar romance plot to experience the consequences of a life intertwined with Corinne's and to recognize that he cannot indefinitely defer the ending of his own romance plot. When he refuses to imagine English as a translated language and himself as a foreignized subject, Oswald in a sense refuses the terms of Goethe's participation, which asks readers to imagine themselves and from the perspective of a foreign culture.

The *Romeo and Juliet* scene, then, uses an instance of literal translation to stage Oswald's anxieties about the viability of a marriage dependent on cross-cultural communication. The text of this scene, however, does not include Corinne's Italian translation; instead, readers encounter quotations from Shakespeare's English followed

by Staël's translations into French prose. As Batsaki notes, "The unrepresentability of a play that returns to its mother tongue a narrative enriched through translation points to the wider problematic of representing hybridity in the novel, including Corinne herself" (37-38). But what, if anything, does the text's linguistic arrangement lead us to conclude about the problem of representing hybridity, or the problem of narrating multilingualism? The strange erasure of the Italian in the play scene goes unremarked in the text, except at one particular moment: the narrator specifies that when Oswald rejoins Corinne after the play and speaks to her as Romeo, he reverts to his familiar English version of the line rather than taking up Corinne's Italian translation. We know that Oswald cries out "en anglais," "Eyes, look your last! Arms, take your last embrace" (200). This detail first of all marks Oswald's speech as foreign to his surroundings and to the restored "mother tongue" of Shakespeare-in-Italy, so that English is stripped of any privilege as original language and Oswald's choice to speak English confirms his alienation from the processes of literary revitalization going on around him. He expresses in English his resignation that he has lost his hold on Corinne as he would have her, that is, in English.

More importantly, however, the marking of Oswald's speech as "en anglais" reminds the reader that the novel's entire text is a sort of translation because it recounts in French lives lived mostly in English and Italian. Reminders of this kind recur frequently throughout the narrative, alerting the reader to unusually significant language differences. These instances of language difference are "inspiré par les sentiments" in the same way that Corinne claims her own multilingualism operates, though the sentiments conveyed in these moments often betray the speakers' instincts towards self-preservation against a dangerous degree of difference. When Oswald returns to Italy married to Corinne's

English sister Lucile he avoids speaking and hearing Italian because "il semblait que cette langue lui fît mal" (554) ["it seemed that the language hurt him" (395)]. Similarly, when Lucile learns that Oswald has secretly cultivated Corinne's influence over their young daughter Juliet, the narrator signals that she asserts her right to primacy in her daughter's life "en anglais" (576).

Perhaps the most significantly marked speech is the narrator's translation of Corinne's improvisations. When Corinne addresses the Roman public from the steps of the Capitol, the narrator draws attention not to the difference between Corinne's Italian and the novel's French, but rather to the difference between verse and prose, specifying that Corinne "se fit entendre dans des vers pleins de charme, dont la prose ne peut donner qu'une idée bien imparfaite" (59) ["she spoke verses full of a delight that prose can but imperfectly render" (26)]. Gutwirth finds that "Corinne's improvisations are, in terms of craft and of the task she set herself, the poorest part of Mme de Staël's novel, and the irony of the greatest living conversationalist of her age failing to render the pulse of live improvisation is fully realized";[67] the improvisations, she says, force on the reader "an awkward blend of pulpit rhetoric with the mild poetic impulse of the eighteenth century" (193). As Batsaki counters, such an assessment forgets that the improvisations are a double translation of poetry into prose and of French into Italian (40). Furthermore, an overly prompt dismissal of the improvisations discounts the narrator's own qualifying introduction to her rendering of Corinne's virtuosity. This qualification serves in part to manage reader expectations, perhaps, but it also stokes the reader's imagination, for if we never encounter Corinne's poetry in all its fullness, its potential meaning remains

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[67] See Gutwirth's preface to *Germaine de Staël: Crossing the Borders*, Ed. Madelyn Gutwirth, Avriel H. Goldberger, and Karyna Szmurlo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 195.

unlimited.[68] Finally, the withholding of the translated text suspends the reader within the narratives of cultural progress and romantic intimacy that Staël is deliberately weaving together, delaying the closure that for both romance and *Bildungsroman* must mean the end of the protagonist's difference from her surroundings.

V.   The promises and failures of enthusiasm

Corinne's narrative logic relies on binary oppositions—men/women, England/Italy, north/south, modern/ancient, urban/rural, written/oral and more—and critics have long followed the novel's lead in structuring their interpretation according to these oppositions.[69] A few studies have shown how the novel might gesture towards some third term that could sustain hybridity and undecidability of the kind Corinne presents. Batsaki suggests that the invisible translation of the "original" English and Italian into the narrator's French constitutes "a critique of notions of national interest and belonging just as they were being formulated, among other ways, through Romantic theories of translation. Speaking two languages without an accent turns out to be more transgressive than speaking only one, or none, or all; it makes the hybrid the embodiment of a true relation. This relation, in order to avoid collapsing into one of its constituent elements, can only be represented in a third, *accented* language" (40). Marie-Claire Vallois approaches the novel via feminist psychoanalysis but reaches a similar conclusion,

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[68] One reader who imagined Corinne's verse was Victorian poet L.E.L. (Letitia Elizabeth Landon), who provided translations of the improvisations for Isabel Hill's 1833 English version of the novel. For details, see John Claireborne Isbell's entry "Madame de Staël," in *The Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English*, Volume 2, ed. Olive Classe. (London: Fitzroy and Dearborn, 2000.), 1320-1322.

[69] For examples of such criticism, see Joan deJean's essay in *Germaine de Staël: Crossing the Borders* on the novel's valorization of oral over written (and by association feminine over masculine) forms, which overlooks the ways that Corinne's mixed artistic output challenges this distinction, as well as Ellen Peel's argument that the novel systematically associates masculinity and mediation of all forms.

finding that the novel works according to the logic of Lacan's Imaginary and articulates a "langage privilégié de l'âme sensible. Langage secret que le lecteur doit interpréter […] C'est un langage pour ainsi dire silencieux qui se trouve inscrit au fond de chaque âme sensible et ne peut se lire que selon le mode de la fiction" (182) ["privileged language of the sensitive soul, a secret language that the reader must interpret […] It's a language that is silent, so to speak, found inscribed deep in each sensitive soul and only readable in the realm of fiction"].

What these admittedly quite different critical perspectives recover in *Corinne* is the novel's investment in the reader's imagination as a place where translation can spark transformation and open new possible channels of communication. An important plot point illustrates the persistent connection between translation and potentially transformative languages of sentiment. Before she is set to reveal to him her mysterious history, Oswald gives Corinne his parents' wedding ring as a sign of his attachment to her. He considers his choice to make this commitment in ignorance of Corinne's patronym and personal history as proof of his extreme fidelity to her. Corinne takes the ring and delivers the letter revealing her identity as the one woman Oswald's father has forbidden him to marry. She thereby accepts Oswald's gesture of fidelity, but just before he leaves her to investigate the details of his father's prohibition, Corinne recreates Oswald's ring as a potential signifier of his *in*fidelity, telling him:

> si vous cessez de m'aimer, cet anneau même m'en instruira. Une ancienne croyance n'apprend-elle pas que le diamant est plus fidèle que l'homme, et qu'il se ternit quand celui qui l'a donné nous trahit? […] Dans les passions profondes, le coeur est tout à coup doué d'un instinct miraculeux, et les souffrances sont des

oracles. Que signifie donc cette palpitation douloureuse qui soulève mon sein?

Ah! Mon ami, je ne la redouterais pas, si elle ne m'annonçait que la mort. (401)

if you stop loving loving me, the ring itself will tell me [..] in deep passions, the

heart is suddenly endowed with a miraculous instinct, and all suffering is an

oracle. What is the meaning of the painful palpitation that makes my breast heave

now? Ah! My friend, I would not fear it, if the only thing it foretold were my

death. (280)

Corinne here takes a natural object, the diamond, as a tool for reading her presentiments

about Oswald's potential betrayal, using it as part of a sort of emotional lexicon. Staël's

footnote here supports Corinne's "préjugé d'imagination" ["imaginative preconception"]

with a reference to Spanish playwright Calderón's *ll Principe Constante* (1629), which is

identified in the text of the footnote as "une tragédie de Caldéron [sic]" in which the

captured Portuguese prince Ferdinand refuses to allow himself to be freed in exchange

for giving up a Christian city to his captor the King of Fez. The footnote recounts that in

an effort to educate the cruel king into a more benevolent disposition, Ferdinand

lui cite tout ce qu'il y a de royal dans l'univers; le lion, le dauphin, l'aigle, parmi

les animaux; il cherche aussi parmi les plantes et les pierres, les traits de bonté

naturelle que l'on attribue à celles qui semblent dominer toutes les autres, et c'est

alors qu'il dit que le diamant, qui sait résister au fer, se brise de lui-même, et se

fond en poudre pour avertir celui qui le porte de la trahison dont il est menacé.

(592)

cites everything royal in the iniverse: the lion, the dolphin, the eagle among

animals. He also seeks among plants and stones the traits of natural goodness

attributed to those that seem to dominate all the others, and then he says that the

diamond, which can resist iron, breaks of itself and crumbles into poweder to

warn the person who wears it of the betrayal threatening him. (431)

Staël's footnote does not reveal the outcome of this exchange between the Christian

prince and the Moorish king but only speculates on the poetic value of the prince's

system of correspondences between human sentiment and the natural world: "on ne peut

savoir si cette manière de considérer toute la nature comme en rapport avec les

sentiments est mathématiquement vraie; toujours est-il qu'elle plaît à l'imagination, et

que la poésie en général, et les poëtes espagnols en particulier, en tirent de grandes

beautés" (592) ["We have no way of knowing whether this way of seeing nature as being

in harmony with man's feelings and destiny is mathematically correct. The fact remains

that is pleases the imagination, and that it has yielded great beauty to poetry in general,

and to Spanish poets in particular" (431)].

Furthermore, Staël emphasizes that she knows this version of diamond folklore

only through "la traduction en allemand d'Auguste Wilhelm Schlegel […], un des

premiers poëtes de son pays, [qui] a trouvé le moyen aussi de transporter dans sa langue,

avec la plus rare perfection, les beautés poétiques des Espagnols, des Anglais, des Italiens

et des Portugais" (593) ["the German translation by August Wilhelm Schlegel […], one

of his country's major poets, [who] has found the way to convey in his language the

poetic beauty of the Spanish, English, Italians, adn Portugese, with the rarest perfection"

(431-2)]. Thus Corinne's reading of Oswald's fidelity or betrayal works as a poetry of

emotional intuition whose value lies in the productive response it inspires in readers. The

prince's system of natural correspondence approximates a viable language of sentiment

like the one that animates Corinne's and Oswald's interaction; it may not be "mathematically true," but it inspires valuable expressions of "poetic beauty," just as Schlegel's translations from all of Europe's literatures make a variety of "poetic beauties" available to readers of German and just as Corinne considers that all "divine verses" are hers to transform and transmit to an audience united by enthusiasm.

Strangely, the ring that guarantees Oswald's fidelity, or signals his betrayal, is not described as containing a diamond; it is "un anneau," not "une bague." Yet the tradition applies because it serves the novel's narrative of potential transformation; an approximation suffices to convey the truth of the embedded story, which reaches the reader through Staël's interpretation of Schlegel's translation—that is, in a highly mediated fashion—anyway. However, just as Staël's footnote about the Spanish prince breaks off before the end of the story, leaving us wondering whether the Moroccan king is at all moved by his introduction to the Prince's symbolic system, the novel in its second half loses faith in the transformative power of the language of sentiment that has underwritten the romance of Oswald and Corinne. Corinne considers Oswald lost to her and returns his ring not after receiving a sign from the ring itself, as her earlier statements implied she would, but after witnessing and interpreting Oswald's interactions with her rival, the perfectly English Lucile. The special knowledge of Oswald's heart and mind that Corinne had claimed becomes irrelevant and is replaced by a logic of self-sacrifice. Thus it is after secretly observing his admiration for Lucile and while in the physical presence of their father's grave that she becomes "fière de s'immoler pour qu'Oswald fût en paix avec son pays, avec sa famille, avec lui-même" ["proud to sacrifice herself so that Oswald might be at peace with his country, with his family, with himself" (357)]; what

had been an assertion of internal knowledge arising from her unique cultural and linguistic situation becomes a self-imposed erasure of any differences that would trouble external standards of community formation.

Corinne's abandonment of the allegorical ring's alternative system of communication and signification takes place over several episodes in the novel's second half; in each instance, an invisible Corinne witnesses Oswald's strong preference for all things English and his relative indifference to their Italian equivalents. When Corinne, dressed in "black Venetian robe" (346) haunts the crowd gathered to watch Oswald's regiment march through Hyde Park, he catches a glimpse of her and "la forme italienne de l'habit noire qui l'enveloppait le frappa singulièrement" (489) ["He was oddly struck by the Italian style of the black cloak that shrouded her" (347)], but as he hears *God Save the Queen* and turns his attention to Lucile's safety on horseback, he "perdit l'idée qui l'avait d'abord occupée" (490) ["lost the thought that had been preoccupying him"[70]]. Corinne is humiliated to see Oswald show Lucile "tous les signes d'intérêt qu'il lui avait autrefois prodigués" ["all the signs of interest he had lavished on her in times past" (348)].

Corinne also watches the couple from across the theater during a performance of *Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage*, an adaptation by the legendary English actor David Garrick of a work by Thomas Southerne. She takes special interest in the performance of celebrated English actress Sarah Siddons because "lord Nelvil avait souvent comparé sa manière de déclamer avec celle de madame Siddons" ["Lord Nelvil had often compared her style with Mrs Siddon's" (340)]. The narrator in this scene praises English acting for

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[70] This is my own translation, as Goldberger's version ["his initial impression faded] does not attribute the hint of agency to Oswald that Staël's French does.

its spontaneity and naturalness of expression, which she says create more daring and emotionally affecting performances than does the highly codified French style. The success of English acting, as embodied in Sarah Siddons and by extension in Corinne, lies in its transcendence of the merely English through a language of sentiment; the performance of strong emotions, says the narrator, works to provoke the viewer or reader into a cross-cultural identification of the kind Staël advocates in her writings on translation and through her characterization of Corinne: "Il y a chez les diverses nations une façon différent de jouer la tragédie; mais l'expression de la douleur s'entend d'un bout du monde à l'autre; et depuis le sauvage jusqu'au roi, il y a quelque chose de semblable dans tous les hommes, alors qu'ils sont vraiment malheureux" (481) ["The way of playing tragedy differs in the various nations, but the expression of suffering is understood from one end of the earth to the other; and from savage to king, there is something similar in allm en when they are truly unhappy" (340)].

Presented with this spectacle of universal suffering, however, Oswald focuses his attention on the more local suffering of his fellow viewer Lucile, whose tearful response to the tragedy on stage leaves Oswald so "fixed" and "occupied" that he seldom returns his gaze to Mme Siddon's performance. In fact, the narrator implies that the whole English audience shows more interest in Lucile than in the play; we learn that "depuis longtemps, même en Angleterre où les femmes sont si belles, il n'avait paru une personne si remarquable" (481) ["even in England, where the women are so beautiful, it had been a long time since anyone so remarkable had appeared" (341)] and that after the performance "la foule se rassembla pour la voir" (483) ["the crowd gathered to see her"

(342)[71]]. This spectacle/spectator dynamic reverses that of Corinne's performance as Juliet, when the Italian audience was transfixed by the performance of an actress whose magnetism arises from her creative performance, from her innovations in Italian-ness rather than her perfect embodiment of an existing national type. Lucile as object of attention is embarrassed because her desirability, unlike Corinne's charm, stems from her Englishwoman's modest reluctance to display herself. Whereas Corinne's confident embrace of her popularity inspires fear and jealousy in Oswald, Lucile's shy beauty prompts "une légère nuance d'orgueil en conduisant ainsi la plus belle personne d'Angleterre à travers les admirateurs sans nombre qui suivaient ses pas" (483) ["a slight trace of pride as he led the most beautiful person in England through the countless admirers following her steps" (342)]. Oswald clearly prefers Lucile's easily legible spectatorship over Corinne's difficult-to-read performance of Shakespeare in Italian. His response displaces enthusiasm, away from the collaboration between performer and audience that Staël praises in German and Italian national culture, away from engagement with the challenging text towards a solipsistic repetition of easy habitual patterns of attention.

The loss of what Staël values as "enthusiasm" dominates the second half of the novel. Anne Amend's study of Staël's career-long elaboration of a "système d'enthousiasme" shows how the concept brings together Staël's aesthetic and ethical concerns and works as an impetus to put sentiments into action. For the German Romantics Staël admires, Amend explains, "l'enthousiasme constitue la charnière entre le concret et le vague, entre le passé et l'avenir, et surtout entre la passion et la réflexion"

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[71] I have changed Goldbergers translation ["the crowd gathered around her"] to maintain the implication that Lucile herself becomes a spectacle.

(290) ["enthusiasm constitutes the hinge between the concrete and the vague, between the past and the future, and especially between passion and reflection"]. For Staël in particular, Amend says, "En fin de compte, l'enthousiasme prend les proportions entièrement constructives: c'est de l'énergie d'engagement, fixant le but de la perfectibilité en général et dépassant ainsi le niveau de la résistance et de la combativité"[72] ["In the final analysis, enthusiasm takes on entirely constructive proportions; it's an energy of engagement, aimed towards the general goal of perfectability and thus overcoming the level of resistance and combativeness"]. The "enthusiasm" that emerges in the first half of *Corinne* puts the concept to work for Staël's model of connected European national cultures by developing it into a possible third term of expanding, active engagement with cultural difference.

The early chapters of the novel linger over the moments Corinne and Oswald spend winding their way through Italy's historical tourist sites. The characters move rapidly from city to city and among galleries and monuments, pausing periodically for one of Corinne's extended interpretations of each place's significance and of the bearing of its history on Italy's future. These movements lend the narrative a fitful rhythm that matches the unsteady pace of the couple's volatile romance. Over the course of their travels, Corinne teaches Oswald, much as the Spanish prince teaches the Moorish king, to recognize how nature "est [en Italie] plus en relation avec l'homme, et que le créateur s'en sert comme d'un langage entre la créature et lui" (141) ["is more in touch with man here [in Italy] and that the creator uses her like a language between His creatures and Himself" (87)]. Oswald, in response, marvels that "Vous me révélez les pensées et les

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[72] Anne Amend, "Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël," in *Le Groupe de Coppet et L'Europe, 1789-1830*. Ed. Simone Balayé and Kurt Kloocke. (Paris: Jean Touzot, 1994), 290.

émotions que les objets extérieurs peuvent faire naître. Je ne vivais que dans mon coeur, vous avez réveillé mon imagination" (141). ["You make me aware of the thoughts and emotions that physical objects can bring to life. I used to live in my heart alone; you have awakened my imagination" (87)]. He seems in this moment to adopt the mode of enthusiastic reading that Corinne models for him.

But the shift in orientation that Oswald undergoes is, as we have seen, incomplete and impermanent, and the inversions of transformative early moments in the later scenes of separation and death demonstrate his failure to maintain the enthusiasm Corinne has, in a way, loaned him. Following their separation, the narrative increasingly loses its vivid interest in Italy's past and future cultural patrimony and instead recounts Corinne's decline and death more or less linearly. And Corinne's steady deterioration is punctuated by comparisons between past and present moments that emphasize the extremity of the loss suffered by Oswald, Corinne, and the communities they could have joined or created; the tone of expansive optimism becomes one of regret. Though Corinne's stepmother Lady Edgermond does reveal to Lucile that her Italian half-sister remains alive in Italy and that Oswald has known her, the stepmother forbids Lucile from speaking of Corinne to Oswald. Thus Corinne, once a source of new possibilities in language, becomes a cause of silence and miscommunication for the young married couple. When he leaves on a military tour, Oswald compares Lucile's silence with Corinne's effusive expressions of grief: "comparant sa douleur silencieuse avec les éloquents regrets de Corinne lorsqu'il se sépara d'elle a Venise, il n'hésita pas à croire que Lucile l'aimait faiblement" (539) ["comparing her silent grief to Corinne's eloquent regret when they pared in Venice, he did not hesitate to think that Lucile's love was not

strong" (383). Once the couple and their young daughter reach Italy, ostensibly to protect

Oswald's failing health, the narrator continually reports not what they say to each other,

but what they could have said under more favorable circumstances; in one instance, a

touching family tableau almost provokes the reconciliation that would open channels of

communication: "Dans ce moment, la mère et la fille étaient charmantes. Oswald les

regarda tous les deux avec tendresse; mais encore une fois le silence suspendit un

entretien qui peut-être aurait conduit à une explication heureuse" (553) ["MOther and

child were charming at that moment. oswald looked at both of them tenderly, but once

more silence suspended a conversation that might perhaps have led to a happy

undersatnding" (394)]. As the conditional verbs accumulate and the atmosphere of lost

potential becomes more oppressive, the narrator further explains that Lucile and Oswald

fail to understand each other because they are too similar: "Corinne, dans une telle

situation, eût bien vite obtenu le secret d'Oswald comme celui de Lucile; mais ils avaient

l'un et l'autre le même genre de reserve, et plus ils se ressemblaient à cet égard, plus il

était difficile qu'ils sortissent de la situation contrainte où ils se trouvaient" (563) ["In

such a situation, Corinne would have ot to Oswald's secret quickly, and to Lucile's as

well, but both of them were reserved in the same way, and the more alike they were in

this respect, the harder it was to make their way out of the constrained situation that

bound them" (402)]. If Staël is writing a romance of national difference, this analysis of

Oswald and Lucile's marriage aligns with her larger thesis about the revitalizing power of

hybridity. Limited by their shared inward-looking Englishness, Lucile and Oswald are

doomed to repeat the same sterile language and patterns of communication that block

mutual understanding, never to be invigorated by a transformation of the kind that the Oswald-Corinne union promises to bring.

The early scenes of ecstatic performance—Corinne's staging of *Romeo and Juliet*, her public improvisations—are also revisited later in the novel. At their inn near Milan, Oswald and Lucile are accosted by a Roman poet whose bad improvisation reinforces the uniqueness of Corinne's poetic speech at the height of her powers; whereas her improvisations reach toward Staël's ideal of enthusiastic poet/audience collaboration, the wandering Roman's verses never communicate any sentiment at all. His attempts to universalize his praise of Lucile and her daughter produce only "des louanges qui convenaient à toutes les mères, a tous les enfants, à tous les époux du monde" ["praise that fits all the mothers, all the children, all the husbands in the world" (395)], and he is as indifferent to his audience as Corinne is sensitive to hers: "[il] ne s'embarrassait pas du tout de l'ennui qu'il causait à ses auditeurs" ["[he was] completely untroubled by his listeners' annoyance" (395)]. His improvisation fails so completely that his words lose all signifying function and his speech no longer registers as human: "l'exagération passait par-dessus tous les sujets, comme si les paroles et la vérité ne devaient avoir aucun rapport ensemble […] il déclaimait avec une force qui faisait encore mieux remarquer l'insignifiance de ce qu'il disait […] Son movement était comme celui d'une machine montée, qui ne s'arrête qu'après un temps marquee" (555) ["[his verse] wildly outdistanc[ed] its subject, as if words and truth were not supposed to have anything in common[…] [H]e declaimed with an energy that made the insignicance of his words all the more noticeable […] He gave every appearance of a wound-up machine that stops only at a predetermined time" (395)]. The narrator explicitly names this monstrous

performance a "parody" of Italian poetry and a "travesty" of Oswald's memories of Italy, suggesting that the entire novel has become a "mechanism" which will stop only at the "set time" of Corinne's death.

