IDEOLOGY, CULTURE, AND TRANSLATION

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Edited by
Scott S. Elliott
and
Roland Boer

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Abbreviations

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–.
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclestiacorum latinorum
KJV	King James Version
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
NA^{27}	*Novum Testamentum Graece*. Edited by Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, Barbara and Curt Aland, et al. 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version
UBS^{4}	*The Greek New Testament*. Edited by Barbara Aland et al. 4th ed. Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993.

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INTRODUCTION

Scott S. Elliott and Roland Boer

Translation: we all do it, but we spasmodically think about how and why we do it. As scholars who work with ancient texts, translation is our bread and butter, our daily task. Without it, we would not be who we are. In the act of translation, we create the texts that create us—a recurring theme in the essays that make up this volume. Yet we reflect on that act far less often than we should. The purpose of this volume is to offer a series of reflections on that *process* of translation. Drawn together from a number of years of the Ideology, Culture, and Translation group of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), the chapters collected here offer various perspectives of what it means to translate. The group itself has met since 2005, at the Philadelphia annual meeting. Initially, the chair was Scott Elliott, one of the editors for this volume, but after Elliott's tenure, the task was taken up by Christina Petterson, who has been the incumbent since 2010. Over the years, we have explored a rich range of themes relating to translation, such as ethics, postmodernism, critical theory, narratology, psychoanalysis, gender, masculinity, constructions of the law, Jewish-Christian difference, professional intercultures, children's Bibles, popular consumption, the foreignization and domestication in politics, literature and film, along with specific histories and practices from Peru to Greenland.

In light of these themes, it should be clear that by "translation" we mean not merely the collection of tasks involved in moving from one language to another, with its many overlaps, poor fittings, closing down of meanings, and the generation of new ones. For translation is a "carrying across"—*translatus*, *transfero*—a transfer that means we leave something of ourselves behind as we make the border crossing, yet find a new dimension of ourselves on the other side. Hence, just as we create the texts that create us, we ourselves are translated in the processes of translating texts.

Translation—interpretation: the two are inseparable, and they take place within the complex webs of ideology and culture.

So that readers may gain an overview of the volume and thereby dip in wherever their appetites may be whetted, we follow convention and offer a synopsis of the book's chapters. The first section of five contributions is drawn from the session held in Boston (2008), entitled "Exploring the Intersection of Translation Studies and Critical Theory in Biblical Studies." It includes works by Roland Boer, K. Jason Coker, Scott S. Elliott, and Raj Nadella, before closing with the response from George Aichele.

Roland Boer's "The Dynamic Equivalence Caper" opens the volume, presenting a concise criticism of what remains the dominant theory of biblical translation—dynamic equivalence. Championed by the long-lived Eugene Nida (who died in August 2011 at the age of 96) and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, dynamic equivalence focuses on the message—and, its champions might say, effect (whether actual or desired)—rather than the medium and has been put forward as a radical break with the tension between free or literal translation. After a brief outline, Boer mounts four criticisms: first, dynamic equivalence is by no means new, for it is a reworked version of the old approach known as paraphrase. Further, dynamic equivalence operates with an instrumental understanding of language, which becomes the tool of meaning. Third, despite its apparent evangelical provenance, dynamic equivalence is theologically suspect, for it follows a gnostic incarnational model, with the message moving from body to body. Finally, the parallels of dynamic equivalence with commodity relations under capitalism suggest that it is the ideal (and therefore problematic) type of translation for our own era.

K. Jason Coker follows with "Translating from This Place: Social Location and Translation," arguing that Bible translation