The bad improviser embodies the paternal warning that love for Corinne transforms language into the meaningless chatter of the "sigisbé," the fawning man devoted to a woman in a union that—especially from an English perspective—mocks legitimately productive marriage. Beyond Oswald and the anonymous improviser, the loss of language affects Corinne herself most significantly. Confined as an invalid, she loses the connection to a receptive public that previously fueled her poetry; the "fragments" she struggles to compose reach an audience only through the intervention of the narrator, who here takes on the previously unnecessary function of the fictional editor, explaining that "L'on a trouvé dans ses papiers quleques-unes des réflexions qu'on va lire, et qu'elle écrivit dans ce temps où elle faisait d'unutiles efforts pour redevenir capable d'un travail suivi" (519-520) ["Among her papers, a number of reflections have been found that were written during the period when she made fruitless efforts to recover her capacity for sustained work" (368)]. What Corinne does manage to write rehearses her past glories and circulates obsessively around her passion for Oswald. She claims an exclusive, intimate knowledge of enthusiasm, saying that "L'enthousiasme en tout genre est ridicule pour qui ne l'éprouve pas. La poésie, le dévouement, l'amour, la religion, ont la même origine; et il y a des hommes aux yeux desquels ces sentiments sont de la folie" (523) ["Every kind of enthusiasm is ridiculous to those who do not feel it. Poetry, sacrifice, love, religion, all have the same origin, and there are men in whose eyes these feelings are insane" (371)]. However, her brittle written "fragments" cannot

approach the immediacy of her former poetry, so that her words lose their connection to their moment of composition: "Combien elle était loin alors du talent d'improviser! Chaque mot lui coûtait à trouver, et souvent elle traçait des paroles sans aucun sens, des paroles qui l'effrayaient elle-même, quand elle se mettait à les relire, comme si l'on voyait écrit le délire de la fièvre" (519) ["How far she was then from the gift for improvisation! Every word cost her an effort, and often she penned meaningless words that terrified her when she went to reread them, for they seemed a transcription of fevered delirium" (368)].

Corinne's own writing here is figured as much as a "parody" of her former poetry as is the empty improvisation of the anonymous Roman who imposes his verses on Oswald; both lack meaning because they use language alienated from enthusiasm. No situational cues can stop the mechanical improviser before his time winds down, and no amount of re-reading can force Corinne's fragments into coherence; they signal nothing but her inevitable death and thus frustrate what Brooks identifies as the novel reader's motivating search for meaning. Building on Roland Barthes's principle of narrative desire, Brooks explains, "what animates us as readers of narrative is *la passion du sens*, which I would want to translate as both the passion *for* meaning and the passion *of* meaning: the active quest of the reader for those shaping ends that, terminating the dynamic process of reading, promise to bestow meaning and significance on the beginning and the middle."[73] The romance narrative of *Corinne* deflects the reader's enthusiastic quest for meaning by using the second half to systematically close all possible avenues of transformation opened in the first episodes.

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[73] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 19.

These potential transformations are located within Corinne's and the narrative's bilingual speech, so it is fitting that the remaining traces of multilingualism in Corinne's fragments contain reflections on death. The first passages of the supposed excerpt of her writing contain quotes on the brevity of life from Petrarch and Dante; following two of the many fluid conventions of citations the novel uses, Petrarch's words appear in Italian followed by a French translation and Dante's are given in French alone. Late in life and mourning her lost potential, Corinne still cites freely from the Italian poets foundational to her promotion of Italian literature, but she cites them at their most pessimistic about the possibility of transmission across historical distance, including Petrach's lament that "Ahi! Null'altro che pianto al mondo dura /… *Ah! Dans le monde rien ne dure que les larmes*" (525) ["Ah! Nothing in the world endures but tears!" (372)] and Dante's comment on future generations who "*appeleront antique le temps actuel*" (524) ["*will call the present times antiquity*" (372)]. Another verse presented as a quotation also appears in both Italian and French; however, singularly in Staël's text, this verse remains unattributed and is unmarked by footnotes, suggesting we are to take it as a line of Corinne's own poetry. In it she describes the peace of mind she hopes to achieve before dying: "'Un profond recueillement m'est nécessaire avant d'obtenir, …Tranquillo varco / A più tranquilla vita. *Un tranquille passage vers une vie plus tranquille*" (525) ["I shall need to enter a deep state of contemplation before I gain… […] "*A peaceful passage to a more peaceful life*" (372-373)]. Here as throughout her final speeches, Corinne envisions death as the absence of sentiment, a transcendence emptied of the deeply felt and spontaneously communicated emotions she celebrates in her prime.

The only line of poetry that Staël writes for Corinne in Italian, then, expresses the tragic failure of the heroine's and the novel's enterprise of promoting enthusiasm in action as a means or communication among national cultures. Her much-lauded improvisation, her Italian Shakespeare, and her famous conversation reach us in a French we are only occasionally invited to regard as a translation, but Corinne's death wish, her sacrifice of enthusiasm, somehow pushes its way through to linguistic presence in the text. The quote that ends her "fragments," however, is a line of Italian poetry by Hippolito Pindemonte, whom Staël praises in an earlier footnote as "l'un des poëtes actuels de l'Italie qui a le plus de charme et de douceur" (590) ["one of the most charming and gentle of contemporary Italian poets" (426)]. Pindemonte's expression of the relief that death brings—"Fermossi al fin il cor che balzo tanto" (526) ["At last it has stopped, the heart that beat so fast" (373)]—is translated into French in a footnote presumably provided by the same editor who has recovered Corinne's writing. This configuration suggests that the earlier translations, located in the text itself, are Corinne's, leaving us with the strange impression that she has been translating Italian citations into the primary language of her writing, which must then be some language other than Italian. Yet given her earlier declarations of fidelity to the Italian language as one she has "suffered much" to live in the midst of, it is surprising to find her writing these intimate fragments in any other language. Ultimately, the language of composition is unknowable, but the ambiguity created by the arrangement of the citations and translations highlights once again Corinne's hybridity, where her commitment to enriching Italian literature— and writing in Italian—exists alongside her fatigued withdrawal from the arena of

cultural struggles, her acceptance of her own obscurity for the sake of the potential resurgence of the Hippolito Pindemontes to come.

An important narrative aside on Oswald's hesitation between Lucile and Corinne provides insight into the sustainability of heightened emotional states and their resulting cultural innovations:

Le plus haut point de la passion, et l'éloquence qu'elle inspire, ne suffisent pas encore à l'imagination; on désire toujours quelque chose de plus, et ne pouvant l'obtenir, l'on se refroidit et on se lasse, tandis que la faible lueur qu'on aperçoit à travers les nuages tient long-temps la curiosité en suspens, et semble promettre dans l'avenir de nouveaux sentiments et des découvertes nouvelles. Cette attente cependant n'est point satisfaite; et quand on sait à la fin ce que cache tout ce charme du silence et de l'inconnu, le mystère aussi se flétrit, et l'on en revient à regretter l'abandon et le mouvement d'un caractère animé. Hélas! De quelle manière prolonger cet enchantement du coeur, ces délices de l'ame, que la confiance et le doute, le bonheur et le malheur dissipent également à la longue, tant les jouissances célestes sont étrangères à notre destinée! Elles traversent notre coeur quelquefois, seulement pour nous rappeler notre origine et notre espoir. (485-6)

Passions's highest point and the eloquence it inspires are still not enough for the imagination; we always want something more, and finding it beyond our reach, we grow chilled and weary. Yet the glimmer of light we spy through the clouds holds curiosity in suspense for a long time, seeming to promise new feelings and new discoveries for the future. Our expectation is not satisfied, however; and in

the end, when we know what is hidden behind all the charm of silence and the
unknown, the mystery withers too, and we come to miss the unconstrained
spontaneity of a lively character. Alas! heavenly delights are so alien to our
destiny that the heart's enchantment, the soul's pleasures, are dispelled over time
by trust and doubt, by happiness and unhappiness alike—and we have no way to
make them last! They cross our hearts at times, only to remind us of our origin
and our hope. (344)

In this formulation, the narrator remains pessimistic about the lasting influence that the
romantic charm of cultural difference can exert over the imagination; a temporary
opening to "new sentiments and new discoveries" eventually serves only to return the
affected individual to a renewed appreciation for his or her own origins; the unknown
only leads back to the known, the foreign returns us home unchanged.

As if to enact this pessimism, Corinne's final act ensures the survival of her name
in Oswald's memory only in the mechanical imitation of her talents that she has taught
his daughter Juliette. Corinne succeeds fully in her plan to "lui communiquer tous ses
talents comme un héritage qu'elle se plaisait à lui léguer de son vivant" (575) ["to
instruct the child, and to transmit all her talents to her, like a legacy she was pleased to
bequeath while she was still alive" (411)]. She succeeds so fully, in fact, that the child
becomes "la miniature d'un beau tableau" (575) ["a beautiful painting in miniature
(411)"] of Corinne's former self. Corinne further exacts from Juliette a promise to play
for her father a certain "Scottish melody" (396) that Corinne has first played for him
before a painting of the ancient Scottish poet Ossian. Her construction of a legacy for
herself in the memory of a single individual, Oswald, represents a drastic limiting of

Corinne's earlier ambition for literary fame. And her method, which ensures the repetition of her words but divorces them from any living sentiment, participates in the sort of bad translation that Staël criticizes in her account of French and English translations of ancient poetry.[74]

Staël's romance of cultural exchange leaves its heroine unable to communicate in any but the most limiting ways, and indeed her revenge and pessimism appear to violate Staël's ideal of exchange among national cultures. As Amend summarizes it, Staël's ethics of enthusiasm urges that "après avoir intériorisé la première réaction à l'oeuvre d'autrui, on ne doit pas en rester, figé, au niveau de 'l'inutile attendrissement,' qui pourrait se mêler à l'enthousiasme, mais on a intérêt à prendre conscience de la distance temporelle qui aboutira à une transformation pragmatique du message que l'auteur veut transmettre ('nous dispose aux actions généreuses') ou à une retransformation poétique"[75] ["After interiorizing the initial reaction to the work of the other, we must not stop there, frozen in the stage of 'useless affection,' which can interfere with enthusiasm, but take stock of the temporal distance that will result in the practical transformation of the message the author intends to transmit ('disposing us towards generous action') or in a poetic retransformation."] By ending on a note of repetition rather than transformation,

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[74] For a variety of critical interpretations of the novel's end, see the edited volume *Germaine de Staël: Crossing the Borders*, Ed. Madelyn Gutwirth, Avriel H. Goldberger, and Karyna Szmurlo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991). In it, Ellen Peel writes that the novel's end undermines Staël's feminist message. For Peel, Corinne's training of Juliette constitutes not only a "sinister" revenge but also a possible "regression" because the heroine resorts to the "mediated techniques" of "ventriloquism and indirect revenge" that the novel elsewhere associates with patriarchal power (112). English Showalter in the same volume, however, argues that this reading misses the novel's complexity and suggests Corinne's compromised position at the end is part of Staël's "refusal to make politics a simple binary conflict" (191).

[75] Anne Amend, "Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël," in *Le Groupe de Coppet et L'Europe, 1789-1830*. Ed. Simone Balayé and Kurt Kloocke. (Paris: Jean Touzot, 1994), 279.

Corinne narrates the loss of faith in and the resulting failure of enthusiastic cultural translation.

VI.   Enthusiasm and teleopoiesis

This assessment of Staël's system of enthusiasm aligns with the provocative comparison translation scholar Sherry Simon has drawn between Staël and contemporary critic, translator, and theorist Gayatri Spivak. Simon explores how both writers work as "cultural brokers" and shows that "setting the ideas of these two thinkers side by side allows us to assess the importance of 'the nation' for the practice and conceptualization of translation" (123). Staël and Spivak speak from vastly different historical moments and represent opposing conclusions on the value of nationalism. Whereas Staël undertakes to create and strengthen national literatures in order to establish them as legible units of cultural exchange, Spivak challenges this framework as outmoded and exclusive. They both, however, foreground the role of the reader's imagination in shaping conceptions of how, why, and within what boundaries we communicate through literature.

For Staël, as we have seen, literary innovation can result from the state of "enthusiasm" inspired by an emotional or narrative-sparked opening to foreign languages and cultures; this imaginative process is frustrated, however, by rigid and narrowly nationalist frameworks upheld by inflexible readers of the kind Oswald represents. The ultimate goal for Staël is always, however, the enrichment of the nation's cultural identity, even if that enrichment requires an openness to hybridity and exchange. As Simon explains: "The influence of English and German literature in Italy was, for Madame de Staël, an illustration of the dialectical process through which translation

helps nations to become more fully themselves" (127).[76] Where Staël invests in

"enthusiasm," Spivak draws on Derrida's "teleopoiesis" to sketch out her vision of a

disciplinary alternative to the nation-centered comparative literature that Staël's

conception of Europe helped to usher in. For Spivak, teleopoiesis prefigures without

prescribing new ways to "discern collectivities."[77] She says in *Death of a Discipline*,

> That is indeed one of the shocks to the idea of belonging, to affect the distant in a
>
> *poiesis*—an imaginative making—without guarantees, and thus, by definitive
>
> predication, reverse its value […] It is with careful accounting for time lags that
>
> effective collectivities are formed […] Active teleopoiesis in all moments of
>
> decision makes the task of reading imperative and yet indecisive.[78] (31)

In this call for reading as "imaginative making," Spivak sketches a practice much like

what Staël implicitly asks of *Corinne*'s audience. Though the plot forecloses the

possibility for Corinne to change the "idea of belonging" and create new "collectivities"

in the world of the novel, it nonetheless sets the stage for us to do so across the "time lag"

between the moment of composition and the moment of reading.

There are important differences between the two thinkers: Spivak's mode of

literary studies requires that we conceive of the other as a producer of knowledge, yet this

is precisely what Staël's universalist vision of confederated nations cannot accommodate;

her allegory of a universal language of sentiment requires a passive Moorish king to

receive poetic wisdom and fails to imagine he has any native lexicon to be overwritten.

Against this model, Spivak calls for a literary studies that understands "the habit of

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[76] Sherry Simon, "Germaine de Staël and Gayatri Spivak: Cultural Brokers," in *Translation and Power*, ed. Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 127.
[77] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 34.
[78] Ibid., 31.

reading and writing as robust allegories of knowing and doing," in which both readers and writers are actively engaged in the knowing and the doing. She takes inspiration from Virginia Woolf's imaginative invocation of Shakespeare's sister in *A Room of One's Own* in which Woolf makes the (according to Spivak) teleopoietic declaration that "she would come if we worked for her." Staël's enthusiasm and Spivak's teleopoiesis are not equivalent, but they spring from an analogous investment in the reader's literary imagination as a space where the "work" of community formation takes place.

In the case of Staël and Carlyle, the narrative transfers to the reader the burden of intellectual or ethical transformation, and it does so in relatively direct ways: by setting up an Editor/narrator as a proxy figure for the reader, by staging performance scenes narrated from the audience's perspective, and by offering a character's failures to read well as a reader's opportunity to read better. In both *Corinne* and *Sartor Resartus*, the reader's role is clearly established, though both texts also use the fiction of translation— English we must imagine to have been translated from German, French that is presented as translated from Italian—in order to complicate the idea that novels address one audience in one language only. With this, both of these *Bildungsromane* begin to mark out an extra-diegetic textual space where reading becomes a foreign experience and can unsettle strictly nation-bound ideas of collectivity. In the later works I will consider, by George Eliot and Virginia Woolf, the reader is less clearly inserted into a straightforward plot of individual development and this textual space—for participation, enthusiasm, teleopoiesis—expands into a paratext that begins to change the shape of the central narrative.

Translation and the Transfer of Impressions in George Eliot's Late Fiction

This chapter marks a rather dramatic shift of focus, from early to late century, and from Staël's Romantic novel to Eliot's works of fiction that stretch the realist conventions she had helped to establish. Yet both writers share an interest in how a story of the moral development of individuals might represent and produce ideas of collective life on local and national levels.

Because its protagonist's embrace of his Jewish heritage challenges notions of monolithic English national identity, *Daniel Deronda* has been a key source for readers who want to understand the relationship between the novel and the nation. And because of the way Eliot weaves together several European literatures in the telling of this story, *Daniel Deronda* is also a key novel of translation. Like *Sartor Resartus* and *Corinne*, Eliot's fictions use foreign languages to plot problems of cultural difference and communication. The patterns of multilingual narration that mark *Daniel Deronda* emerge even more centrally in her understudied final work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. In this chapter, I trace instances of translation in her fiction and show how her texts use multiple particular languages to posit the historical and cultural embeddedness of all language. Beginning with a study of the forms that translation and multilingualism take in *Daniel Deronda*, I argue that both her final novel and *Impressions* are part of her sustained project to establish a historicized multilingual textuality as a basis for a collective *Bildung* of the kind Carlyle and Staël also imagine.

My readings show how Eliot's novels use translation to speak to collectivities beyond the nation. The linguistic texture of *Daniel Deronda* and *Impressions of*

Theophrastus Such reveals a preoccupation with reading and communicating meaning, especially in the way it unfolds seemingly singular units of meaning such as names and citations into elaborated narrative events. In *Daniel Deronda*, the epigraphs introducing each chapter grapple with translation through their experiments with appropriation and originality. And in this context the first-person narrative voice of *Theophrastus Such* can be seen as a sort of extended epigraph in its constant play with citation, multilingualism, and ironic displays of erudition, all of which color the speaker's celebration of "those national traditions and customs which are the language of the national genius—the deep suckers of healthy sentiment."[79] The multiplicity of languages in these texts invites the reader to imagine an over-arching multilingual consciousness in control of the narrative, and meanwhile, this narrator is implicated in acts of translation that acquire new meanings through repetition.

In both of Eliot's last two works, narrative acts of translation occur as a series of varied impressions. We will see, for example, how a single line from Dante echoes through epigraphs, footnotes, plot points, and dialogue. These impressions initiate readers and characters alike into a deeper, more sympathetic understanding of history as a shared experience recorded in shared texts, a relation the epigraph to *Daniel Deronda*'s chapter twenty-one calls "the true bond between events."[80] Ascendance to this epigraphic textuality, the space of shared history, requires a passage through narrative; this process grants reading and writing the status of event and requires that a translation tell its own story. By emphasizing language difference as a defining concern in Eliot's fiction, I

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[79] George Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, ed. Nancy Henry (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 160. Further citations in text.

[80] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Terrence Cave (New York: Penguin, 2003), 227. Further citations in text.

bridge two familiar areas of critical interest: Eliot's use of realist narrative to promote an ethics of sympathy and her investment in nation, race, and ethnicity as organizing categories for culture at the height of England's imperial power. From both perspectives, Eliot's narration inevitably emphasizes the foreignness of the languages her characters use, both the literal foreign languages of other nations and cultures and the historically-bound personal vernaculars thatlimit each character's capacity for fully successful communication with other characters equally embedded in a particular language situation. The parallel between intercultural and intersubjective communication that structures Eliot's treatment of these problems becomes explicit when her narrator describes potentially unrepresentable subjective experience as "the language in which we think." Problems of self-knowledge and failed romance are narrated in the same vocabulary as plots shaped by literal language barriers. Rather than accepting the impossibility of either intercultural or interpersonal communication, however, Eliot's final works develop an epigraphic narrative structure in which foreign words invite readers into textuality as a network of social and historical relations, pushing Eliot's fictions of "fellow feeling" beyond national borders and restructuring plot and narrative address.

A return to Eliot's translations, her first form of professional writing, usefully frames her life-long exploration of the ways that languages create communities, an exploration that culminates in the transition from *Daniel Deronda* to *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. Long before she wrote her first novel, George Eliot's translation projects confronted questions she would come to explore through fictional narrative: questions of historical consciousness, national and group belonging, and the transmission

and evaluation of cultural traditions. In 1846, as a new member of a circle of free-thinking philosophers in Coventry, she was persuaded to complete the translation of David Strauss' *The Life of Jesus*, a key text of German historical biblical criticism. In 1854, during her tenure as assistant editor at the *Westminster Review*, she undertook the translation of Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, another important work in the same vein of German Bible criticism. Many commentators point out that this translation is her only publication under her real name.[81] This fact suggests her strong identification with Feuerbach's demystification of religion as well as her investment in promoting his ideas in England as a basis for a new secular ethics. Two years later, she finished a translation of Spinoza's five-volume *Ethics* which was intended to complement her partner George Henry Lewes' series of articles promoting the philosopher's work among English readers; however, contract disputes left this translation unpublished.[82] In all of these cases, Marian Evans' choice of project reflects a new point of convergence between personal relationships and intellectual commitments; but beyond their place in her biography**,** these translations steep her moral vocabulary in non-English references that later provide the scaffolding for her narratives of moral development.

Despite the central role of translation in her intellectual development, Eliot addressed the subject directly in only one piece of published writing. In an 1855 review of recent translations of German authors, she concludes:

> Though a good translator is infinitely below the man who produces *good* original works, he is infinitely above the man who produces *feeble* original works. We had

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[81] See Gordon Haight, *George Eliot: a Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1978), 143 and Susanne Stark, "Marian Evans, the Translator," in *Translating Literature*, ed. Susan Bassnett (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 119.

[82] See Haight's account in *George Eliot: a Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1978), 200.

meant to say something of the moral qualities especially demanded in the translator—the patience, the rigid fidelity, and the sense of responsibility in interpreting another man's mind. But we have gossiped on this subject long enough.[83]

While Eliot's direct statement on translation appears on the whole fairly conservative, especially in its insistence on "rigid fidelity" as the translator's moral standard, the ironic dismissal of these moral questions of translation as "gossip" does suggest a critique of assumptions that trivialize the work of the translator. Even more importantly, the "moral qualities" that Eliot grants the good translator are not unlike those that she elsewhere attributes to good novelists and to her most sympathetic characters. And though she writes four decades later, Eliot's conception of translation maintains the framework established by Goethe and Schleiermacher: just as her German predecessors, Eliot understands translation as a process of intersubjective communication, a story of how the minds of authors, translators, and readers can be brought together.

The critical tradition surrounding Eliot's work has traced the influence of the texts she chose to translate on Eliot's particular use of realism.[84] Many scholars have concluded, also, that for Eliot's characters ontological and hermeneutic problems are experienced as problems of language.[85] What has been less studied, though, is the trace of the practice of translation in her fictional texts. Neil Hertz is one of the few scholars who

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[83] George Eliot, "Translations and Translators," in *Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Daniel Weissbort and Astradur Eysteinsson (Oxford University Press, 2006), 220.

[84] Among relatively recent critics, Elizabeth Ermarth in her *George Eliot* pays close attention to Eliot's engagement with the ideas of Strauss, Feuerbach, and Spinoza. For a study of Eliot's work on Spinoza in particular, see Dorothy Atkins' *George Eliot and Spinoza* (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1978).

[85] For example, J.Hillis Miller in *Others* argues that for Eliot the problem of knowing the other is always a "linguistic predicament" and that her novels plot the potential problems of misreading others as well as the ethical imperative to maintain the commitment to reading others (Princeton University Press, 2001), 70.

have considered Eliot's novels in this light. He opens *George Eliot's Pulse*, his collection

of essays on large and small scale patterns in Eliot's fiction, by dilating on a single

instance of "transgression" in her translation of Strauss' *Life of Jesus*. Focusing on key

words like "pulse" and "seed" that Eliot uses to express the expansion and contraction of

experience and to develop a vocabulary of necessary transgression, Hertz shows how

single words that recur in passages of little obvious narrative import—the narrator's

direct address to the reader or her frequent moral ruminations, for example—can

nonetheless contribute to narrative meaning by illuminating patterns of action within and

across more immediately visible plot lines. In short, the narrative voice can reveal an

alternate narrative on the level of language. Hertz explores Eliot's use of narrative voice

most thoroughly in his chapter on *The Lifted Veil*, in which, he says,

> George Eliot was quite deliberately experimenting with the narrative voice that
>
> had established her reputation, by embodying it—that is, by blending
>
> recognizable elements of that anonymous, wise, wide-ranging, ironic yet
>
> sympathizing voice with the accents of a very particular (and not particularly
>
> likable) valetudinarian *homme de ressentiment*. In short, sometimes Latimer does
>
> sound rather like the narrator of *Middlemarch*, but often he just sounds like a
>
> kvetch.[86]

Hertz identifies *The Lifted Veil* as the only one of Eliot's "fictions" to depart from the

"unnamed and practically uncharacterized" narrative voice so familiar to her readers.[87]

Hertz does not include *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* in his discussion of Eliot.

However, when he mentions Latimer in *The Lifted Veil* as an important hybrid narrative

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[86] Neil Hertz, *George Eliot's Pulse* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 43.
[87] Ibid., 42.

voice in Eliot's fiction, he opens a possible new perspective on the later work because both place the familiar omniscience of the George Eliot narrator within highly characterized personas, personas which seem prompt critics like Hertz to draw on foreign words to account for them. Theophrastus's voice, unlike Latimer's, is characterized less by his repetition of key words than by his repetition of acts of translation that transform those words. And his trademark character sketches are as much about his own evolving interpretations of his objects as they are about those objects themselves. Theophrastus engages in translation through his repeated incorporation of foreign words, and the translations interwoven in his narrative become a means to communicate his changing "impressions" of his surroundings. They allow him to transfer to readers the experience of interpreting a changing social and cultural landscape. With this transfer, he enlists his audience as participants in what for him is a crucial ongoing process of collective meaning-making.

Though *Impressions* does in first-person essays what *Daniel Deronda* accomplishes with expansive omniscience, both books are part of what Irene Tucker identifies as Eliot's redefinition of "commonness," the basis of representational authority that claims to bring readers into relation with the subjects of the realist novel. Tucker situates *Daniel Deronda* within a broader shift from a commonness based on cultural and linguistic likeness or on geographical proximity towards a commonness produced by a shared experience of reading. In this mode, the audience comes "to experience the material world they inhabit as a made world, created in the past and present and capable of being made a new in future."[88] This temporality of reading is key to the common

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[88] Irene Tucker, *A Probable State: The Novel, the Contract, and the Jews* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 120.

culture Eliot remakes with her novelistic practices; as Tucker explains, in *Daniel Deronda*, "the novel [offers] a specific temporalized behavior, a particular experience of coming to know in time, as the ground of a common culture: the experience of reading and the process of imagining generated by that reading experience."[89] The "coming to know in time" of *Daniel Deronda* also characterizes the reading practices that Theophrastus Such demonstrates in his protracted and ongoing evaluations of England's changing cultural values. Because it registers cultural change over time, translation as a representational and reading practice serves Eliot's grounding of a common culture in historicized textuality. To use the terms of the more recent theorists I discuss in the Introduction, Eliot's multilingual narration attempts the "teleopoiesis" that Spivak calls for by attempting to "discern new collectivities" across space and time.

I propose that her narrators' "impressions" reveal over time the networks of meaning encoded in the multiple languages of those narrators. Theophrastus' impressions are presented as such through his first-person voice, and even the title, as Nancy Henry explains in her introduction to the text, stresses the mediation of Theophrastus' character: as a pun on the ancient Greek Theophrastus' formula for introducing characters—"such a type who…"—the text's title makes "a linguistic connection in 'such' to the literary tradition of character writing."[90] Furthermore, because the title uses the English version of the Greek formula, Theophrastus' connection to literary tradition is forged through traditions of translation—that is, through received and transmitted impressions of earlier texts. The structure of Theophrastus' narrative voice seems to validate the narrator's claim in the linguistically diverse chapter seventeen of *Daniel Deronda* that, "often the

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[89] Ibid., 118

[90] Nancy Henry, "Introduction," in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, ed. Nancy Henry (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), *xix*.

grand meanings of faces as well as of written words may lie chiefly in the impressions of those who look on them" (186). Here and throughout Eliot's two final works, "impressions" serve as both the raw material and the final substance of language, and Eliot uses translations as "impressions" to shape her narratives into textual networks that can ground collective reading practices.

I.   The "faithful traditions" of the translator

The narrative structure of *Daniel Deronda* takes multiple positions on whether and how foreign languages should be translated or represented with "rigid fidelity." Rather than proposing any straightforward formula for social or textual exchange, Eliot's final novel instead explores the "moral qualities" of the translator. Because the novel connects intersubjective and intercultural communication, it evaluates those characters engaged in protracted processes of socialization and introspection according to the terms Eliot earlier applies to literal translators. That is, the moral re-education of the central characters, especially Daniel and Gwendolen, initiates them into the practices of the "good translator" as Eliot defines them in the 1855 review. More importantly, *Daniel Deronda*'s use of foreign epigraphs *as events* shows that language difference challenges conventional distinctions between levels of narrative discourse. We can start to see how translation shapes Eliot's fiction by examining her characters' own explicit translation practices.

Published in 1876, *Daniel Deronda* narrates the search for spiritual, biological, and textual origins. Such searches drive not only the title character Daniel, who is marked by his mysterious birth and his reluctance to embrace any vocation, but also the more

conventionally novelistic heroine Gwendolen Harleth, whose vague ambitions to greatness are thwarted by her family's fall into poverty. The novel has what critics have until recently understood as a bifurcated structure, divided between the "English" plot and the "Jewish" plot. In the former, Daniel and Gwendolen progress to intimacy through a series of brief but intense interactions, however, against reader expectations, they do not marry; instead, Gwendolen marries a rich, cruel nobleman out of financial necessity, and Daniel guides her through a painful process of moral transformation, out of provincial egotism and into sympathy and humility. Daniel, meanwhile, discovers his previously unknown Jewish origins, becomes the spiritual heir to Mordecai, a proto-Zionist visionary, and marries Mirah, Mordecai's long-lost sister. The novel ends with the couple's departure for Palestine.

As the structural hinge between the novel's two worlds, Daniel acts as an often anonymous mediator in his relations with other characters. The narrator continually notes his sympathy and deep sense of responsibility to other minds. Yet though he is naturally what we might call, in Eliot's terms, a "good translator," he avoids positions of recognizable authority and struggles to invent the terms of his own vocation. Instead, he moves among other lives, enacting various rescues of the morally and physically needy characters surrounding him. Throughout, his hesitation to claim agency in these other lives is expressed through a vocabulary of authorship, and this dread of authorship causes Daniel to identify himself so closely with the objects of his rescue that he risks losing the agency he requires to rescue them. Because of this tendency, his final embrace of vocation depends on a shift in what we might call his translation practices from

unreflexive fidelity to a position that understands linguistic change as a marker of

historical change. This occurs when Daniel must oppose his revered teacher Mordecai.

In *The Powers of Distance,* Amanda Anderson describes Daniel's position as one

of "reflective dialogism."[91] She introduces a crucial distinction between Daniel's Zionism

and Mordecai's and shows how the novel uses characterization to present multiple

perspectives on "the Jewish Question." Whereas Mordecai "reflects German romantic

social doctrine, which reifies national community into a collective will modeled on the

single individual,"[92] Daniel embodies the "universalist civic model."[93] This model of

cultural belonging maintains a critical stance of "cultivated partiality, a reflective return

to the cultural origins that one can no longer inhabit in any unthinking manner."[94] To

illustrate the tension between the two characters' positions, Anderson points to a key

scene in which Daniel refuses Mordecai's invitation to claim sole original authorship of

the latter's ideas. Mordecai imagines a "willing marriage which melts soul into soul" and

urges Daniel to "call nothing mine that I have written." Daniel refuses these terms on the

grounds that "our duty is faithful tradition where we can attain it" and begs Mordecai,

"Don't ask me to deny my spiritual parentage, when I am finding the clue of my life in

the recognition of my natural parentage"; before signing his name to ideas originating in

Mordecai's mind, Daniel says he "must be convinced first of special reasons for it in the

writings themselves" (751).

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[91] Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 121.
[92] Ibid., 134.
[93] Ibid., 123.
[94] Ibid., 121. For a rebuttal of Anderson's position on Zionism and *Daniel Deronda*, see Aamir R. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 95-96.

Mordecai's assumption of the ease of their inevitable and complete union contrasts starkly with Daniel's care to assert his right to oppose that union, to keep open the possibility of "reflective refusal."[95] But Daniel's refusal is less a rejection of the content of Mordecai's ideas than a bid for accuracy in the attribution of that content and a resistance to historical erasure. When he withholds the "promise" immediately in question, Daniel in fact makes another commitment: to preserve Mordecai's connection to the texts he has written. With this gesture he both defends Mordecai's authorship and defines his own role as that of the translator, and we know already that, because Mordecai has written in Hebrew for a prefigured English-bred medium, Daniel's task is literally one of translation. But this scene demonstrates the paradox of his position: Mordecai, as Daniel's source text, demands that Daniel leave no readable traces of his own translation, so that in order to achieve the "moral qualities" of the "good translator"—akin to Anderson's "reflective dialogism"—Daniel must claim enough authority to oppose his original. For him, "rigid fidelity"—or, as Daniel calls it, "faithful tradition"—consists in recognizing the impossibility of absolute identity between a work and its translation. The faithfulness that precludes the union of original and translation preserves Daniel's connection to his "natural parentage" by preserving the history of biological and textual events that have made the story of his life; this commitment requires his refusal of Mordecai's messianic "melting" of history. The translation practices into which Daniel is educated thus maintain an ideal of group belonging firmly grounded in a textual tradition that makes visible its own changes over time.

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[95] Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 135.

II.   Narrator translation in Eliot's epigraphs

The discovery of a shared textual history reorients Daniel's vocation narrative and makes him into a good translator. Beyond its importance for individual character development, however, the same recognition of a broad and cosmopolitan cultural heritage informs the narrative voice as a whole, especially in the framing and organization of the many plots it brings together. In *Daniel Deronda*, the epigraphs become a space for play with appropriation and originality, a space where the narrator engages in acts of translation.[96] The absence of attribution in the novel's many anonymous (or self-citing) epigraphs allows for experimentation with various generic conventions and with archaic and poetic language. In many cases, the epigraph's source and its commentary on the plot are straightforward, but often even clearly attributed epigraphs create an ambiguity of narrative status through their shifting and inscrutable relations to the text within the chapter. The frequent citation of untranslated passages in other languages contributes to this difficulty. This technique includes a multiplicity of voices in keeping with the plot's international scope while at the same time limiting some readers' full comprehension of unfamiliar foreign words. In several cases the text does include translations, however, and the narrative status of these translated epigraphs becomes significantly vexed. Whole or in fragments, the text of these untranslated epigraphs repeatedly resurfaces within the chapter proper, suggesting that the passage

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[96] In her study of the ways that anthologizing and citation act as external forces on Eliot's novels, Leah Price concludes that for Eliot appropriation is the price of dissemination: Eliot's "attitude towards the *Sayings* [...] revived the tension between [...] the fear of having her work appropriated and the wish to have it read. In the end, her audience's insistence on quoting made one inseparable from the other." In *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 137.The inevitable passage of her words through mediums beyond her control perhaps explains the palpable presence of this tension within Eliot's works themselves.

between languages creates a movement that rises to the level of plot and more forcefully enters the sequence of narrative events.

In chapter forty-two, which follows Daniel's first doubts about his new mentor Mordecai's claim to "greatness," the epigraph quotes in German a long passage from the German Jewish historian Leopold Zunz, who grounds a claim to collective greatness in what he considers the ennobling quality of the Jews' history of "sorrow." Though the epigraph offers no translation of the German, the English version, exceptionally, opens the text of the chapter itself. Immediately after the paragraph-length translation, we learn that "Deronda had lately been reading that passage of Zunz, and it occurred to him by way of contrast when he was going to the Cohens, who certainly bore no obvious stamp of distinction in sorrow or in any other form of aristocracy" (517). The translation is thus severed from its original in order to join the narrative proper, which in this passage takes place in Daniel's mind, where a "contrast" places his textual and experiential impressions in relation; because the citation "occurred to him," the event recorded here is not the initial moment of reading, but rather a later moment of spontaneous, associative recall of what has been read. Reading, here, can include repeated encounters with texts and a possible reorienting within the world those texts describe.

The epigraph-chapter sequence appears to illuminate Daniel's subjective experience at this key moment in the story—that is, it appears to offer a direct citation of his thoughts as he rehearses a passage from his reading. But since we know that Daniel speaks German and would read Zunz in the German version, the English paragraph seems unlikely to constitute a literal representation of his internal monologue (unless he translates as he reads); furthermore, as Terrence Cave points out in his footnote to the

epigraph, Eliot translates Zunz's "Tragödie" as "National Tragedy." This change, of

course, puts a finer point on the text's nationalism by conflating cultural and political

recognition,[97] but it also introduces an uncertainty of agency: to whom are we to ascribe

this infidelity of translation? To whose mind does it occur? Given the novel's

preoccupation with the emotional dynamics of communication, it seems possible that this

shift in meaning registers Daniel's not-yet-articulated impression of Jewish history; that

is, the change implicates the narrator in an act of unfaithful translation in order to narrate

Daniel's unconscious movement towards the fully articulated nationalist project he later

comes to embrace as his vocation. This formal strategy establishes an overlap between

the paratextual space of the epigraphs and the diegetic space of the characters. In this

space characters have access to the expansive textuality usually available only to

narrators, and narrators relate events and characters by relating texts and languages.

When translation becomes part of the narrative in this way, the reader's understanding of

character change and historical change requires a recognition of textual change.

This localized crossing between epigraph and chapter establishes the multilingual

consciousness of Eliot's narrator and her use of acts of translation as narrative events.

Another more protracted instance of narrative translation demonstrates how successive

repetitions of a single citation can color the meaning of an event. Chapter seventeen, in

which Daniel saves his future wife Mirah from suicide by drowning, is introduced by a

quote from Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*: "This is the truth the poet sings / That a sorrow's

crown of sorrow is remembering happier things" (185). Though not initially designated

as a translation, the epigraph recurs startlingly a few pages later in Italian, and as in

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[97] Mufti also notes this change in Eliot's translation, but does not remark on the narrative's signal that this text "occurs" within Daniel's mind. See his *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 100.

chapter forty-two, it enters the narrative as an internal event: rowing passively along the Thames, Daniel "was all the while unconsciously continuing the low-toned chant which had haunted his throat all the way up the river—the gondolier's song in the 'Otello,' where Rossini has worthily set to music the immortal words of Dante" (187). Dante's words move through Rossini to Daniel and finally connect him to the still nameless Mirah when "his voice […] entered her inner world without her having taken any note of whence it came." Here the epigraph serves to introduce a new character, who appears as entirely out of context as an obscure foreign quotation; indeed, as the narrator puts it, she is "a figure which might have been the impersonation of the misery [Daniel] was unconsciously giving voice to" (187). Mirah becomes the literal embodiment of "Dante's immortal words," another version of an already heavily mediated citation. Like the passage from Zunz, Mirah is a text that "occurs to" Daniel as he occurs to her. Mirah's initial appearance as a textual fragment, a epigraphic citation, is an another instance of Eliot's use of translation as narration; in this case, the full significance of the citation, which itself reflects on the effects of repetition, is born out across multiple "impressions" in multiple languages.

When the lines from the epigraph reappear in Italian, Eliot's footnote explains: "Dante's words are best rendered by our own poet in the lines at the head of the chapter" (187). This narrative sign-posting suggests that the choice of the translated epigraph serves a practical purpose: it allows Eliot to make a foreign citation legible to the reader without folding its translation into the narrative. However, the footnote seems deliberately ambiguous in its wording, prompting us to wonder whether Tennyson's rendering is "best" among his own translations, among all translations, or even "best"

compared to Dante's original? This claim, along with the placement of the translation at the "head" of the chapter, grants primacy to the translated version. As the narrator remarks in the text of the chapter between the English epigraph and the Italian original, "often the grand meanings of faces as well as of written words may lie chiefly in the impressions of those who look on them" (186). Tennyson's lines convey both Dante's words and the impression they create in him, and his reframing of what "the poet sings" gains in emotional gravity what it may lose in "rigid fidelity." The repeated "renderings" or "impressions" of both words and faces change our understanding of them by showing how they exist in relation to one another.

In the two instances I discuss above, Eliot's narrator draws attention to translation as a protracted process of interpretation and evaluation and implies that such processes drive even Daniel's most intimate, familial relationships. In other instances, the narrator uses translation to provide an alternate language to a character whose voice remains limited within the context of the plot. Henleigh Grandcourt, Gwendolen's cruel husband, is marked by his silent dominance over his entourage and by his limited vocabulary for expressing his even more limited range of emotions and experience. The narrator makes this point in the text of chapter thirteen, in which Grandcourt is stymied by Gwendolen's ambivalent response to his courtship: "'Damn her!' thought Grandcourt, as he too checked his horse. He was not a wordy thinker, and this explosive phrase stood for mixed impressions which eloquent interpreters might have expanded into some sentences full of an irritated sense that he was being mystified, and a determination that this girl should not make a fool of him" (133). Here the narrator directly performs the "eloquent interpretation" of Grandcourt's "mixed impressions," since unlike more verbally and

morally intelligent characters such as Theophrastus and Daniel, Grandcourt cannot do so in his own voice.

The same narrative intervention, which recalls Eliot's 1855 formulation of the translator's task as "the interpretation of another man's mind," recurs later in the space of the epigraph to chapter twenty-five, which weaves together registers, languages, and generic conventions to expand the reader's understanding of Grandcourt's motivations beyond his own narrow self-awareness:

> How trace the why and wherefore in a mind reduced to the barrenness of a
> fastidious egoism, in which all direct desires are dulled, and have dwindled from
> motives into a vacillating expectation of motives: a mind made up of moods,
> where a fitful impulse springs here and there conspicuously rank amid the general
> weediness? 'Tis a condition apt to befall a life too much at large, unmoulded by
> the pressure of obligation. *Nam deteriores omnes sumus licentiae*, saith Terence;
> or, as a more familiar tongue might deliver it, *'As you like' is a bad finger-post.*"
> (278)

Here the epigraph transforms Grandcourt into a type, one of many minds reduced to a common "condition" characterized by an insensitivity to impressions. It does so with hyperbolically archaic diction and ironically Latinate syntax, so that the ultimate shift into literal Latin clinches the joke on both the dull Grandcourt and his overly "eloquent" interpreter. The epigraph takes a turn, however, with its concession to reduce its eloquence to a pithy and "familiar" formula. The translation from Latin motto to colloquial expression multiplies the reader's impressions of the narrative voice as well as of Grandcourt, surrounding the void of his silent apathy with a mix of languages and

styles that reinforces both his own confusion and the universality of Grandcourt's "type" of moral confusion.

The epigraphs are equally important to the characterization of Gwendolen, especially in the novel's early books before her most intense interactions with Daniel have catalyzed her moral transformation. In these moments before her marriage and its consequences, the narrator tells us, "it was never her aspiration to express herself virtuously so much as cleverly—a point to be remembered in extenuation of her words, which were usually worse than she was" (267). The epigraph to chapter six demonstrates Gwendolen's aspiration to cleverness by granting her what reads as the first-person voice of a French coquette: "Croyez vous m'avoir humiliée pour m'avoir appris que la terre tourne autour du soleil? Je vous jure que je ne m'en estime pas moins." [Do you think you've humiliated me by teaching me that the earth revolves around the sun? I swear I don't think any less of myself for it].[98] This chapter follows a scene in which Gwendolen is in fact humiliated by the German musical genius Herr Klesmer's public criticism of her singing. Herr Klesmer delivers his judgment in "an odious German fashion with staccato endings" (48), and Gwendolen, inwardly dejected at having this "sudden width of horizon opened round her small musical performance" (49), outwardly responds with an icy sarcasm that alienates her from the company. The epigraph, however, reimagines her response in a voice unavailable to her character and grants her a masterful and charming French beyond her own level of schoolgirl accomplishment, as if to soothe her pride at being called provincial by allowing her expression in the most cosmopolitan of languages. Furthermore, the invocation of a planetary perspective as a source of humility, though here laughingly rejected, nonetheless anticipates the lesson Gwendolen learns

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[98] This is my own translation.

during her final conversation with Daniel at the novel's end, when "she was for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving" (804).

This epigraph provides commentary on the central arc of the novel's plot by means not only of the foreign language but also of the particular source of its citation. The narrator provides no English version of the bit of dialogue recounted but does indicate the reference, Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*. This late 17th-century work of popular science presents recent discoveries in astronomy through fictional conversations between a scientist and a marquise. In his preface, Fontenelle compares his project to Cicero's translation of Greek philosophy into Latin. Both works aspire to extend the reach of new ideas that the authors consider to be of wide import and interest. His book, he hopes, will provide both instruction and pleasure in varying degrees according to the disposition and prior knowledge of readers. Fontenelle further specifies that he intends his dialogues to make natural philosophy accessible to women by providing them with a identifiable character in the marquise. By her "exemple," predicts Fontenelle, women readers will be encouraged to "s'appliquer" [apply themselves] to scientific ideas as easily as they follow novelistic plots:

A la vérité, elle [la marquise] s'applique un peu, mais qu'est-ce ici que s'appliquer ? Ce n'est pas pénétrer à force de méditation une chose obscure d'elle-même, ou expliquée obscurément, c'est seulement ne point lire sans se représenter nettement ce qu'on lit. Je ne demande aux dames, pour tout ce système de philosophie, que la même application qu'il faut donner à la Princesse

de Clèves, si on veut en suivre bien l'intrigue, et en connaître toute la beauté. Il
est vrai que les idées de ce livre-ci sont moins familières à la plupart des femmes
que celles de la Princesse de Clèves, mais elles n'en sont pas plus obscures, et je
suis sûr qu'à une seconde lecture tout au plus, il ne leur en sera rien échappé.[99]

Indeed, she applies herself a bit, but what does it meant to apply oneself? It is not
sustained meditation on something either inherently obscure or obscurely
explained. It is just not reading without clearly envisioning what one reads. To
understand this entire philosophical system, I ask of ladies no more than the same
application it requires to follow the plot and see the beauty of the Princesse de
Clèves. Of course the ideas in this book are less familiar to most women than
those of the Princesse de Clèves, but they are no more obscure, and I am sure
nothing will be lost after at most two readings.

With this comparison between science and novels, Fontenelle presents his project as one
of translation between two discourses—philosophical and popular—and he uses narrative
techniques of dialogue and characterization in order to connect two audiences. The
preface to *Entretiens* situates the work at the border between fiction and non-fiction, its
generic hybridity intended to multiply possible audiences for its ideas on possible worlds.
When she creates an alternate voice for Gwendolen from this particular source, Eliot
connects *Daniel Deronda* to a network of texts consciously engaged in the application
and redistribution of specialized knowledge. In *Impressions,* this is a central concern for
Theophrastus, who like Fontenelle casts himself as an interpreter and advocate rather
than an originator of new ideas. And, as we have seen, the inspiration of a "movement in

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[99] Bernard Le Bouyer de Fontenelle, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Paris: Debuisson, 1863), *xii*.

men's minds" through translation and mediation is the essence of the mission Daniel

accepts from Mordecai. However, his work as a moral and intellectual guide begins with

Gwendolen, and her line in the epigraph as the irreverent French

marquise/pupil suggests how foreign to her early character her final ethical position will

be.

When untranslated epigraphs like these reappear wholly or partially translated in

ways that advance plot and characterization, we see how foreign words can generate

narrative even on the small scale of a single chapter. The intersection between the

paratext and the diegetic space reveals not only character relations but also the relations

between the foreign languages included in *Daniel Deronda*. Each of the novel's major

foreign languages becomes associated with specific cultural influences and particular

aspects of the overall plot. The first books of the novel, which are set mainly in England

and concern Gwendolen and Grandcourt's courtship, contain far fewer foreign languages

in the epigraphs, just two instances each of French and Latin, the languages most likely

familiar to well-educated English women and men, respectively. However, the

introduction of non-English characters coincides with a proliferation of epigraphs and

references in the novel's two other major languages: German and Italian, both of which

the narrative links to Judaism. Chapter seventeen, as we have seen, uses a translation

from Italian to introduce the at-first ambiguously foreign Mirah, and once her Jewishness

is revealed, most of her appearances include her singing in Italian. Gwendolen bristles at

the "odious German" of the Jewish composer Klesmer, and the chapter in which Daniel

visits the Cohen family's Sabbath meal includes an untranslated epigraph from the

German poet Heinrich Heine's "Hebräische Melodien."

The novel's persistent association of Judaism with Italian and German exposes, of course, the total absence of Hebrew text, translated or otherwise.[100] This is a striking omission in a narrative so dependent on the *idea* of Hebrew, the language in which Mordecai writes and into which he educates Daniel, the language through which Mirah connects with the memory of her dead mother, and the language of the documents Daniel inherits when he recovers his Jewish origins. Hebrew text never appears in the novel, though Hebrew is included by association in the web of languages present in the paratext of *Daniel Deronda*. The epigraphs open a space that multiplies available meanings and connects the central narratives to textual worlds it cannot enter directly. Nonetheless, the absent presence of the Hebrew language constitutes it as a template for language in general. And because the novel's portrait of Jewish language stresses its role in the ongoing communal practice of Jewish life in particular contexts, from the scene of transporting communal worship in Hebrew in a Frankfurt synagogue to the very material presence of those Hebrew texts that establish Daniel's heritage, it comes to argue for the historical and cultural embeddedness of all language. When *Daniel Deronda* relies on Hebrew as a universal particular, it bases itself as a novel on the idea that stories are never monolingual.

Hebrew is almost entirely absent from the novel, but Tucker notes the one inclusion of a Hebrew word (though not in Hebrew script), which occurs during Daniel's visit to a German synagogue before he has learned he is Jewish. Just after Daniel

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[100] Ortwen de Graef discusses at length the novel's quasi-erasure of Hebrew. He also sees the epigraphs as an arena of conflict between the universal and the particular and argues that *Daniel Deronda* replaces Mordecai's nation-bound *Shemah Israel* with a "post national sentiment" from Wordsworth's *Prelude* (22). See his article "A Common Humanity Is Not Yet Enough": Shadows of the Coming Race in George Eliot's Final Fiction," *Partial Answers* 9, no. 1 (2011): 17-39.

experiences a "divine influx in the darkness" (368) while listening to the prayers of the

service, his father's friend recognizes Daniel's family resemblance and asks his name,

leaving Daniel confused and unsettling his sense of himself as an Englishman. But before

this incident, the narrator's account of Daniel's spiritual experience lists the sensory

elements that affect him, one of which is "the chant of the *Chazan's* or Reader's grand

wide-ranging voice with its passage from monotony to sudden cries" (367). Tucker notes

the significance of this particular choice of foreign word, which is invoked to explain

Daniel's entry into a mode of relation that does not rely on understanding a common

language, just as readers of the novel are made aware at this moment of their own

potential difference from the characters and from one another:

> [The novel's readers] are made readers by coming to understand what being a
>
> reader means, in the movement from the sound *chazan* to 'reader.' In this way the
>
> process of reading becomes not simply the immediate apprehension of established
>
> common meaning but the experience of meaning coming into being, a creation of
>
> a new sense that is always in the process of transmuting existing significances,
>
> closing off options even as it creates new ones.[101]

Daniel experiences the meaning of Hebrew prayer before his is able to fully comprehend

its content because he is drawn into participation in the enactment of that meaning. The

narrative work done by the word *chazan* becomes emblematic of the work of all the

novel's foreign words, which enlist readers in an ongoing process of meaning-making.

The two sets of foreign languages—the French and Latin of educated English and the

non-Hebrew yet Jewish-associated German and Italian—converge in the skewed romance

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[101] Irene Tucker, *A Probable State: The Novel, the Contract, and the Jews* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 100.

plot between the novel's central characters. When Daniel reveals his Jewish parentage to her, Gwendolen's new knowledge about him introduces a difficulty of communication that "acted like a difference of native language" (802) between them, as if to frustrate her attempt to blindly "assimilate" to the model she imagines him to be offering. This formulation recalls Daniel's own interrogative stance as he prepares to meet his mother and "could not even conjecture in what language she would speak to him" (625). Thus the defining moment of what is sometimes termed the novel's "English" plot places it in startlingly proximity to the "Jewish" plot because Gwendolen's moral conversion is rendered in the vocabulary of assimilation that the novel elsewhere uses to describe Jewish experience. As Daniel's "words […] inspired her with a dreadful presentiment of mountainous travel for her mind before it could reach Deronda's" (802), Gwendolen herself becomes the wanderer exiled from her spiritual home in Daniel's mind. The convergence of these two vocabularies—one of communication and one of exile—figures ethical dilemmas as alienation from one's "home" language. The overlap shows that a translational mode of reading is key to Gwendolen's transformation. And significantly, her dread of "mountainous travel" separating her from Daniel recalls an earlier epigraph from Dante which comments on her moral struggle not in English or French as in early chapters, but rather in Italian, one of the languages consistently associated with Jewish characters. In this way, her moral conversion is conflated with spiritual conversion as well as language learning. Her thinking in the scene of her parting with Daniel occurs in images, much as Daniel's own thinking operates during his first pre-linguistic "reading" of Hebrew in the synagogue, and as she struggles to comprehend the terms of her new existences, she remains nearly as silent as a foreigner struggling to grasp the vocabulary

of a new language. These signals suggest that Gwendolen glimpses a new mode of social—and textual—relations in which, as Tucker says of the earlier passage, readers "experience […] meaning coming into being."

The logic of the narrative of *Daniel Deronda* requires the separation of the two halves of the English romantic couple, and their refigured relation gives rise to texts that emphasize their distance and difference from one another. Daniel attempts to soothe Gwendolen with the promise of correspondence and even claims "I shall be more with you than I used to be […] If we had been much together before, we should have felt our differences more, and seemed to get farther apart. Now we can perhaps never see each other again. But our minds may get nearer" (806). And despite her initial reluctance to accept this vision, Gwendolen's final appearance in the novel is as a text sent over great distance: in her letter to Daniel on his wedding day, she assures him "I have remembered your words—that I may live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born. I do not yet see how that can be, but you know better than I. If it ever comes true, it will be because you helped me" (810). Though her letter affirms Daniel's authority over her, it also reveals a new awareness of the opacity of language; she repeats Daniel's words while acknowledging her own limited yet developing understanding of them. Her education into sympathy has depended on her reformed understanding of communication as an ongoing process of careful interpretation, and her new mode of reading gives her new access to a shared textual history that bridges novelistic plots, languages, and religions.

III.   Translation as temporal layering

As Gwendolen's transformation makes clear, the multilingual narrative is key to the

resolution of the novel's central relationship, and fittingly the last untranslated epigraph

of *Daniel Deronda* heads the chapter in which the narrator provides one of the most

direct assessments of Daniel's function for Gwendolen, demonstrating how translation

works as a narrative mode in Eliot's novel. In chapter sixty-four, the epigraph again

invokes Dante, perhaps Eliot's favorite non-English source, with a citation from Canto

Four of the *Purgatorio*: "Questa montagna è tale, / Che sempre al cominciar di sotto è

grave, / E quanto uom più va su e men fa male" ["It is the way of this mountain always to

seem hard at the beginning and become easier as one goes on climbing"].[102] Though the

title *Purgatorio* itself provides a kind of commentary on the intensity of Gwendolen's

moral and emotional distress following the accident of her husband's death, no direct

translation is offered for this allegory of spiritual labor. However, several pages into the

chapter, the allegory at work in the epigraph recurs as the narrator relates that

"Gwendolen in fact had before her the unscaled wall of an immediate purpose shutting

off every other resolution. How to scale the wall?" (763). Daniel is clearly Gwendolen's

Virgil, not only in his general role as guide and mentor, but in his specific function as a

mediator between his pupil and an entire "world"—if not underworld—of potential

experience outside of her own narrow self-consciousness. What the narrator calls in this

scene "that mission of Deronda to Gwendolen" consists of checking "worldly"

indifference by acting as an immediate embodiment of Gwendolen's perfected self. Just

as the reader's full understanding of the Italian epigraph is potentially delayed until its

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[102] This translation of Dante is from W.S. Merwin's *Purgatorio: A New Verse Translation* (New York: Knopf, 2000), 37.

later repetition in English and in the context of the plot, so the narrator's assurance that Daniel has fulfilled his "mission" gives a flash-forward to a Gwendolen who has already scaled the wall and conquered the mountain of the moral challenge she faces beginning in this chapter. The temporal layering of translation informs the narrative's movement through its final events, and the epigraph-chapter structure in this case affirms the narrator's comment on Sir Hugo's speculative ruminations at the end of the chapter: "it is the trick of thinking to be either premature or behindhand" (764). This use of a foreign epigraph about changing impressions—travel that seems easier as the traveler continues forward—constellates several moments of Gwendolen's plot, thus making the novel reader into a reader of translation.

The delayed internal translation of this Dante quote repeats, albeit with a less literal and less explicitly signaled way, the relation between epigraph and chapter that structures the scene of Daniel and Mirah's first encounter. As we have seen above, the two are carried toward one another by the moving words of an Italian opera; the lines they sing concern the effect of past happiness on present sorrow. And a similar temporal layering establishes the emotional potency of Mirah's untranslated Italian singing much later in the novel. All three of these significant citations from Dante brings to the present moment emotions legible only by the light of other moments in time. What I have called their temporal layering relies on the status of these citations as untranslated foreign words, for as the narrator clarifies their meaning, the significance of their initial opacity itself becomes clear. Foreignness and the resulting desire to translate and read can clarify character relations, character development, plot structure, and the narrative's temporal

logic. These impulses are central to the sympathetic imagination Eliot's novels seek to cultivate in readers.

In the case of Gwendolen and Daniel, the novel ends with their mutual imagining of written communication as the only space they can continue to share. While Daniel believes letter-writing will bring them closer, Gwendolen dwells on past rather than future words and acknowledges her lack of understanding while looking forward to greater insight. "I have remembered your words," she says, and she trusts that though she "do[es] not yet see" how they will unfold in her life, she already can affirm that "it will be better with me because I have known you" (810). Gwendolen's final words attempt the same deferral of meaning accomplished by the untranslated epigraphs, and her physical separation from Daniel and from novelistic action establishes their potential correspondence as an extradiegetic space that functions similarly to the novel's epigraphs. Her re-education allows Gwendolen to ascend to the space of the epigraphs, where continually unfolding interpretations balance the interests of multiple worlds. Here she becomes a purely textual entity, a "character" in the archetypal sense used by Theophrastus, who works in this same space of citation and translation to create his commentary on contemporary culture. Daniel's trajectory ultimately fits a classical *Bildungsroman* structure, if we consider that his life in England has been a foreign experience he has learned to recognize as foreign in light of his revealed Jewish origins. But Gwendolen's story is left open: the meaning of her experience abroad—both literal travel abroad and the challenge to her ego that Daniel's mentorship presents—remains for her to discover. And we don't know how or to which home she might return, only that she has learned to imagine a common experience with Daniel that tests novelistic

conventions and is based on shared reading, rather than a shared time or place. With this, Gwendelon models the kind of reading-in-common that Tucker describes as "a particular experience of coming to know in time."

IV.   Blindness and "self-betrayal" in Theophrastus' autobiography

The epigraphs to *Daniel Deronda* emerge throughout the course of the novel as a space for complex, increasingly multilingual narrative commentary. Of seventy epigraphs, eighteen or about one quarter either appear in or reference a language other than English, and the percentage rises significantly if we consider only the novel's second half, in which thirteen of thirty, or more than forty percent, of the epigraphs invoke a foreign language. But even given the prominence of untranslated foreign words in Eliot's novel, the texture of languages and citations it creates remains far less dense and difficult than that of her final work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, which abounds with multilingual allusions to literature, history, and science.

In *The Academy*'s 1879 review of George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, George Saintsbury warns admirers of Eliot's "special excellence in novel writing" to expect disappointment from her work as an "essayist." *Impressions*, he reluctantly concludes

> is not likely to be among the most popular of its author's books, nor, perhaps,
> does it deserve this popularity. But still it will be found in all probability very
> quotable, not to say plunderable, all the more so, perhaps, because many of its

good things are in their present habit not set off to the best advantage, and

therefore are not likely to stock the general memory as they stand.[103]

This contemporary evaluation of Eliot's final work of fiction is remarkably prescient of

the book's fate, for indeed, *Impressions* has proven far less popular among readers and

critics than Eliot's famous multi-plot novels, and it has been dismissed as confused and

confusing on both formal and thematic grounds.[104] Saintsbury's appraisal is also keenly

responsive to the book's own claims about literary legacies in general[105]—the essays are

centrally concerned with how and to what ends texts come to "stock the general memory"

of the communities in which they circulate. Though recent decades have brought more

critical recognition, if not sustained analysis, to some of Eliot's lesser-known works like

Romola, *Armgart*, and *The Spanish Gypsy*, *Impressions*, remains a rare object of study.[106]

Its famous final essay is "plundered" for relevant quotes while its roles as an essay

collection, as an experiment in fiction, and as the endpoint of Eliot's publishing career go

largely unexamined. Yet, the questions of address and audience that Saintsbury as early

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[103] George Saintsbury, "Impressions of Theophrastus Such, by George Eliot," *Academy* 15, no. 373 (28 June 1879), 557.

[104] A few examples of critical disregard: F.R. Leavis' canonical *Great Tradition* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948) leaves *Impressions* out of its chapter on Eliot; Joan Bennett, in her 1948 *George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art* calls the essays "disappointing" in comparison to Eliot's journalism (Cambridge University Press, 1966), 52; and Gerald Bullett in *George Eliot: Her Life and Books* mistakenly refers to the collection as *Essays of Theophrastus Such* (Yale University Press, 1948), 138.

[105] Saintsbury's framing of the potential merits of the book is unsurprising given that he himself was a noted historian and critic of French literature and thus had a stake in conceptions of national literatures as well as channels of circulation among them. See for example Dorothy Richarson Jones' account of Saintsbury's championing of French verse forms in *"King of Critics": George Saintsbury, 1845-1933, Critic, Journalist, Historian, Professor*. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992) and Alan Bell's account of his surveys of French literature, "George Saintsbury: Criticism and Connoisseurship," in *Across Boundaries: The Book in Culture and Commerce*, ed. Bill Bell, Philip Bennett, and Jonquil Bevan (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), 143-154.

[106] These few extended treatments of *Impressions* include Nancy Henry's 1994 edition, Andrew Miller's "Bruising, Laceration, and Lifelong Maiming; or How We Encourage Research," *ELH* 70, no.1 (2003): 301-318, the final chapter of Avrom Fleishman's *George Eliot's Intellectual Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), and Ortwen de Graef's recent article "'A Common Humanity Is Not Yet Enough': Shadows of the Coming Race in George Eliot's Final Fiction," *Partial Answers* 9, no. 1 (2011): 17-39.

reviewer poses, the questions Eliot poses through Theophrastus, remain insistently before us as readers of her career in novels.

As its readers have long noted, the book challenges us to evaluate a character's voice in the absence of traditional narrative. This formal problem contributes to the text's treatment of themes of authorship and originality, and the "impressions" of the title form a sort of alternative narrative of the development of Theophrastus' understanding of the characters he describes. From the final and most notorious essay, "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!," which frames questions of reading and writing on a world-historical scale, to the autobiographical opening essay, "Looking Inward," Theophrastus' essays question the degree of agency we should understand authors—writing as self-conscious historical subjects and moral actors—to exert over their texts. At the same time, their multilingual and allusive texture questions readers' relation to the text and the world it refers to.

Since *Impressions* is structured as a series of essays, it is fair to question whether those it is useful to call Theophrastus the "narrator" rather than simply the "speaker." Each essay includes a character sketch that opens into a broader cultural critique, and while throughout the collection the frame of reference does expand—from the Midlands to the continent, from autobiography to history—it does so fitfully rather than according to any logic of narrative progression. Rather, the dominant narrative elements recur within the essays themselves, and it is this characteristic pattern that invites the comparison to novels like *Daniel Deronda*. Theophrastus quite often recounts the context for his discovery of distinctive traits in the characters he describes; his essays also make visible, either through dialogue or description, the analytic process through which he makes judgments about a particular character, explaining preliminary conclusions that he

holds momentarily but ultimately rejects in light of new evidence or greater clarity of perception. Thus, the narrative logic of the text is contained within the plural noun of its title, and it is the sequence of "impressions," implying the comparison and evaluation of multiple moments in time, that makes Theophrastus a complex and forceful fictional narrator.

Theophrastus' method recalls the warning against hasty character judgment issued by the narrator of *Daniel Deronda* in her commentary on Gwendolen's first meeting with her future husband: "Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? even when he is presented to us we only begin that knowledge of his appearance which must be completed by innumerable impressions under differing circumstances. We recognise the alphabet; we are not sure of the language." As his understanding of "impressions" as the units of the language of personality makes clear, Theophrastus' aspirations to a mastery of human character are inextricable from his pretensions to a mastery of multiple languages. To call this book a narrative recognizes it as part of Eliot's career-long exploration of the ethical problems of communication and interpretation; though *Impressions* differs markedly from the novels that precede it, it does so primarily in its more complete shift of focus from a narrative of character relations in a complex society to a narrative of textual relations in a world composed entirely of language.

Theophrastus begins by positing self-knowledge as the essential, yet impossible, foundation for writing, questioning whether as an observer of "characters" he can "given any true account of [his] own"(3). He chooses not to be paralyzed by this difficulty and instead takes it as a marker of truth and sincerity in writing, citing as his predecessor

Rousseau, of whom he says "half our impressions of his character come not from what he means to convey, but from what he unconsciously enables us to discern" (5). Tellingly, Theophrastus uses the metaphor of foreign language to explain the experience of this convoluted "self-ignorance," in which one knows that one expresses more than one can know of oneself, when he asks, "Who can be aware of what his foreign accent is in the ears of a native?" (3). This characteristic mapping of the problems of intercultural transmission onto problems of intersubjective communication suggests that for Eliot, all speech and writing have an "accent" because their meaning resides partially in their transmission history, in their movement among groups constituted by common traditions of "hearing" those "accents."

Although his acceptance of the inevitable "incompleteness" of self-knowledge founds the "charter for writing" that Theophrastus makes for himself, his writing in this first essay nonetheless reveals traces of ambivalence about its consequences. He wonders why, for example, ideas and texts that he authors never seem to succeed when credited to him. His voice, he concludes, is one of "loving laughter" at his fellows' weaknesses, but he hints at his insecurity about the effectiveness of this tone when he admits that his sole publication found an audience only in a translation that neutralized the text's humor: "The work was a humorous romance, unique in its kind, and I am told is much tasted in a Cherokee translation, where the jokes are rendered with all the serious eloquence characteristic of the Red races" (5). If we imagine Theophrastus' prose style in romance to be as dense and allusive as his style in the essays, then such a remote readership as these imagined humorless Cherokees is perhaps the least likely of any to understand his references, presuming they survive translation at all. Theophrastus' success in a context

marked as so extremely foreign—and his corresponding failure to appeal to a domestic audience—suggests that as an author he lacks control over the ways that his texts move through communities within and beyond England.

When he criticizes the Cherokees who appreciate a translation precisely because it has had all its humor and allusion flattened out, Theophrastus challenges his current audience to appreciate his essays in all their instability and contrariness. Yet even he cannot fully imagine the mode of reading that could do full justice to his heavily "accented" impressions. Henry reads Theophrastus' difficult style as part of a strategy to create a community of readers bound by cultural knowledge, able to create a shared future out of shared memories, but the painful joke of the bestselling Cherokee translation reveals Theophratus' doubt about his text's effectiveness as an instrument of cultural organization. He does often rely on "memory and consciousness" to conjure a sense of community, but in his moments of deepest anxiety, Theophrastus instead cultivates an enabling blindness about his readership. One's self-knowledge is inevitably limited, he believes, and consequently one's writing inevitably exceeds one's control; the only way to proceed in light of this truth is to resort to deliberate self-deception. And so Theophrastus yearns for an audience "nearer to my idiom than the Cherokees," and he "imagine[s] a far-off, hazy, multitudinous assemblage, as in a picture of Paradise, making an approving chorus to the sentences and paragraphs of which I myself particularly enjoy the writing. The haze is a necessary condition. If any physiognomy becomes distinct in the foreground, it is fatal" (12). The question becomes, then: how can Theophrastus' writing foster cultural community if he can write only under a self-imposed blindness about his audience? If in order to writer for any audience, he must imagine it as a uniform

mass? In presenting his series of characters, Theophrastus outlines a theory of representation in which fiction is authorized only when it can accommodate the possibly conflicting interpretations of a diverse readership, but his own success at implementing such a theory remains dubious.

V.   Fiction and the "non falsi errori"

Throughout *Impressions*, this problem of authorship and cultural transmission generates some of the text's most complex interweaving of languages and references. Often it is through inserted foreign words that Theophrastus argues for a kind of fiction that is authorized by its imagining of a multilingual audience. In the later essay "How We Come to Give Ourselves False Testimonials, and Believe in Them," Theophrastus again takes the problem of self-knowledge as one with the problem of "truth" in fictional representation. For Theophrastus, both "false testimonials" and false fictional representations reveal a distortion of vision on the part of their author. The "self-ignorant" allegorical characters he describes all cling to "creeds" and "traditions" about themselves that no longer correspond with their behavior as observed by others around them; that is, according to Theophrastus' earlier aphorism, they have no sense of the "accent" others hear in their speech. One character, Callista, is praised for her fruitful imagination, but Theophrastus qualifies that "I must inquire whether, on being requested to give a precise description of what she saw, she would be able to cast aside her arbitrary combinations and recover the objects she really perceived so as to make them recognisable by another person who passed the same way" (108-109). The standard for truth in representation is one of communication; imagination is an "addition" rather than

a "cheaper substitute" only when it produces creative works that communicate a recognizable reality, one that is not confined to a single subjectivity and can, in a sense, speak in the multiple languages of its multiple readers.

Theophrastus continues to use a vocabulary of vision and blindness here, so that the capacity to communicate as author or moral subject depends on "the fundamental power of strong, discerning perception." He cites Dante as a model of the "keen vision" that grounds the truly "fine imagination," which always maintains "a keen consciousness of what *is*, and carries the store of definite knowledge as material for the construction of its inward visions" (109). Truth in representation, then, is based on a *secondary* and transformative vision that "constructs" effective communication from the "material" of its impressions. Theophrastus uses a quote from his exemplary Dante to theorize imagination as secondary vision. The "strongest seer," he says "distinguish[es], as Dante does, between the *cose che son vere* outside the individual mind, and the *non falsi errori* which are the revelations of true imaginative power" (111). The logic of this transformative vision is contained in the phrase "*non falsi errori*," which raises the "not falseness" contained in fictional representation to a truth higher than that of an unmediated vision of the "outside" world. In this sense, the choice to cite this paradoxical phrase in Italian repeats the reversal it accomplishes, but only for English-speaking readers, who encounter it in a language removed from their immediate comprehension, whether via prior knowledge, dictionary, or cognates. The idea that good fiction is best described not as "true" but rather as "not false" is most effectively communicated through foreign words that remain just recognizable enough to fulfill Theophrastus' standards of communication. The "non falsi errori" rejects the notion of a single,

universal truth to be communicated and takes the possibility for multiple versions and readings as the enabling condition for viable fiction.

Theophrastus quotes Dante earlier in the same essay to illustrate the moral hazards of over-active comparison of self to others and to justify his conviction that "a too intense consciousness of one's kinship with all frailties and vices undermines the active heroism which battles against wrong" (105). He gives us "Dante's sentiment," "E cortesia fù, lui esser villano," noting parenthetically that "it is painful to think that he applies it very cruelly" (105). This line, which can be translated "to be rude to him was courtesy," invests "rudeness" with its opposite quality, "courtesy," in the context of the speaker's interaction with a particular man. Like the category of "*non falsi errori*," the figure here appears only in Italian in the essay and thus creates a similar potential opacity of meaning. Yet in this case, Theophrastus assumes knowledge not only of the language but also of the narrative situation of the "cruelly applied" maxim, which in the *Inferno* Dante uses to justify his refusal to remove the icy scales from the eyes of an acquaintance. This man, Fra Alberigo is punished as a traitor against hospitality for murdering guests at a banquet; his violation of hospitality is a violation of a code that, in a sense, establishes a safe means of communication between mutually foreign parties. For this crime, Fra Alberigo remains present in body in the physical world while his soul languishes in the third ring of the ninth circle of Hell. There, the cold freezes a crust over his eyes, which prevents him from relieving his suffering through tears. When he recognizes Fra Alberigo, Dante refuses to remove the icy scales from his eyes. He prioritizes the code of hospitality, judges Fra Alberigo unworthy of reprieve, and chooses to leave him in a state of blocked emotions and imperfect vision. Dante's decision

mirrors Theophrastus' decision to use difficult or untranslated references at key moments in his argument. By blocking readers' full comprehension at a single point in his text, Theophrastus reinforces his distinction between unmediated, imaginative vision—which amounts to a sort of blindness because its impressions cannot be communicated—and the "discerning" and constructive "inward vision" that the "truly fine" imagination achieves over time. Once again, the temporal layering of translation is invested with moral pedagogical value and works to educate Theophrastus' readers into an appreciation for the opacity of languages, forcing them to occupy at least momentarily the blindness to which Dante abandons Fra Alberigo, the blindness from which Daniel rescues Gwendolen. The foreign quote, which itself allows for conflicting readings of a single act as either "courteous" or "cruel," illustrates the narrative procedures that Eliot endorses through Theophrastus, who calls for fiction that registers multiple impressions over time.

VI.   From "screeching" consciousness to "communities of feeling"

Just as the quote from *Purgatorio* in *Daniel Deronda* recurs in English paraphrase within the chapter it heads, so Dante's maxim of cruel kindness reappears later in *Impressions*. It is in the last essays of the collection that the use of foreign words most clearly argues for a commonness grounded in the possibility of multilingualism. In "Shadows of the Coming Race," Theophrastus relates a debate with his friend Trost over the possibility of machine evolution. Incensed by Theophrastus' extended portrait of a "machine parliament," Trost, "getting angry and judging it kind to treat me with some severity" scolds him with a cruelty akin to Dante's treatment of Fra Alberigo. Trost remains optimistic that increasingly sensitive measurement machines can relieve humans of

"grosser labour" (139) without threatening human intellectual superiority. Theophrastus, however, claims to doubt this human monopoly on powers of interpretation and plays with the position that consciousness, in fact, is a "futile cargo" and a "mere stumbling of our organisms on their way to unconscious perfection" (141). He imagines a future in which "blind and deaf" machines come to dominate by rendering human language obsolete; they "execute changes as delicate and complicated as those of human language and all the intricate web of what we call its effects, without sensitive impression, without sensitive impulse: there may be, let us say, mute orations, mute rhapsodies, mute discussions, and no consciousness there even to enjoy the silence" (142).

Theophrastus' nightmare of a world that functions without the familiar "impressions" and "impulses" of human language is meant to inspire horror in Trost and the readers for whom he is a proxy. His vision places the ascendance of the "coming race" of machines at the end point of a historical and evolutionary process that eventually transcends "screeching" human consciousness (141). Since the silent rock-like machines "execute changes" without recording them, their world operates entirely without history or narrative, so that the arrival at unconsciousness implies the forgetting of the process of getting there. Such a system is understandably frightening to Theophrastus, whose arguments depend on anecdote and narrative context. Without a textual tradition, the network of impressions through which he creates meaning would disintegrate.

The brief foray into science fiction of "Shadows of the Coming Race" demonstrates the intensity of Theophrastus' investment in language and tradition as the fundamental advantages of human consciousness. This understanding of consciousness as the capacity to receive and communicate impressions, along with the introduction of

"race" as an organizing term for Theophrastus, sets up the collection's final and most-discussed essay, "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" This essay argues for the cultivation of "national consciousness," which is constituted, Theophrastus says, by the "living force of sentiment in common" among members of a nation (147). As he traces recent European history in order to illustrate the benefits of such group feeling, Theophrastus attributes the driving spirit of the Italian unification movement to this "national consciousness," which acts as the "divine gift of a memory which inspires the moments with a past, a present, and a future, and gives the sense of corporate existence that raises man above the otherwise more respectable and innocent brute" (144). We see here that it is precisely the same shared historical perspective, capable of understanding multiple moments in time as units of unfolding meaning, that distinguishes humans from both machines and animals. And as with his satirical prediction of the evolution toward machine supremacy, Theophrastus in his reflections on patterns of migration looks forward to an inevitable "fusion of races." Yet while acknowledging the inevitability of this historical progression, Theophrastus recommends delay, praising "that spirit of separateness which has not yet done its work in the education of mankind, which has created the varying genius of nations, and, like the Muses, is the offspring of memory" (160).

Such frank statements of nationalism, especially where they conflate categories of race and nation, strike us today as dangerously aligned with an essentialist cultural conservatism. However, as Henry emphasizes, Theophrastus' status as both insider and outsider in mainstream English culture complicates our reading of his nationalism. His anxiety over threats to his own survival as an embodiment of a particular English intellectual tradition fuels his concern for the fate of other threatened minority cultures,

particularly Jewish culture. Theophrastus takes European Jews as exemplars of national

consciousness; they form, he finds, "a people educated from an earlier or later period to a

sense of separateness unique in its intensity, a people taught by many concurrent

influences to identify faithfulness to its national traditions with the highest social and

religious blessings" (149). His investment in Jewish culture works like *Daniel Deronda*'s

use of Hebrew to theorize the universal particularity of languages. Somewhat

paradoxically, then, Theophrastus' chosen example of the sort of collective cultural life

he prescribes for England is a minority group whose status in that country has been at

best contested. He spends most of this last essay debunking the various hypocritical

justifications for the historical and continuing abuses of Jews in England. With this

condemnation of anti-Jewish sentiment and his refusal to blame a minority group for its

own persecution, Theophrastus places the responsibility to maintain a common culture on

members of the community, shifting nationalist discourse away from its preoccupation

with outside threats and towards a focus on the cultivation of textual traditions.

Theophrastus' argument attempts to advocate for the universal right of individuals

to belong to a particular "community of feeling" (163), for a nationalism without

chauvinism. Along with an attachment to their immediate fellows, Theophrastus explains,

the English must recognize "a corresponding attachment to nationality as legitimate in

every other people, and understand that its absence is a privation of the greatest good"

(147). This recognition of similarity in difference begins in an appreciation for a shared

textual and linguistic history. Particularly odious in Theophrastus' eyes is Christian

violence against Jews, "whose ways of thinking and whose very verbal forms are on our

lips in every prayer which we end with an Amen" (163). Though bland cosmopolitanism

is his primary target, his assessment of English cultural stagnation condemns English claims to unique status as a historically vigorous nation; he just as strenuously rejects any limited, presentist celebrations of English culture. Both forms of blindness deny other nations' claims to national pride. Such a "nullification," in Theophrastus' scheme of international cultural relations, is born of "blinding superstition" and an insensitivity to the impressions left by a shared history (165).

The nullification Theophrastus objects to is the same egotism that Gwendolen is educated out of, the same historical erasure Daniel must learn to resist in his reformed translation practices, so that the position that Theophrastus articulates in the final essay, and throughout the collection, expands on the argument implied by the epigraphs of *Daniel Deronda*. In the novel, Eliot valorizes multiple textual traditions when she reinforces the central plot with a parallel narrative built on translations and citations of several languages. In *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, she carries this strategy further by shifting the burden of the entire argument from the novelistic plot to the elaboration of the multiple textual traditions that, as we have seen, both constitute and continually inform the impressions Theophrastus conveys in his essays. Viewed in conjunction with *Daniel Deronda*, *Impressions* appears as an expansion of the paratextual space of the epigraphs into the text proper. Theophrastus in his crankiness worries over the state of English culture and language in the face of growing foreign influences, but he even more forcefully bids the English to remember the foreign words that already structure their daily lives and to recall the Hebrew history behind their "amens." In the move from the omniscient multilingualism of *Daniel Deronda* to the highly specific voice of *Impressions*, Eliot's fiction more insistently reconceives particularized languages as the

type of all communication and uses translation to promote reading practices that

recognize the impressions left as texts and languages change.

Translation and Collaborative Reading in Virginia Woolf's Novels and Essays

In the preceding chapters, I have shown how the novel can work as a form for experimenting with an ethics of translation that centers on the experience of readers. Building on the foreignizing translation theories and pan-European ideals of Romantic thinkers, novelists use foreign words and citations in ways that challenge readers' conceptions of community and reshape narrative structure. For novelists in the nineteenth century, narrative acts of translation—Staël's proposition that Shakespeare is not just equally comprehensible but actually better in Corinne's Italian version, the recurrence of foreign words that re-align *Daniel Deronda*'s "English" and "Jewish" plots—ultimately exceed available novel structures and place new demands on readers. In the present chapter, I connect these translational modes of reading, Germaine de Staël's enthusiasm and George Eliot's impressions, to what I identify in Virginia Woolf's work as a concept of "attachment." As for her predecessors, Woolf's commitment to reconceiving the authority of the author leads her into narrative strategies that solicit an active collaboration from a knowing reader who recognizes both the necessity and the limitations of common signifiers. Narrators and characters transfer their loyalties and shift between extremes of connection and isolation through acts of literal and metaphoric translation, and the movements between languages model for readers a transferable relation to group affiliations and to the author. Figures of attachment proliferate in the metaphoric texture of her novels and the concept underlies the explicit arguments of her most memorable essays, so that Woolf's interest in translation as a mode of reading can provide a useful perspective on the generic texture of her body of work.

Woolf has long been considered the most thoroughly English of canonical modernists,[107] but her works attests to a career-long interest in foreignness and the meanings of Englishness in a period of rapid geopolitical change.[108] From her early study of ancient Greek drama to her final essays on the legacies of linguistic class divides in medieval and contemporary England, Woolf grapples with the diversity of languages present within any social group. And though the main characters in her novels and the speakers of her essays identify themselves explicitly as English, Woolf's narratives portray their affiliations as self-conscious and in-process. This is true of Rachel Vinrace, the main character of Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915). Rachel's journey to a

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[107]Most studies of Woolf and translation have addressed the reception history of translations of her novels in specific languages and contexts in order to illuminate the aesthetic or ideological implications of a particular translator's encounter with Woolf's work. See, for example, Katherine Shields, "Qui a peur de traduire Virginia Woolf? La Querelle des *Vagues*," *Babel: Revue International de la traduction* 44, no. 1 (1998): 15-28 and Nicolletta Pirredu "Modernism Misunderstood: Anna Banti Translates Virginia Woolf," *Comparative Literature* 56 no. 1(2004): 54-76. Others propose strategies for translating her experimental narrative and syntax. See, for example, Charlotte Bosseaux, "Point of View in Translation: A Corpus-based Study of French Translations of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*," *Across Languages and Cultures* 5, no.1 (2004): 107-122 and Elena Minelli, "Punctuation Strategies in the Textualization of Femininity: Virginia Woolf Translated into Italian," *New Voices in Translation Studies* no.1 (2005): 56-69. The attitude of Steven Yao in *Translation and the Languages of Modernism* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) is typical of critics who do not include Woolf among modernists interested in translation and cosmopolitanism. He finds in Woolf's prose, "a generally more conservative approach to the practice of translation as a mode of literary production" than that taken by Pound and Yeats, whose work Yao argues "indicates the capacity of translation to function under certain circumstances as a triangulated strategy for negotiating the politics of influence within Anglophone culture itself" (235). Among the rare studies of Woolf's own direct engagement with translation are Emily Dalgarno's *Virginia Woolf and The Visible World* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Rebecca Walkowitz's chapter "For translation: Virginia Woolf, J. M. Coetzee and Transnational Comparison" in *The Legacies of Modernism: Historicising Postwar and Contemporary Fiction* (ed. David James, Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[108] Recent work on transnationalism in modernist studies has fostered closer attention to Woolf's writings on cultural exchange and much discussion of her positions on race and imperialism, of which the most influential statement is Jane Marcus' *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004). In *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton University Press, 1998), Susan Stanford Friedman performs "uncommon readings" of passages from Woolf in order to demonstrate "how reading in the time-space of one's position reflects geopolitical location" (130). Several critics have shown how Woolf imagines alternative modes of political action and affiliation, including what Jessica Berman describes as a "splinter and mosaic" model of community (*Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2001)) and what Rebecca Walkowitz calls "evasion" (*Cosmopolitan Style* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)). These readings illuminate connections between Woolf's vision of community formation and her position on the uses of translation, suggesting that for Woolf, reading in translation does not constitute a refusal to engage with cultural difference, but rather can function to displace hierarchies and create solidarities among disparate groups of English speakers.

South American island gives her a first glimpse of England as part of a global whole, almost as if visualized on a map; this new perspective on her home forces her to reconsider her status as an Englishwoman, and she spends much of the novel searching for language to describe the life she desires. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Woolf includes two characters, Septimus Smith and Peter Walsh, who represent England's military and imperial interests abroad only to find themselves alienated from daily life when they return to the metropole. *Orlando* (1928) and *The Waves* (1931), the novels I will discuss here, interweave insider and outsider perspectives on English cultural identity by building a common language out of acts of translation. In both works, Woolf invents narrative techniques that allow her to expand the field of representation geographically, historically, and psychologically while still foregrounding the difficulties of that expansion and keeping unassimilable details in focus.

During the period in which she produced these novels, Woolf also published two volumes of an essay collection called *The Common Reader* (1925, 1933). The work of these essays plays on the double meanings of the two terms in the title: the "reader" is both the individual, ordinary and perhaps even of the "common" class, as well as the collection itself, which brings together disparate texts and audiences. Several of the essays, particularly "On Not Knowing Greek" and "The Russian Point of View," foreground problems of translation and cultural transmission and make clear that these concerns are relevant to all readers, not only to university-educated expert readers. The implied reader-writer relation of *The Common Reader* volumes puts into practice a politics of translation inspired by the collaborative ethos of the audience-playwright exchanges of earlier moments in England's literary history.

Woolf explicitly formulates the connection between translation and common reading in the later project that yielded *The Years* (1937) and *Three Guineas* (1938), which she initially planned as a single work but later separated into two generically distinct books. Her confrontation with the foreignness of languages and the translational work required of all readers eventually breaks this project in two; yet translation persists as the point of attachment between the novel and the essay that emerge from Woolf's idea for one book about the history of English cultural life. The citation of Antigone's line "'tis not my nature to join in hating, but in loving," recurs at key junctures of the argument of *Three Guineas* and in narration of *The Years*, in Greek and in translation; these words suture the two works together while also marking their formal and generic divisions. In her final novel *Between the Acts* (1941) and her last unfinished essays "Anon" and "The Reader," Woolf continues to argue that translation is necessary to both reader-writer collaboration and to the lateral connections that create individual readers into one audience; at the end of her career she demonstrates more directly than ever her conviction that these new modes of reading can open up new modes of affiliation outside of patriarchal nationalism.

With this account of translation in Woolf's career, I deliberately bring together her works of several genres: short journalistic essays, book-length polemical essays, her most "serious" novel, which skirts the borders of poetry, and one of her least "serious" novels, which sends up the conventions of biography. I do so partly to suggest that translation is a persistent concern and provides one unifying view of a body of work that critics have tended to divide into discrete generic categories.[109] I also show that this

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[109] Even Jed Esty, one of the keenest readers of Woolf's ambivalent stance towards nationalism, sees her popular literary criticism as at best a frustrated supplement to her modernist fiction: "Modernist writers

engagement with problems of translation *creates* generic hybridity, not only across the

works I will consider, but within each one as well. That is, the fictional elements of

Woolf's essays—the character of Shakespeare's sister in *A Room of One's Own* or the

epistolary premise of *Three Guineas*—work like the non-narrative language of *The*

Waves and the mock biography of *Orlando*. Both push against genre boundaries as part

of Woolf's ongoing project to re-invest written language with the collaborative potential

she values in the orally transmitted, anonymously-authored performances of England's

literary past. Those earlier forms, for Woolf, maximize reader participation by

transferring at least partial authority from writer to reader and connecting the acts of

translation performed by both.

Woolf's essays propose two key figures as emblems of her pedagogical and

feminist projects, the common reader and the Outsider, and my readings of Woolf's work

across genres will look for these figures in the implied audience of her fiction, as well.

The common—that is, ordinary or not highly educated—readers for whom Woolf writes

her essay collections are necessarily Outsiders according to the terms she sets forth in

Three Guineas: specifically, Woolf says, Outsiders maintain anonymity by refusing to

measure success in terms of degrees or titles that elevate the individual name, and they

remain indifferent to what she calls the "unreal loyalty" of patriotism (94).[110] Outsiders

must practice a common reading not only of literature but also of the complex sign

systems that organize the distribution of power in their national culture. Yet the two

terms "common" and "Outsider" create a paradox where they intersect: the outsider

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expressed frustration at their marginality in a number of ways. Woolf, for example, developed a rich and
generous body of criticism dedicated to preserving English literature for the 'common reader.'" In *A
Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*. (Princeton University Press, 2004), 54.

[110] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (1938; New York: Harcourt, 2006). Further citations in text.

readers' commitment to anti-nationalism, if it extends to their literary activities, may seem to imply a mutlilingualism that is at odds with the level of education of the common readers, and especially the women readers addressed in *Three Guineas*. However, Woolf considers this limitation to a single native language part of the "unpaid-for education," which her argument attempts to revalue by transforming its apparently restrictive elements into the principles of her Outsider ethics.

In the case of the speaker of *Three Guineas* (an educated man's daughter) and her interlocutor (an educated man), a "difficulty of communication" (6) arises from differences of education and experience. These differences are embodied in the figure of Mary Kingsley, a late Victorian writer and traveler whose confession that "being allowed to learn German was *all* the paid-for education I ever had" becomes a refrain throughout the essay (6). Here the question of access to multilingualism sums up the crucial distinction between "paid-for" versus "unpaid-for" education on which much of Woolf's argument rests. Mary Kingsely's exceptional German proves the rule, and she speaks from an England in which the privileged insider position is also the only point of departure outside English culture. The argument transforms Mary Kingsley from a historical personage into a recurring character whose biography defines one of the essay's key rhetorical terms, so that Woolf's point about translation is made, as it often is, at the juncture between essay and novel.

Because it questions the authority of the original and allows for engagement, however mediated, with other cultures and languages, translation is implicated in Woolf's strategies for forming communities along organizational axes other than the nation and its institutions. Her texts demonstrate how "reading and writing one's own tongue" can

figure crucially in the critical stance towards cultural authorities that she calls on

Outsiders to maintain. Jessica Berman includes Woolf among a group of modernists

whose works demonstrate a much stronger interest than previously recognized in

possibilities for alternative communities. For these writers, "[T]ranslation functions as a

metaphor for the liminal zone between the punctual and the fragmented self, between the

self and its communities of affiliation, both past and present, as well as between the

loyalties and allegiances demanded by those communities, both large and small."[111] And

for Woolf particularly, "[her] notion of affiliation stands in opposition to both atomistic

individualism *and* to conventional modes of construing community in which the group

exists as a 'monolithic, consistent, whole.'"[112] Thus translation serves Woolf's model of

community by guarding against the misrepresentation of individuals as fully autonomous

and the misrepresentation of groups as uniformly constituted.

As Berman's analysis suggests, Woolf's work is fundamentally shaped by this

double "opposition" and the search for textual practices that do not reproduce old

structures of authority. Staël's *Corinne* uses translation to gesture toward a third language

beyond its heroine's literal bilingualism, a language in which readers can access the

meaning of her poetry without reducing her to a single national language. Woolf's essays

and novels also situate their readers as a sort of third term, in an outsider position from

which new possible modes of attachment become visible.[113] For Woolf's outsider

readers, the inability to engage directly with the linguistic difference of a foreign

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[111] Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.
[112] Ibid., 122.
[113] For an account of how Woolf's own reading shaped her political affiliations, see Anne Fernald, *Virginia Woolf: Feminism and the Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

literature is the mark of gender and class; part of the Outsiders' difference is their way of

reading difference, that is, in translation.

Woolf imagines a heterogeneous readership whose multiple perspectives magnify

its collective political agency, and her model of reading in translation fits into the broad

concerns that recur in her fiction: the problem of perspective, the insufficiency of

language, the distortions wrought by sequence and endings. The "anonymity" and

"indifference" named as the key values of the Outsider of *Three Guineas* give political

meaning to the search undertaken in *The Waves* for a language outside of perspective.

That novel oscillates between the high tide of a narrating "we" and the retreat into an

intimate "little language" (183, 227) that precedes individuation, two positions that

escape the "I, I, I" (227) of the stable self but prove equally impossible to maintain. In

this *The Waves* provides a framework that allows us to see how the same movement

structures moments of more explicit language difference that occur throughout *Orlando*,

where for example the mutually foreign "little language" Orlando uses with his lover is

the French taught him by his mother's maid and later the check on Orlando's total

assimilation into a band of "gypsies" is the unbridgeable distance between their words for

"beauty."[114]

In these and other moments, the effort to bypass self becomes an effort to step

outside, if not to *stay* outside, a singular national identity and to attempt communication

there. Woolf shares Eliot's and Staël's optimism about the agency of the imaginative

reader, but for her, whether that common outsider status allows for meaningful exchange

is always uncertain, as when in *Between the Acts* two women divided by class, one the

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[114] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928; New York: Harcourt, 2006) and *The Waves* (1931: Penguin, 2000). Further citations in text.

play's author and one the play's audience, emphatically do not communicate the mutual gratitude they intend to convey: "Their eyes met in a common effort to bring a common meaning to birth. They failed."[115] Moments like these in Woolf's fiction constitute an explicitly articulated politics of translation, which gives rise to a specific narrative language, from ironic appeals to the reader's imagination in *Orlando* to attempts in *The Waves* to elaborate through repetition a poetic language that can, in a sense, translate a diversity of embodied experiences.

I.   Common reading

In *Three Guineas* Woolf considers translation and foreign language education mainly insofar as they produce and signal privilege, but in earlier works she interests herself in translation as a literary and stylistic problem. An examination of several of her early essays allows us to appreciate more fully the novelty of Woolf's position on translation as it emerges later in *Three Guineas* and the novels. As she was drafting *Mrs. Dalloway* and the essays for the first *Common Reader*, Woolf was working on her own translation of *Agamemnon*, and her direct commentary on translations in "On Not Knowing Greek" and "The Russian Point of View" emphasize an inevitable distortions of sound and meaning.[116] Of Russian literature, which was gaining popularity in England at the time she wrote and of which her own private press published many translations,[117] Woolf says, "When you have changed every word in a sentence from Russian to English, have thereby altered the sense a little, the sound, weight, and accent of the words in

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[115] VirginiaWoolf, *Between the Acts*. (1941; London: Hogarth Press, 1990), 95.

[116] These essays were both written while Woolf was drafting *Mrs. Dalloway* and were published in 1925 in the first *Common Reader*. My citations are from the *Collected Essays Volume 1* (London: Hogarth, 1966). Further citations in text.

[117] Ibid., 146.

relation to each other completely, nothing remains except a crude and coarsened version of the sense" (238-239). In the case of ancient Greek, she at one point contends that "It is useless, then, to read Greek in translations. Translators can but offer us a vague equivalent; their language is necessarily full of echoes and associations" (11-12). In this instance Woolf indeed adopts the conservative attitude that Steve Yao attributes to her in *Translation and the Language of Modernism,* voicing a predictable position on translations as necessarily flawed works that strive for but can never achieve perfect fidelity to their originals. Such a position would effectively invalidate the experience of readers outside the class of highly educated readers within England's university system. However, her argument moves past this refusal by using the limitations of reading in translation to illustrate by extension the limitations of reading in general.

The very subject of Woolf's essay on Greek literature places her discussion of translation in the context of nineteenth-century scholarly debates over the proper mode of circulation and interpretation of classical Greek literature in modern England,[118] most notably the famous 1861 dispute between Matthew Arnold and Francis Newman over the meter and standards of readability that ought to apply to English translations of Homer. Arnold argues for a standard that encloses both translations and their audience within the university system; for him, "the translator of Homer ought steadily to keep in mind where lies the real test of the success of his translation, what judges he is to try to satisfy. He is to try to satisfy *scholars* because scholars alone have the means of really judging him." This conception of his audience guides Arnold's ideal translator in his aim to "reproduce

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[118] On the influence of classical Greek on Woolf's intellectual development, see Fernald, who argues that Woolf rejects the Victorian (and specifically Arnoldian) notion of a direct inheritance from Greek ancients to English moderns. See also Jean Mills *Goddesses and Ghosts: Virginia Woolf and Jane Ellen Harrison* (dissertation, CUNY, 2007) for a discussion of Woolf's engagement with Greek literature and with the methods of the prominent feminist classicist Harrison.

on the intelligent scholar, as nearly as possible, the *general effect* of Homer."[119] Newman, on the other hand, defends his own literal translation of the *Iliad* on the grounds that it best serves readers without access to the original. Envisioning a more diverse audience, he distinguishes between scholarly and popular readers: "Scholars are the tribunal of Erudition, but of Taste the educated but unlearned public is the only rightful judge; and to it I wish to appeal. Even scholars collectively have no right, and much less have single scholars, to pronounce a final sentence on questions of taste in their court."[120] Yet though more attentive to its popular audience, Newman's model of translation nonetheless relegates that audience to the clearly demarcated domain of "Taste," where readers passively consume what scholars produce. Whereas he wants to sidestep the critic's authority in order to make a space for popular readers to engage with Greek literature, Woolf not only rejects the critic's authority but also challenges the division of readers into hierarchized groups.

Woolf writes against Arnold's Victorian model of professional criticism, which functions as a realm apart from and superior to that of her "common readers." This model is exemplified by Arnold's conception of translation as a key to England's cultural superiority. Arnold explicitly links translation and criticism as related scholarly functions; indeed, he enters the debate with Newman in order to "point out how widely, in translating Homer, a man even of real ability and learning may go astray, unless he brings to the study of this clearest of poets one quality in which our English authors, with

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[119] Matthew Arnold. "The Translator's Tribunal, from *On Translating Homer* (1861)". *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche*. ed. Douglas Robinson (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome., 1997), 254. Further citations in text.

[120] Francis Newman, "The Unlearned Public is the Rightful Judge of Taste from *Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice* (1861)." *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche*. ed. Douglas Robinson. (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome, 1997), 256. Further citations in text.

all their great gifts, are apt to be somewhat wanting—simple lucidity of mind" (255). Arnold considers masterful translation into English a sign of the superiority both of English writers and of the language itself, and his prescription for English success in the European intellectual scene is inherited by contemporaries of Woolf like F. R. Leavis.

English don at Cambridge, Leavis promotes a vision of literary studies in which an educated elite safeguards an intellectual tradition. In his 1930 "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture," he writes that "The minority capable not only of appreciating Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, Baudelaire, Hardy (to take major instances) but of recognizing their latest successors constitute the consciousness of the race (or of a branch of it) at a given time."[121] For Leavis as for Arnold, the informed appreciation of foreign literatures reinforces a coherent "Englishness" whose center of authority remains within the university system. It is at this point of contention over the location of authority where Woolf intervenes, taking Arnold and his successors as subtle interlocutors throughout "On Not Knowing Greek." Woolf echoes the famous central tenet of Arnold's conception of criticism, which he first formulated in his essays on translation: the mandate to "see the object as in itself it really is" (255). In Woolf's essay, the phrase is reversed to become an expression for precisely what inevitably escapes the grasp of even the most expert of readers. Thus, Aeschylus' "use of metaphor […] amplif[ies] and give[s] us, not the thing itself, but the reverberation and reflection which, taken into his mind, the thing has made" (31). And later, the Greek language can offer "only an image of the reality, not the reality itself" (35). In Woolf's reformulation of Arnold, "the thing itself" remains inaccessible even to the elite minority.

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[121] F.R. Leavis, "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture," in *For Continuity* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1933), 14-15.

Just as Arnold comes to his views on criticism by way of a debate about translation, Woolf develops her position on common reading by thinking through questions of foreign reading. By labeling translations as "vague equivalent[s]" she seems to voice a position akin to Arnold's dismissal of the popular reception of translations, but the argument of "On Not Knowing Greek" ultimately levels the playing field between scholars and common readers of Greek literature. Woolf goes further than Newman, whose conception of translation, though more inclusive than Arnold's, nonetheless positions the scholar-translator as a benevolent yet authoritative gatekeeper of foreign literature. Her statement, however, shifts the focus from the production of translation to its uses, and the "not knowing Greek" comes to refer not just to an ignorance of classical languages but to the general impossibility of knowing another culture across time and space through its literature. Melba Cuddy-Keane in her study of what she terms "the pedagogical Woolf" makes just this point. As she says about Woolf's essay on Greek literature, "the 'privileged' position of knowing the language is undercut when the essayist points out that no one in the twentieth century has first-hand knowledge of the society or the climate of ancient Greece."[122] The crucial difficulty for Woolf, however, results not just from the historical distance but from the differences of language and culture. In her discussion of the difficulties for English readers of Russian literature, Woolf says: "A special acuteness and detachment, a sharp angle of vision the foreigner will often achieve; but not that absence of self-consciousness, that ease and fellowship and sense of common values which make for intimacy, and sanity, and the quick give and take of familiar intercourse" (238). Arnold, too, admits that even "[the scholar] knows

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[122] Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, The Intellectual, and The Public Sphere* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 140.

[Homer] but imperfectly, for he is separated from him by time, race, and language," yet he still insists "but he alone knows him at all" (254). Woolf, for her part, directly challenges the exclusive intellectual authority that Arnold struggles to retain; she not only implies that even scholars inevitably work in uncertainty, but makes the stronger claim that "even for the unlearned some certainties remain" about Greek literature (12). In Woolf's revision of the workings of intellectual authority, experts remain outsiders and the uneducated glimpse truths, but no reader or class of readers, however well-educated, can claim to gain exclusive knowledge of another nation or culture through its literature.

Indeed, for literature to take on such a role would be undesirable and would threaten to warp the relation of writers to both subject and readers by situating them as representatives who read their own culture from the outside, but who, unlike the Outsiders later imagined in *Three Guineas*, retain a level of patriotism inconsistent with the Outsiders' crucial "indifference." This is the problem Woolf identifies in the case of Sinclair Lewis in her 1925 essay "American Fiction":

> But the uneasiness is there. He has not identified himself with America; rather he has constituted himself the guide and interpreter between the Americans and the English, and as he conducts his party of Europeans over the typical American city (of which he is a native) and shows them the typical American citizen (to whom he is related) he is equally divided between shame at what he has to show and anger at the Europeans for laughing at it.[123]

By contrast, the fiction of Ring Lardner succeeds in making English readers "feel at least freely admitted to the society of our fellows" because "he is not merely aware that we

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[123] Virginia Woolf, "American Fiction," in *Collected Essays Volume 2* (London: Hogarth, 1966), 116. Further citations in text.

differ; he is unaware that we exist" (117-118). That is, writers like Lardner succeed in creating compelling fiction because they neither attempt to translate the specificity of their subject into more palatable forms nor promote the fiction of a stable pre-existing national character by aiming to represent it in literature for other nations. This strategy invites "common" reading in the sense that it creates the text as a potential common ground for American writers and their English audiences.

In instances of untranslatable difference such as those between English readers and contemporary American writers, nineteenth-century Russian novelists, or ancient Greek dramatists, Woolf's essays articulate a common reading that rejects the notion of a representative national literature. Drawing on the logic of translation, Woolf opposes the individual authority of authors as well as the collective authority of nations and distinguishes her own social and intellectual project from those that participate in the consolidation of English literary studies as a discrete academic and institutional category, a space for the accumulation of a specialized, nationally-defined knowledge.[124] Her resistance to positions of authority in her own prose style facilitates a reading experience that does not place readers at the receiving end of a transmission of some specialized knowledge, but rather positions the act of reading outside the realm of such an economy of knowledge altogether.

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[124] On the history of subject English in England, see *Questions of English* by Robin Peel, Annette Patterson, and Jeanne Gerlach (New York: Routledge, 2000), particularly their account of the 1921 Newbolt Report on national education, in which academics from the English Association responded to the post-First World War "desire that the nation's wounds be healed, and the nation's divisions [...] replaced by the unifying influence of a shared national literary heritage" (87).

II.   Outsider reading

Two early essays in particular anticipate the most explicitly anti-nationalist moments of Woolf's argument in *Three Guineas* and demonstrate how her ideas about translation are bound up with her elaboration of "common" reading practices from the very beginning. First, "Hours in a Library," originally published in 1916 in the *Times Literary Supplement*, goes in search of a balance between appreciation for canonical works and curiosity about contemporary and experimental literature, and it ultimately remains distant from both, maintaining a condescension to popular forms alongside an ironically overstated admiration of the classics. Yet Woolf stresses above all the importance of an independent critical faculty and she begins the essays by advocating non-professional reading practices: "A reader, on the other hand, […] must check the desire for learning at the outset; if knowledge sticks to him well and good, but to go in pursuit of it, to read on a system, to become a specialist or an authority, is very apt to kill what it suits us to consider the more humane passion for pure and disinterested reading."[125] For the adventurous reader Woolf addresses here, the rejection of system and specialization allows appreciation for "a literature in the making" that arises from a heterogeneous pool of memoirs, autobiographies, and "books of facts and history." This diverse literature is never marked nationally; instead, it is attuned to its "age," of which no other is "so little submissive to authority as ours, so free from the dominion of the great; none seems so wayward with its gift of reverence, or so volatile in its experiments" (38-39). Reading practices that cast a wide net both historically and generically, including the "history and biography" so central to the argument of *Three Guineas*, foster a

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[125] Virginia Woolf, "Hours in a Library," in *Collected Essays Volume 2* (London: Hogarth, 1966), 34. Further citations in text.

"disinterestedness" that resonates with the later "indifference" of the Outsider in *Three Guineas*.

Throughout Woolf's work, most famously in the opening passages of *A Room of One's Own*, the university library with its locked doors and chained books figures as the locus of power of the professional readers whose influence she seeks to bar from the library of the outsider reader. Like "Hours in a Library," "How Should One Read a Book" (1926) imagines the reverse of the university library in the libraries of the common readers: "To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place upon what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of those sanctuaries Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions—there we have none."[126] As if to enact the advice of these earlier statements, the speaker of *Three Guineas* composes her letters in a space that admits the "furred and gowned" authorities only as a series of inserted photographs and neutralizes their influence by submitting them to a defamiliarizing reading.

By the time Woolf writes *Three Guineas*, then, the common reader's library has become an outsider's library where books are not bound to authoritative interpretations or rigid systems of value and influence. The speaker encourages the daughters of educated men to read in and from "A working library, a living library; a library where nothing is chained down and nothing is locked up" (77) and where readers, having cultivated indifference, can ask "what is the 'civilization' in which we find ourselves?" (77). Reading in translation is key to the cultivation of this anti-authoritarian perspective, for it

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[126] Virginia Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book," in *Collected Essays Volume 2* (London: Hogarth, 1966), 1.

produces what Emily Apter calls "the shock value of cultural comparison."[127] Though the Outsider may recognize easily enough her political and economic alienation,

> Still some 'patriotic' emotion, some ingrained belief in the intellectual superiority
>
> of her own country over other countries may remain. Then she will compare
>
> English painting with French painting; English music with German music;
>
> English literature with Greek literature, for translations abound. When all these
>
> comparisons have been made by the use of good reason, the outsider will find
>
> herself in possession of very good reasons for her indifference. (128)

Translation, then, though it encourages reading in a single national language, enables movement beyond the borders of that nation's cultural production. It situates reading outside the realm of the academic institutions which Woolf sees as increasingly implicated in a nationalist project. And, furthermore, reading from multiple cultures in a non-professional library allows language to come "unchained" so that women can "experiment" with provisional definitions of the terms on which they will participate in the "civilization" their reading allows them to interrogate. Her descriptions of the common reading she envisions for Outsiders connects the moment of cultural comparison and reading in translation to the "unchaining" from exclusive, inflexible national attachments.

The central passage calling for cultural comparison is the keystone of *Three Guineas'* explicit argument about language education and the politics of translation. That argument is supported by the essay's structure and idiosyncratic use of language, and the narration of the processes of change and communication draws on the same strategies

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[127] Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 59.

Woolf uses in her novels. In *Three Guineas*, the speaker's attention to the limits of communication so thoroughly orients the book that translation in a broad sense, as an experiment in negotiating the distance between individual and shared uses of even a single language, becomes a key rhetorical strategy throughout the essay. The opening pages stage the book's rhetoric in a space not unlike the common reader's library by bringing the speaker's "indifference" to bear on the language of her interlocutor's anti-war manifesto: "Therefore let us define culture for our purposes as the disinterested pursuit of reading and writing the English language. And intellectual liberty may be defined for our purposes as the right to say or write what you think in your own words, and in your own way. These are very crude definitions, but they must serve" (108-109).

The argument progresses through definition, and the meanings of words—"culture" and "intellectual liberty" in the example quoted above, and elsewhere "patriotism" (11), "influence" (21), "free" (120), and "indifference" (127) among others—are continually interrogated. Conclusions stand only insofar as the speaker can claim "confidence that you interpret these words as we do" (170). Indeed, by the essay's end, the operative meanings of these words-in-process, as well as several phrases such as "the daughter's of educated men" and "Arthur's Education Fund," have shifted away from conventional definitions by almost imperceptible degrees, have become newly foreign even in their familiarity in a way that demands the reader pay attention to the processes through which meaning is created over time. The multiplicity and provisionality at work in the redefinition of terms here and throughout *Three Guineas* are key principles informing Woolf's ideas about translation. Translations, though imperfect, are made to "serve," and they are valuable to the extent that they are made to serve

intellectual creativity and experimentation. "Reading and writing one's own tongue" (107) permits reading and writing in one's "own way."

Often in direct discussions of translation, Woolf is preoccupied with the relative number of words required to render in translated language a given passage from a foreign text. In "On Not Knowing Greek," she laments that English translation cannot always reproduce the concision of the original, noting an instance in which "Shelley takes twenty-one words in English to translate thirteen words of Greek" (11). *Three Guineas* raises similar concerns but shifts the focus from questions of semantic or stylistic fidelity to questions of use and value. Invoking public galleries, radio, and public libraries as resources "now easily within the reach even of the poorest of the daughters of educated men" who are trying to transition into the professions without reproducing their patriarchal structures, the speaker enjoins us to "Consider Antigone's distinction between the laws and the Law […]. Lame as the English rendering is, Antigone's five words are worth all the sermons of all the archbishops" (98). The footnote gives the five words in Greek along with translator Richard Jebb's version of them as "Tis not my nature to join in hating, but in loving" (202). In the body of the essay, however, these eleven translated words do not appear at all; rather the phrase "Antigone's five words" replaces the Greek with English in a form that relegates the question of fidelity to a footnote and asserts the five words' cultural currency independent of their expression in any one language. As "How Should One Read a Book" begins to suggest and *Three Guineas* makes clear, the distance from the classical language and from any fixed interpretation of its sense allows translation to enable anti-authoritarian reading practices and a re-imagining of the ways readers can "join in" the creation of meaning.

Yet the phrase "Antigone's five words," in its insistence on the original number of words, still contains a reminder of our fundamental not-knowing of Greek, and for Woolf this reminder ensures that even in its usefulness, art—as translated across languages and historical moments never approaches the sterile utilitarianism she warns us against in the preceding footnote:[128]

> It is impossible to judge any book from a translation, yet even when thus read the *Antigone* is clearly one of the great masterpieces of dramatic literature. Nevertheless, it could undoubtedly be made, if necessary, into anti-Fascist propaganda. […] But though it is easy to squeeze these characters into up-to-date dress, it is impossible to keep them there. […] This result, to the propagandist undesirable, would seem to be due to the fact that Sophocles (even in a translation) uses freely all the faculties that can be possessed by a writer; and suggests, therefore, that if we use art to propagate political opinions, we must force the artist to clip and cabin his gift to do us a cheap and passing service. Literature will suffer the same mutilation that the mule has suffered; and there will be no more horses. (202-202)

Literature, here in translation, undermines its own purposes when it is produced "on a system" and imposes its meaning on the reader; propaganda, Woolf implies, cannot be effectively countered with propaganda. Just as Greek words cannot be made to correspond exactly with English words, literature cannot be made to fit seamlessly into the political project of one historical moment. Efforts to force seamlessness deprive readers of the opportunity to practice the "intellectual liberty" that drives common

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[128] For an account of Woolf's career-long engagement with the Antigone myth, see Gerhard Joseph, "The Antigone as Cultural Touchstone: Matthew Arnold, Hegel, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Margaret Drabble," *PMLA* 96, no.1 (1981): 22-35.

reading. And the implied comparison to translation highlights Woolf's commitment to a "joining in" that does not bind readers to single monolithic group identities.

The discussion of "Antigone's five words" exemplifies Woolf's efforts to grant readers the authority to remain uncertain. Similarly, the very title of *Three Guineas* practices a complicated translation in its negotiation of the conflicting demands of art and politics. At the end the speaker states explicitly what the essay's argument has shown, that the "three guineas, you will observe, though given to three different treasurers are all given to the same cause, for the causes are the same and inseparable" (170). The causes—feminism, anti-Fascism, pacifism—are inextricably intertwined, but they cannot be resolved into any single unified artistic statement. Rather they must be addressed by a plurality of voices, letters, meanings and, ultimately, guineas, and the argument gains currency through the translation of the single causes into the heterogeneous form of *Three Guineas*. She resists generalizing from her own position to that of women of other classes for, as Marcus points out "Woolf never assumed she could speak for workingwomen or workingmen. The guineas of the title mark her class and the fact that she could, in those days when such privileges were rare, write a check on a bank."[129] Furthermore, the essay ends with the offering of not one but multiple guineas and the refusal of the individual signature. We can recognize the implicit plurality of the essay's framing as an example of what Berman calls "an intense effort to specify the location and limitation of [Woolf's] cosmopolitanism. In other words, the world does not simply occupy the outermost circle of a concentric cosmopolitan perspective; the local

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[129] Jane Marcus, "Introduction," *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, 2006), *xxxv-lxxii.*

community colors, shapes, and constrains the ways the world can be imagined."[130] Woolf's title contains a tension between the local and the universal because it functions as a translation between the localized perspectives of upper-class English women embedded in various economic situations under patriarchy and one international manifesto-driven political project (the anti-war manifesto). Instances of plurality and uncertainty like the essay's title open these possible channels of translation among diverse reader perspectives.

If the title signals Woolf's resistance to universalizing political views and the withholding of the signature reflects the Outsider's commitment to anonymity and indifference, the final footnote uses multilingualism to argue for the value of foreignness, though never the absolute foreignness of what Berman calls the "atomistic" individual.[131] Just before *Three Guinea*'s conclusion, the speaker calls up the poet's dream of "a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only" and of "the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity." Yet she turns away from that dream and concludes that "since we are different, our help must be different. What [our methods] can be we have tried to show—how imperfectly, how superficially there is no need to say" (169). This apology for its own limitations, the very limitations on which it grounds its strongest claims, performs yet again the essay's anti-authoritarian stance and opens out to a footnote that invokes not a single authority but a multiplicity of perspectives from the very poets whose dream of universality has just been undercut.

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[130]Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 27.
[131] Ibid., 122.

This important final footnote at first weaves together quotations from Coleridge, who himself cites and translates Rousseau and Whitman. It then gives a long quote from George Sand, whose French remains untranslated, so that the essay ends with a conspicuously foreign last word:

Toutes les existences sont solidaires les unes des autres, et tout être humain qui présenterait la sienne isolément, sans la rattacher à celle de ses semblables, n'offrirait qu'une énigme à débrouiller… Cette individualité n'a par elle seule ni signification ni importance aucune. Elle ne prend un sens quelconque qu'en devenant une parcelle de la vie générale, en se fondant avec l'individualité de chacun de mes semblables, et c'est par là qu'elle devient de l'histoire." (222)

All existences are linked to one another, and human beings who would present their own, separately, without connecting it to those of their fellow creatures, would be offering only an enigma to decipher…. That individual self, by itself, has neither meaning nor importance of any kind. It takes on meaning only by becoming part of all creation, by blending with the individual selves of each of my fellow creatures, and through this blending it becomes history.[132]

The essay, then, ends not just with a foreign last word, but with a last word that posits the fundamental incomprehensibility of the individual considered in isolation. Both the content and the elaborate framing connect this final footnote to the concerns raised by the plural title and the working over of "Antigone's five words."

Sand's *Histoire de ma vie*, the source of this final citation, is an example of the sort of "history and biography" the essay promotes as a resource for the Outsider reader.

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[132] This rendering is from the aptly group-translated *Story of My Life: The Autobiography of George Sand*, ed. Thelma Jurgrau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 271.

Even if this reader does not understand French, the final section of the footnote

introduces the quote with an affirmation that the "words" of a "half-forgotten novelist"

are as much "worth considering" as those of the fully remembered writers among whom

Sand takes her place (222). Woolf's choice to include a (then, though certainly no longer)

non-canonical woman writer among the likes of Coleridge and Rousseau corresponds

with the essay's general assertion of the value of women's experience as recorded in such

unofficial histories—sources that blur the distinction between the public and the private

in a way perhaps best expressed by the doubleness of the French word "histoire" in

Sand's title. However, the foreignness of the French insists on the potential

unintelligibility of this experience, and Sand's statement of the necessity of "attachment"

comes to stand in its foreignness for the element of untranslatability that Woolf's feminist

cosmopolitanism cannot deny. The footnote, then, becomes registers the same tension as

does the title, and it demonstrates how, for Woolf, that poetry-fueled desire for universal

meaning cannot be articulated except in terms that recognize its impossibility.

Between the two sentences that Woolf quotes in that final footnote to *Three

Guineas*, Sand explains in the first person that her own "feelings" and "impulses" remain

unreadable "were I not to reread in the universal book the page that precedes the one on

which my individual self is inscribed." Sand's text moves smoothly from the general to

the particular, but the elision in Woolf's citation creates a much more startling shift from

the impersonal "human beings" to the personal "my fellow creatures." That jump puts a

finer point on the ambivalence of the relation Sand describes in the same breath as

"fondant" ("blending") and as a desire to "rattacher" ("connecting," though this

translation does not convey the suggestion of recursiveness in the French word). The two

names mark the difference between a model of collectivity that unites many perspectives into a single voice and one that fosters connectedness while keeping its heterogeneity in focus. The place of the writer's "moi" in any "universal book," becomes clear only through a process of reading that continually recreates its attachment to a collectively authored history. George Sand becomes an emblem for Outsider reading because she reads her own position in history and imagines texts as the potential nodes of attachment among divided individuals.

III.   Attachment

What Sand calls the "enigma" of subjective experience drives even Woolf's most political work, so it is no surprise to find that *The Waves*, one of her most aesthetically experimental novels, is explicitly structured around this problem as a series of monologues voicing the interior lives of six distinct characters. But just as the plural noun of the title *Three Guineas* registers Woolf's refusal to merge disparate perspectives into a single voice, *The Waves*, published seven years earlier, takes as its title a figure for unbounded and undifferentiated sensory experience and uses techniques inspired by translation to narrate the forming of attachments among characters, readers, and writers.[133] Kate Flint's introduction to the latest edition includes a quote in which Woolf herself explains the novel as a negotiation between an unutterable singularity and a recognizable social language: "I am writing *The Waves* to a rhythm not to a plot… though the rhythmical is more natural to me than the narrative, it is completely opposed to the tradition of fiction and I am casting about all the time for some rope to throw to the

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[133] Christie Purifoy also finds a conceptual link between *Three Guineas* and *The Waves* when she sees the six friends of the novel as a Society of Outsiders, "at once cohesive and various," in "Melancholic Patriotism and *The Waves*," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 56 no.1 (Spring 2010): 25-46.

reader" (xxi). The "rhythm" here opposed to plot connects to the waves of the title, and her preference for these forms as more "natural" to her suggests that whatever necessary plotting the novel offers must limit the immediacy of its representation.

But the writer who "throws a rope" to a reader drowning in rhythmic language is more than just an apt metaphor for some of Woolf's compromises with narrative in *The Waves*; this image describes the very content of the novel, and it repeats in the characters' own language as well as in the patterns that connect their voices to one another and to the recurring italicized passages that open each chapter. Rhoda, whose painful introversion makes her a sort of depoliticized version of *Three Guineas'* Outsider, imagines herself in the positions of both the abandoned reader, "cast up and down among these men and women […] like a cork on a rough sea," and the potentially useless literary device, "[l]ike a ribbon of weed […] flung far every time the door opens" (80). Bernard, the storytelling character whose extended monologue makes up the last fifth of the novel, also repeats the gesture Woolf describes when he loses the thread of his fantasy about a stranger's daily life and must admit that "the stories that follow people into their private rooms are difficult. I cannot go on with this story. I twiddle a piece of string" (37).

The string-twiddling that marks the limits of Bernard's narrative power recurs in the speech of Neville, the character perhaps most resistance to naming and self-definition. In an early speech, he complains of his schoolmate,

> Let him burble on, telling us stories, while we lie recumbent. Let him describe
> what we have all seen so that it becomes a sequence. Bernard says there is always
> a story. I am a story. Louis is a story. There is the story of the boot-boy, the story
> of the man with one eye, the story of the woman who sells winkles […] But

Bernard goes on talking. Up they bubble—images. 'Like a camel', … 'a vulture'.

The camel is a vulture; the vulture a camel; for Bernard is a dangling wire, loose,

but seductive. (27)

Neville's objection to Bernard's "foolish comparisons" reverses the rope and string

metaphors with another metaphor of a dangerous dangling wire. Across the characters'

individual speeches, then, multiple versions of one metaphor come together to give a

fuller account of the stakes of story-telling and figurative language, which can rescue or

do violence depending on their objects.[134]

Critics have used various names to account for the particularity of the language

The Waves uses to show us what Marcus calls "culture making."[135] My own reading

attempts a look at Woolf's strangest fiction that takes her at her word when she says in

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[134] "The violence of representation in all its forms," as Tamlyn Monson puts it ("'A Trick of the Mind': Alterity, Ontology and Representation in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 50 no. 1 (2004): 174), has been a central theme in criticism on *The Waves*. Monson describes the novel's depiction of language in the vocabulary of psychoanalysis and philosophy: "The image of the wave rising associates identity with agency, will and force, while the crashing of the wave, the falling of the drop, represents a disintegration of totality and agency—a passivity in opposition to the certainty, desire, and will associated with identity. This state is, in turn, characterized by an awareness of the inadequacy and violence of language." What Monson frames as the subject's initiation into symbolic systems many others read politically as a depiction of the totalizing discourse of colonialism. Since the beginning of the critical movement to take Woolf's politics seriously, and especially since Marcus' call for a "rescue" of the novel as a "radical" "narrative about culture making" (Marcus 61), critics have worked to nuance our understanding of the nature and degree of *The Waves*' complicity with racist and imperialist modes of representation. Marcus emphasizes the ways the novel's ironizes the totalizing discourses of colonialism and reads Bernard's struggles with poetry as "comic" (Marcus 69), but such a reading requires that we understand as univocal a text that is crucially about polyvocality. Jane Garrity situates *The Waves* in the context of modernist interest in ancient ritual as a source of cultural regeneration; she also sees in the characters' collective investment in the absent Percival a Kristevan semiotic revival of "the abjected maternal body." But ultimately she finds that Woolf "is, finally, unable to see outside of her historical moment" and that "the novel's invocation of poetic language […] is complicit with cultural narratives that encode Englishness and racial primitivism" (Jane Garrity, *Step-daughters of England: British women modernists and the nation imaginary*. (Manchester UP: 2003), 288). Most recent accounts have contributed to what Christie Purifoy calls "a growing consensus that the truth [about Woolf's stance on nationalism and imperialism] lies somewhere in between" critique and complicity (Purifory 25).
[135] Alongside Garrity, Monson also reads parts of the novel as in keeping with Kristeva's semiotic, as well as Emmanuel Levinas' ethics of radical alterity. Gabrielle McIntire takes the novel as a demonstration of Bakhtin's heteroglossia (see "Heteroglossia, Monologism, and Fascism: Bernard Reads *The Waves*." *Narrative* 13 (No. 1: January 2005), 29-45. Purifoy, as her title suggests, understands the novel's position regarding Empire as one of productive melancholy, while Marcus also invokes Bakhtin when she names the novel's comic mode "postcolonial carnivalesque."

Three Guineas that a woman evaluating politics as an outsider uses "comparisons […] made by the use of reason" to arrive at "very good reasons for her indifference" to patriotism (128). As we have seen, she argues throughout her essays for this common reading that nourishes an outsider perspective on nation and self, much like the perspective we see George Sand take as she reads her own history across many pages of "the universal book." Woolf concedes that despite this comparative effort the outsider may retain "some love of England dropped into a child's ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes" (129). The debate surrounding her project in *The Waves* seems to hinge on the question of whether she herself is moved by "this drop of pure, irrational emotion" as she portrays her characters' responses to English rooks and English rhymes. My aim is to ask what sort of reading Woolf's own "universal books" promote, and I name *The Waves* and *Orlando* this way because both, through their experimental narrative forms, take up Sand's proposal that we can better understand a single life through comparative reading, whether the comparison is among many voices or between different versions of one self. These novels' comparative structures invite the reader back into the process of representation or "culture making" in a way that brings together Woolf's political and aesthetic concerns.

Tracing the recurrence of its primary metaphor, the rope or string, shows us how the linguistic texture of *The Waves* posits a renewed role for the reader. Bernard, we have seen, "twiddles a piece of string" as he struggles to continue narrating the private life of a stranger. In a slightly later speech, Neville echoes the exact words that Bernard himself has just used to describe his own mental activities: "'Bernard's stories amuse me,' said

Neville 'at the start. But when they tail off absurdly and he gapes, twiddling a bit of string, I feel my own solitude'" (37). The repetition of images across speeches is at work from the very first chapter, but this instance of repetition is startling because it attributes not just the same idea or experience but the same phrasing to two characters' supposedly interior monologues. Bernard and Neville across their vast psychological distance each light upon the same words for the failure of poetic language. This strange convergence forces us to confront the artificiality of the novel's premise and the urgency of its appeals to us: if Bernard misrepresents Neville, and Neville grasps but never speaks against this misrepresentation (for the "Neville said" paradoxically implies that "Neville thought or felt but did not say directly"), then where but in our reading do the two communicate? The implausibly common language between two characters becomes truly common only when its repetition is acknowledged by the reader, whose participation thereby becomes necessary to the novel's creation. By replacing conventional narrative form with linguistic patterns to be recognized, *The Waves* draws attention to its reliance on its readers as pattern recognizers.

The threading together of the characters' private speech is the chief "rope" the novel throws us as readers and participants in Woolf's narrative experiments. The characters' speeches are woven together not just by recurring images and phrases, but also by their uniformity of style and sentence structure.[136] Though their lengths vary with the rhythms of the prose, most sentences use an un-inverted declarative syntax, often beginning with "I am," "I will," "I see," "Here," or "Now," as if to anchor what follows

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[136] Garrity is one of few critics who comments on this feature of the novel. She reads the uniform prose style partly as "democratizing" but also concludes that it "delineates a universalist fantasy in which alliterative poetic utterances function as a kind of communal Englishness dissolving dinstinctions between the six voices" (246). I would argue instead that the uniform style forces readers to recognize difference in other forms.

in a present moment of subjective experience. And since the invariable past-tense "*x* said" is the only third-person narration outside of the interludes, some of these opening phrases work as the clearest markers of what we would typically call events. In the chapter that moves the characters from school to university, for example, two characters open speeches by saying "It is the first day of the summer holidays" (45, 47), and this simple repetition alerts us to a common external factor temporarily in place for all speakers; because almost all the narration is understood to refer to internal events that occur in language alone, fictional reference in the usual sense operates only in the overlap between speeches.

By orienting us in this way, the novel comes to rely on a particularized language that is foreign to both character and reader. The leveling effects of the prose, the repetitions and the uniform style and syntax continually remind us that the speeches are not—and do not claim to be—direct, literal renderings of the substance of the characters' thoughts. Instead, the language of the novel works as a sort of poetic "translatese" that better communicates multiple perspectives because of its partial infidelity to each single perspective.[137] *The Waves'* poetic prose might be called "translatese" not in the sense that it lacks rhythmic fluency, of course, but rather in the sense that it takes the most immediate experiences of perception and emotion and renders them strange—because the language used to convey them does not follow the conventions of dialogue or narrative

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[137] In his history of translation *The Translator's Invisibility* (New York: Routledge, 1995), Lawrence Venuti points to this "group of pejorative neologisms designed to criticize translations that lack fluency, but also used, more generally, to signify badly written prose: 'translatese,' 'translationese,' 'translatorese.'" He names the category to support his point that "in English, fluent translation [as opposed to foreignizing translation] is recommended for an extremely wide range of foreign texts—contemporary and archaic, religious and scientific, fiction and nonfiction" (4).

prose—but also strangely familiar—because the language attempts at all to capture the usually unnarrated feeling of living as one self among many.

Not only is translation implicated in the characters' collective address to the novel's readers, but it is also directly invoked as an idealized mode of communication that would restore order and meaning to a fragmented world. Louis, the character whose Australian accent makes him especially sensitive to the nuances of language, speaks for pages about the difficulties of reading while immersed in "the rhythms of the eating house":

> I will read in the book that is propped against the bottle of Worcester sauce. It contains some forged rings, some perfect statements, a few words, but poetry. You, all of you, ignore it. What the dead poet said, you have forgotten. And I cannot translate it to you so that its binding power ropes you in, and makes it clear to you that you are aimless; and the rhythm is cheap and worthless; and so remove that degradation which, if you are unaware of your aimlessness, pervades you, making you senile, even while you are young. To translate that poem so that it is easily read is to be my endeavor. (69-70)

Louis speaks here of the literal translation of classical poets into English, and he uses the now familiar image of the rope, whose "binding power" refers to translation in the way other iterations refer to narrative and metaphor. The refrain of this speech voices Louis' desire to "reduce you all to order," and the "you" includes not just "the words that rail drearily without human meaning" but also "the steam that runs in unequal drops down the window pane" and "the stopping and starting with a jerk of motor-omnibuses" (71). The parallel between order in words and order in the material world suggests that translation

can, as Louis promises his imagined interlocutor here, "bring us back to the fold" by shoring up a common cultural identity built on a shared inheritance of a classical tradition. Louis, then, understands the power of translation much as Arnold does when he calls for a centralized authority figure to shepherd English readers into a common understanding of their place in the history of civilizations. Woolf draws our attention to the "culture-making" potential of translation by putting the most direct statements of a desire for translation in the voice of Louis, the cultural outsider who in the same speech laments that others "wai[t] for me to speak again, in order that they may place me—if I come from Canada or Australia, I, who desire above all things to be taken to the arms with love, am alien, external" (70). Louis the outsider speaks his desire to translate himself inside a monolithic Englishness, but he is not, however, the Outsider of *Three Guineas*; his desired attachment is too fixed to allow for the uncertainty crucial to common reading. With this depiction of Louis' excessively ordering and systemizing mode of translation, Woolf exposes the "binding power" of translated language, a power she undertakes to reimagine through the narrative structure of the novel as constellation of voices.

To point out that a modernist writer takes translation as a metaphor for attempts to convey experience in language is not surprising, but my claim here will be somewhat different from this familiar idea. The notion that language communicates interiority like translation communicates one language in another is very much operative in Woolf's fiction, but her novels do not take the terms of the metaphor, or its uses, as settled. Instead, the novel is *about* what it might mean to take translation as a metaphor for narrative and, more fundamentally, for language itself. It dwells in the making of

metaphor, in the process of translation, as a safeguard against any hasty claims to see "the thing in itself" and as a way to remain instead in the indifference that governs what amounts to the narrative voice of *The Waves.* Not through any one character, but through their exchanges from the reader's outsider perspective, the novel uses a kind of translated language to restructure the relation between author and reader.

David Punter's *Metaphor* provides an illuminating definition of metaphor as a rhetorical device and organizing principle of language and cognition:

> Metaphor makes us look at the world afresh, but it often does so by challenging our notions of the similarity that exists between things; how alike they are; and in what ways, in fact, they are irreconcilably unalike. Thus, metaphor represents a basic operation of language: it seeks to 'fix' our understanding, but at the same time it reveals how any such fixity, any such desire for stability and certainty, is constructed on shifting sands.[138]

Punter explains that he has purposefully chosen "an image of dangerous uncertainty"[139] as a metaphor for metaphor itself. A construction necessarily built "on shifting sands," metaphor can also be compared just as usefully to "the waves," the organizing image of Woolf's novel about the making of common meanings from divided perspectives.

The image of the waves organizes the novel most obviously in that, like the image of the rope or string, it recurs across the speeches of all the characters. Each character at least once describes the subjective experience of common life in terms of the movements of water. For Rhoda, the waves are opposed to the basin of rainwater she rocks back and forth in her solitary, self-soothing play as a child. Unlike the basin's enclosed, controlled

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[138] David Punter, *Metaphor* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 10.
[139] Ibid., 10.

waters, the waves move as a threatening multitude out of which she struggles to "pull"

herself as "they heap themselves on me; they sweep me between their great shoulders; I

am turned; I am tumbled; I am stretched, among these long lights, these long waves, these

endless paths, with people pursuing, pursuing" (19). If Rhoda escapes engulfment

through a characteristic submission to "them," Neville survives by holding tightly to his

centered self as he navigates the uproar of a London train station that feels "like the surge

of a sea. We are cast down on the platform with our handbags. We are whirled asunder.

My sense of self almost perishes; my contempt. I become drawn in, tossed down, thrown

sky-high. I step out on to the platform, grasping tightly all that I possess—one bag" (52).

Alongside these metaphors for the dangers of commonality, other characters use

the waves to describe the pleasures and triumphs of merging with others, whether lovers

or children. A dance at a party becomes, for Jinny,[140] a "slow flood" whose current

"holds us together; we cannot step outside its sinuous, its hesitating, its abrupt, its

perfectly encircling walls. Our bodies, his hard, mine flowing, are pressed together within

its body; it holds us together; and then lengthening out, in smooth, in sinuous folds, rolls

us between it, on and on" (77). Similarly, Susan asserts that "My children will carry me

on; their teething, their crying, their going to school and coming back will be like the

waves of the sea under me. No day will be without its movement. I shall be lifted higher

than any of you on the backs of the seasons" (99). These instances of wave imagery

dramatize the forms of connection that the characters experiment with. Their speeches

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[140] Dancing and waves are persistently connected in Jinny's understanding of her sexuality and of her body's pulsing energies more generally, as highlights from this earlier speech also suggest: "the pulse drums so in my forehead, behind my eyes, that everything dances […] All is rippling, all is dancing; all is quickness and triumph […] Now the tide sinks. Now the trees come to earth; the brisk waves that slap my ribs rock more gently, and my heart rides at anchor" (33).

become wavelike themselves in their vacillations between pain and pleasure, isolation and immersion.

The language of *The Waves* is made of "the waves"—that is, Woolf uses a metaphor for the uncertainty of figurative language to organize her characters' reflections on intersubjectivity. Each iteration of wave imagery not only strengthens the lateral connections that bind together the language of the six voices, it also reaches toward the reader by recalling the novel's title and its status as a named work of literature. Fittingly, then, many of the most memorable images take the waves explicitly as a metaphor for the ways language unites or divides the characters. We know that Jinny feels buoyed by the figures of a dance, and we also learn that from Rhoda's perspective, "Jinny rides like a gull on the wave, dealing her looks adroitly here and there, saying this, saying that, with truth. But I lie; I prevaricate" (79); the difference between the two women's experiences hinges on the perceived certainty of expression, their facility "saying this, saying that." Susan understands her alienation from the other characters to result from her difficulty with language. Just after the passage above which compares her daily life as a mother to the waves, she explains that "the object of my love shows by a phrase that he can escape. He escapes, and I am left clutching at a string that slips in and out among the leaves on the tree-tops. I do not understand phrases" (99). And most tellingly, Neville the would-be poet, writes to a rhythm much as Woolf claims she has written the novel *about* Neville:

> Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm; words that have lain dormant now lift, now toss their crests, and fall and rise, and fall and rise again. I am a poet, yes. Surely I am a great poet […] I see it all. I feel it all. I am inspired. My eyes fill with tears. Yet even as I feel this I lash my frenzy higher and higher. It foams.

I become artificial, insincere. Words and words and words; how they gallop—
how they lash their long manes and tails, but for some fault in me I cannot give
myself to their backs. (61)

Here it seems to be Neville who needs rescuing but cannot bring himself to make use of
the "manes and tails" of galloping words that would carry him through to some
communicable meaning of the kind Woolf's novel both attempts and problematizes.

The waves contribute the title, the recurring metaphor, and also the content of the
interludes that open each chapter. By tracing the patterns that connect these interludes to
the rest of the chapters, we can see that they function as a bank of available metaphors
that the six characters translate according to their individual perspectives. The interludes'
italicized passages vary in length from one to three pages, and each narrates in an
omniscient past tense the movements of the sun over the ocean and the movements of
light over an unidentified house and garden. The language of the interludes is the most
impersonal of the novel, especially in the first few sentences of each interlude that
describe the position of the sun as it progresses over the course of a single day. That
single day is mapped onto particular stages in the lives of the characters as the chapters
find them in childhood, at school, at university, in middle age, and in old age. The
interludes become less strictly impersonal, though, as their descriptions begin to include
particularized metaphors that imply a human perspective on the natural world. The birds,
who appear in every interlude, are especially often figured through comparisons to
human endeavors and relationships: they "now sang a strain or two, wildly, like skaters
rollicking arm-in-arm" (20). In another instance the waves themselves recede and leave
residue "as if some light shallop had foundered and burst its sides and the sailor had

swum to land and bounded up the cliff and left his frail cargo to be washed ashore" (54).

The descriptions of nature in the interludes expose the comparative logic behind the use

of figurative language throughout the novel; we see that metaphor-making renames the

world through a process that unfolds over time and requires narrative—the birds'

rollicking, the waves as a cargo washed ashore—to communicate its full meaning.

Even more strikingly, the metaphors of the interludes work as a shared lexicon for

the characters' individual descriptions of their experience. Some of the most fundamental

examples of metaphor repetition between the interludes and the chapters occur in Louis's

speeches. In chapter three, the interlude includes an image of a snail shell that becomes

an object of the gaze of the birds, whose songs and visions merge and dissolve over the

course of the description: the birds "sat silent on the tree […] intensely conscious of one

object in particular. Perhaps it was a snail shell, rising in the grass like a grey cathedral, a

swelling building burnt with dark rings and shadowed green by the grass" (54-5). A

series of "or" statements lists other possible objects the birds may be examining, but the

paragraph as a whole describes the movement in and out of postures of certainty. So it is

fitting when towards the end of the chapter Louis explicitly chooses the same "one

object" and makes a series of declarative statements characteristic of his investment in

the unifying and binding powers of language:[141] "That is a snail, I say; that is a leaf. I

delight in the snails; I delight in the leaf. I am always the youngest, the most innocent, the

most trustful. You are all protected. I am naked" (72).

Also in this chapter, the same comparison of the snail, a structure of interest to

birds, to a cathedral, a structure that signifies the concentration of human attention and

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[141] Louis' very first and most frequently recurring statement—"A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps" (5)—also appears at the end of a later interlude when "The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping" (113).

effort, provides the vocabulary for an exchange between Neville and Bernard about their relative "power of fixing remorselessly upon a single object" (64). Neville claims, "The breeze stirs; the curtain quivers; I see behind the leaves the grave, yet eternally joyous buildings, which seem porous, not gravid; light, though set so immemorially on the ancient turf" (72). By contrast, Bernard says of himself that "I like views of spires across grey fields. I like glimpses between people's shoulders" (59). Both speak through the metaphors given in the interlude as they define against one another their particular ways, to use Lily Briscoe's phrase from *To the Lighthouse*, of "having their vision."

Like the uniform prose and the continually re-made metaphor of the waves, the exchange of images between chapters and interludes suggests connections among the characters that events alone, such as they are, do not establish. The relation between the language of the narrator—the voice that tells us both that "the sun rose" and that "Rhoda said"—and the language of the characters is not one of simple repetition. Rather, the characters' speeches develop multiple distinct versions of the same potential metaphors. The speakers deploy these metaphors to convey their particular experiences, and since each one's individual use of a certain subset of metaphors in a certain way follows predictable patterns, the chapter-interlude exchange becomes an important element of the novel's characterization. Rhoda is recognizable as Rhoda because her figurative language systematically exposes the threat of disintegration, while Jinny is Jinny because in her voice the same metaphors signify physical power and integrity. The character system and the novel's narrative structure are built around these multiple versions or translations of the same images.

The unnamed omniscience of the interludes and their focus on planetary processes like tides and solar movements give these sections an aura of universality. We might assume, then, that the speakers' individualized use of the interludes' images is meant to illustrate a process whereby the raw materials of perception are shaped into language according to personality or perspective. However, as we began to see above, the language of the interludes quickly reveals itself as already grounded in a particular human perspective. Furthermore, the strictly natural landscapes soon extend to include very localized and domestic scenes. We enter a garden and see evidence of the presence of a cook who throws food scraps out the window; we look through that window at china, kitchen tools and a bowl of fruit; the light plays on "elm trees" (182), "apple leaves" (55), and other plants and trees native to the climate of England. Marked in this way, the interludes provide a common language that is bound by place and time, and the interlude-chapter exchanges show that subjective poetic language by no means comes out of nowhere. To follow this narrative of culture-making, readers must trace the patterns of each character's translation of the interludes' metaphors and also recognize those metaphors as the elements of one particular language used in multiple ways.

Marcus' landmark reading of *The Waves* also makes much of the patterns of words that recur across the characters' speeches, though she is not particularly interested in the interludes or their generic difference from the body of the chapters. Instead, her argument traces the startlingly frequent recurrence of the words "white" and "whiteness" and takes Bernard's final speech as a comic enactment of the death of the author. Reading the novel as univocally comic or ironic, Marcus finds that it unmasks "the complicity of the poet in the making of culture as he exudes cultural glue (in the form of an elegy for

the dead hero) as a source of social cohesion, the grounding for nationalism, war, and, eventually, fascism."[142] But though the novel certainly offers a critique of imperialism by trafficking in its imagery and language, I believe it is also possible to see the novel's structure as an attempt to find other "sources of social cohesion," as part of Woolf's quest to re-form the basis of the poet's authority so that it does not depend on the singularity of the individual voice, but rather on the heterogeneity of the voices it brings together. We see in the crossings of words and images between the novel's two main locations—the highly personalized voices in the chapters, the impersonal voice of the interludes—how Woolf uses an internal generic divide to theorize her text as a not-too-binding social cohesion.

IV.   Little languages

By the end of her life, Woolf was planning a literary history that would locate the emergence of "The Reader" (the title of one projected essay) from within modes of communal reception. The way she describes the language of the transitional period when this figure emerged, the period between anonymous common literature and plays with a single named author, seems to recapitulate the processes of individuation that are exposed by the language of *The Waves*. In the late essay titled "Anon," she says:

> At last one man speaks in his own person. The wandering voices are collected, embodied. There is no abstraction any longer. All is visible, audible tangible in the light of the present moment. The world takes shape behind him. Egypt and Libya and Persia and Greece rise up. Kings and Emperors stride forth. Like great moths shaking their wings still damp and creased they unfurl the great sentences,

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[142] Ibid., 64.

the absurd hyperboles […]. The utmost stretch of words can scarcely give body to

this vast universe that is struggling into being. Words mount; pile on top of each

other; over balance and tumble.[143]

In this poetic literary history, the binding together of wandering voices creates a

triumphant bodying forth of a unified transcendental present moment. This newly

individual voice, aligned with figures of power promoting territorial expansion, is just as

implicated in imperial violence as is the Orientalizing, hero-worshipping collective

unconscious of the six characters in *The Waves*. But by pinpointing the moment of

change in what she repeatedly calls the "attachment" between the writer and the

audience, Woolf reopens the terms of that relationship to examination and redirection.

In Woolf's Elizabethan age, also crucial to *Orlando*, contradictory modes of

reader-author attachment coexist. Already, "The first blow has been aimed at Anon when

the authors name is attached to the book" (682), but nonetheless the poet remains

"attached to his audience [,] tethered to one spot and played upon by outside influences"

(686) and "the play is still in part the work of the undifferentiated audience" (689). The

shifting writer-audience relations reflect parallel shifts in the composition of the

audience. Woolf attributes Elizabethan literary achievements in part to the linguistic

desegregation that began when vernacular English entered the French-speaking court; the

preacher who gave sermons in English "was teaching the nobles and the peasants to

respect their mother tongue. He was making it possible for the gentry and the commons

to sit together in one house listening to a play" (688). This view of literary history seems

to celebrate the arrival at a single national language, but what is at stake is less the

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[143] Woolf, Virginia. "Anon." *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 686.

monolingualism of the Elizabethan playgoers than their common status as participants in a performance, their "sitting together in one house listening to a play," despite class and language differences. As if to echo the position she takes in *Three Guineas*, she criticizes Elizabethan writers not for disdaining to use English but for using foreign languages to reinforce their own positions of power. Speaking of an aristocratic woman's letters to her family, Woolf notes, "There is no little language nothing brief, intimate, colloquial. When they write the rhythm of the Bible is in their ears. It makes their speech unfamiliar. […] Greek and Latin come as easily to her pen as a French phrase comes to ours" (685). What Woolf is searching for, in these late essays and in her experimental fiction, is a collective language whose "binding power" does not reinforce unjust social hierarchies.

In the final pages of *The Waves*, Bernard discards his "book of phrases" and relishes a few moments of solitude in an empty restaurant. Before he gathers himself to re-enter the street—"I must haul myself up and find the particular coat that belongs to me […] I, I, I, tired as I am, spent as I am"—he attempts to speak in a language of the kind we see Woolf reaching towards in her literary histories, one that would forge connections without relying on the systematic correspondences he has spent his life establishing. He asks, "What is the phrase for the moon? And the phrase for love? By what name are we to call death? I do not know. I need a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children use when they come into the room and find their mother sewing and pick up some scrap of bright wool, a feather, or a shred of chintz. I need a howl, a cry" (227). The "little language" Bernard yearns for is what Woolf sees lacking in Elizabethan letters and what the novel's patterns of overlapping but distinct metaphors-as-translations ask readers to imagine.

These patterns, through the interludes, set up a collaborative narrator-character relation that models the writer-reader relation Woolf envisions throughout her career: when she exposes the ways foreign language education has been used to reinforce nationalist cultural elitism, when she calls on outsiders to make their common reading comparative, when she looks to literary history to learn whether "we can still become anonymous and forget something that we have learnt when we read the plays to which no one has troubled to set a name" (692). Bernard's speech suggests that a "little language," an intimate language that does not require fixed names or a resolution of differences to acquire meaning, connects the "enigma" of subjective experience to the problem of global communication. Throughout his final summary of the collective life of the six characters, Bernard cycles back through this mode of speech whenever the ordering impulse of narration or metaphor veers too close to violence. His exultation at "bring[ing] my sentence to a close in a hush of complete silence" leads him to feel "One can learn Spanish, one thinks, by tying a string to the right toe and waking early." But this optimistic ambition to bypass language barriers immediately gives way to an incoherent jumble of images from the interludes: "a rushing stream of broken dreams, nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences, and sights—elm trees, willow trees, gardeners sweeping, women writing—that rise and sink even as we hand a lady down to dinner" (196). When petty domestic arguments threaten his new marriage, extreme familiarity once again gives way to an almost redemptive mutual foreignness that Bernard remembers with gratitude: "Heaven be praised, I said, we need not whip this prose into poetry. The little language is enough" (202).

Tellingly, it is when Bernard recounts his most explicit experiments with modes of speech, abstracting out the "self" of habit and public life and addressing it "as one would speak to a companion with whom one is voyaging to the North Pole" (216), that collaborative intimacy and foreignness converge most clearly. As he attempts to "describe the world seen without a self," he has recourse to early scenes of reading, recalling a moment when "the old nurse who turns the pages of the picture-book had stopped and had said, 'Look. This is the truth'" (221). In this self-less mode, Bernard seeks out a new audience for his own speech. He says to the anonymous interlocutor with whom he will share a meal "when I met you in the place where one goes to hang up one's coat I said to myself, 'It does not matter whom I meet. All this little affair of 'being' is over. Who this is I do not know; nor care; we will dine together.' So I hung up my coat, tapped you on the shoulder, and said, 'sit with me'" (221).

In *A Shrinking Island*, Jed Esty also brings Woolf's late essay "Anon" into conversation with her late fiction, showing how in *Between the Acts*, she portrays ritual English pageantry in order to create "a vision of restored contact between artist and audience in a postmetropolitan English culture."[144] As Esty points out, Woolf's "anon" speaks in a position of commonness—both collective and non-elite—and outsiderness: "anon" is "the common voice singing out of doors" (quoted in Esty 102). His analysis of Woolf's final novel emphasizes the moment of staged self-reflection when the pageant players turn fragmented mirrors on the audience and the gramophone suggests "let's talk in words of one syllable, without larding, stuffing or cant. Let's break the rhythm and forget the rhyme. And calmly consider ourselves" (quoted in Esty 102). Esty says of this moment: "The machine's dream is the substitution of elaborated literary style with a

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[144] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island* (Princeton UP: 2004), 103. Further citations in text.

spare aesthetic of self-contemplation on the collective level" (100). What Esty takes in

Between the Acts as evidence that Woolf's fiction "registers a historical process" of

"transition from metropolitan literature to national culture" is already at work in the new

languages of collective artistic agency forged by the patterns of narrative address

elaborated in *The Waves* and comically exaggerated in *Orlando*.

     The translatese of *The Waves* emerges from the speakers' individualized

reworkings of a collective bank of potential metaphors. It makes novelistic language into

a strange, intimate "little language" like the one that brings Bernard into renewed

collaboration with his audience. What becomes an implied appeal to the reader in *The*

Waves is a playful direct address in *Orlando*, published three years earlier. While the later

work depicts polyvocality by adapting one recognizable voice to the perspectives of six

distinct characters, *Orlando* explores multiple iterations of a single character. As

Orlando's biographer explains, "she had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more

than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it

merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many

thousand" (309). If Orlando is at least six selves in one person, we can take her fictional

biography as a sort of inversion of the project of *The Waves*. Orlando's transformation

from man to woman coincides with her return from an ambassadorship in Turkey, via a

sojourn with a band of "gypsies," so that the movement between foreign cultures parallels

movement between selves.

     A long quote from the end of *Orlando* shows how the novel both invests in reader

participation and gently mocks assumptions that readers can easily make meaning from

fragments and omissions. Just after Orlando, at this moment a married woman living in

the late nineteenth century, agrees to publish the poem that has been her life's work, "The Oak Tree," she muses on the significance of this development:

> What then, was Life? The thought popped into her head violently, irrelevantly (unless old Greene were somehow the cause of it). And it may be taken as a comment, adverse or favourable, as the reader chooses to consider it upon her relations with her husband (who was at the Horn), that whenever anything popped violently into her head, she went straight to the nearest telegraph office and wired to him. There was one, as it happened, close at hand. 'My God Shel,'she wired; 'life literature Greene toady—' here she dropped into a cypher language which they had invented between them so that a whole spiritual state of the utmost complexity might be conveyed in a word or two without the telegraph clerk being any the wiser, and added the words 'Rattigan Glumphoboo,' which summed it up precisely. For not only had the events of the morning made a deep impression on her, but it cannot have escaped the reader's attention that Orlando was growing up—which is not necessarily growing better—and 'Rattigan Glumphoboo' described a very complicated spiritual state—which if the reader puts all his intelligence at our service he may discover for himself. (282-3)

The conspicuous telegraph wires that allow Orlando's intimate communication with her husband recall the ropes and strings that connect characters and readers in *The Waves*. And the "little language" that the two adopt creates the same mode of attachment that Woolf theorizes in her later novel. The tone of *Orlando*, of course, is what distinguishes the two takes on the possibility of self-less or nation-less communication. The narrator's exaggerated confidence that readers will grasp the full meaning of Orlando's cypher

language suggests the implausibility of more serious writerly assumptions about reader participation. When she pokes fun at the idea that we understand "Rattigan Glumphoboo," Woolf admits doubt that readers understand the less mysterious but no less particular languages of poetry, narrative, and translation.

The same recourse to mutual foreignness marks Orlando's earliest romance with the Russian princess Sasha. We hear of Sasha that "[s]he talked to [Orlando] enchantingly, so wittily, so wisely (but unfortunately always in French, which notoriously loses its flavor in translation) that he forgot the frozen waters or night coming or the old woman or whatever it was" (47). Here the narrator's defeat in the face of untranslateable French parallels Orlando's persistent but ultimately futile attempts to capture Sasha in metaphor, and the free indirect narration of Orlando's drive to describe her recalls Bernard's monologues on the difficulties of storytelling. Like the characters of *The Waves*, Orlando finds himself "plunging and splashing among a thousand images" as he sorts through available comparisons:

> Snow, cream, marble, cherries, alabaster, golden wire? None of these. She was like a fox, or an olive tree; like the waves of the sea when you look down upon them from a height; like an emerald; like the sun on a green hill which is yet clouded—like nothing he had seen or known in England. Ransack the language as he might, words failed him. He wanted another landscape, and another tongue. English was too frank, too candid, too honeyed a speech for Sasha. (47)

When Orlando wishes for "another landscape, and another tongue" to speak to and about his foreign lover, he takes metaphor as a metaphor for translation in the same way that *The Waves* does. If the landscape works as a language, it does so by providing a range of

potential metaphors, much as the interludes do for the six voices who translate those metaphors to communicate their individual perspectives. Furthermore, to equate language and landscape in this way figures the text as the common ground for readers and writers.

But, as ever, Woolf in *Orlando* stops short of imagining that the little languages her characters and narrators experiment with could ever become universal. Orlando, on her journey between Turkey and England and between her life as a man and her life as a woman, stays for an extended period with a "gipsy tribe […] with whom it is obvious that she must have been in secret communication before the revolution" (141). She so closely approaches assimilation with the tribe that they "looked upon her as one of themselves" and hold a "belief that she was, by birth, one of them and had been snatched by an English Duke from a nut tree when she was a baby" (142). But her full integration is checked by an incident that the narrator recounts from a sort of reverse Orientalist perspective, alternating between feigned objectivity and the imagined collective voice of the tribe members shocked by Orlando's exotic English ways:

But Orlando had contracted in England some of the customs or diseases (whatever you choose to consider them) which cannot, it seems, be expelled. One evening, when they were all sitting round the camp fire and the sunset was blazing over the Thessalian hills, Orlando exclaimed: 'How good to eat!' (The gipsies have no word for 'beautiful.' This is their nearest.) All the young men and women burst out laughing uproariously. The sky good to eat, indeed! The elders, however, who had seen more of foreigners than they had, became suspicious. They noticed that Orlando often sat for whole hours doing nothing whatever, except look here and then there […] Returning home, she saluted each star, each peak, and each watch-

> fire as if they signaled to her alone […] She could not help bursting out, How good to eat! How good to eat! (For it is a curious fact that though human beings have such imperfect means of communication, that they can only say 'good to eat' when they mean 'beautiful' and the other way about, they will yet endure ridicule and misunderstanding rather than keep any experience to themselves.)

Orlando's persistent Englishness does not keep her from attempting to make shared meaning from shared surroundings. Indeed, the elements of this landscape remind us of her earlier impulse to conjure through accumulated images a new landscape in language to describe Sasha. But in the end the stars, peaks, and fires appear "as if they signaled to her alone," and the implied metaphor through which "good to eat" conveys "beauty" cannot be made to work for her purposes. Here, as in the speeches throughout *The Waves*, the movements of metaphor become figures for the movement between languages. The failure of metaphor leaves Orlando and her companions unable to "bring a common meaning to birth," as Miss La Trobe attempts to do with her audience in *Between the Acts*.

V. Severed parts

Orlando's failure to translate her experiences into another group's language works like the narrator's exaggerated confidence in the reader; both mark Woolf's doubts about the possibility of changing the language through which readers and writers communicate. Her ambivalence is perhaps best expressed in "Anon" where she sketches the "fitful" attachment between the two:

There comes a point when the audience is no longer master of the playwright. Yet

he is not separate from them. A common life still unites them; but there are

moments of separation. Now we say, he is speaking our own thoughts. Now he is

our selves. But this sense of individuality comes fitfully. The beauty which is so

astonishingly revealed, is often a suspended derelict irrelevant beauty. There is no

sequence. It does not connect; the parts are severed, and something runs to waste.

Woolf's depiction of the playwright-audience exchange dwells in the gap between the

two, the moments of non-communication that break the "sequence" of the narrative

binding them together. The play manages to "speak" from a "common life" or language,

but gaps nonetheless open where the author's "individuality" and the audience's—

"our"—"thoughts" fail to make a single story. These gaps prove that though the

playwright and audience are not one, they are also "not separate," and their non-

separability, their transferable attachment, is what produces an "irrelevant" beauty. Like

the necessary non-correspondence between the Greek and English of "Antigone's five

words," the "wasteful" excesses born of reader-writer collaboration in these scenes of

imagined performances allow for a crucial uncertainty. And it is this element of

uncertainty, like the incommensurability of languages and selves, that makes translation

central to Woolf's common reading.

The gaps that Woolf takes as necessary to a renewed collaboration between reader

and writer are the breaking points that structure her texts spatially and generically. One

such gap, in the "énigme" between one "individualité" and its "semblables," severs the

footnote quoting untranslated George Sand from the body of *Three Guineas*. Another

instance of translation splits *Three Guineas* and *The Years* into novel and essay. One of

the novel's most discussed moments occurs during the party in the final chapter that reunites the Pargiters across generations. Edward the classics scholar refuses to translate the same phrase that features so prominently in *Three Guineas* as "Antigone's five words." The Greek words appear on the page of the novel and remain untranslated, although their content—Antigone's assertion that her nature is "to join in loving, not hating"—recurs throughout the subsequent dialogue and narration. Edward's younger brother claims against all evidence that he "never hated anybody […] My heart's full of love; my heart's full of kindness."[145] And North, the nephew to whom Edward refuses the translation, muses that his uncle has withheld it because "he's afraid […] of people who think differently" and "that's what separates us; fear." This separateness leaves North with a "knot in the middle of [his] forehead" and a vacillating desire to connect to the other party guests towards whom he "felt repelled and attracted, attracted and repelled" (393).

The narrative refuses translation at a moment, a reunion party, that is ostensibly meant to connect characters whose perspectives have been divided across chapters. Because it comes from Edward, a member of the cultural elite who can produce published scholarly translations but not extemporaneous translations to satisfy an audience physically present and demanding a sort immediate mediation, this refusal recalls Woolf's direct critique of class and education differences in *Three Guineas*. Beyond this, the interweaving of the "five words'" message of transferable attachment into the English narration of the scene relies on the readers' recognition of patterns and variations in much the same way that *The Waves* does. The fracturing along "Antigone's

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[145] Virginia Woolf. *The Years*. 1939 (New York: Harcourt, 2008), 396. Further citations in text.

five words" occurs at the place where the essay's argument transforms into a fictional encounter between characters and between reader and writer.

The "common life" Woolf wants audience-writer collaboration to reach towards perhaps seems possible only in the Elizabethan theater she praises in "Anon" and "The Reader," where the immediacy and the shared physical space of performance can join a multitude of playgoers into a united audience in league with the playwright. Nonetheless Woolf's body of work continually seeks to compensate for loss of the fully present "undifferentiated audience" and the anonymous authorship of England's literary past. Her early essays argue for a comparative common reading while her novels experiment with translations that forge transferable attachments laterally among characters. Across genres her narrative strategies attempt to recreate the potential for collaboration in the textual space of the reader-writer relation. In all these instances, Outsider status is key to Woolf's ideal of collaborative common reading because it directs attachment through "little languages" that leave space for the same uncertainty that persists in translated language; that space of uncertainty is where readers "join in loving."

To return to earlier terms, Woolf's collaborative reading, the flexible attachment that joins readers but does not bind them, operates in the space of Spivak's teleopoiesis, Staël's enthusiasm, and Eliot's sympathetic impressions. These modes of reading, fostered by the collective foreign experience of reading "abroad," are the potential rewards the Editor of *Sartor Resartus* glimpses but cannot clearly envision as he looks across the narrow bridge connecting his "band of readers" to the world of a foreign text. By using foreign words to imagine connections like the Editor's bridge and Woolf's

"ropes," these novelists and others working in their tradition theorize the ethical stakes of reading translation.

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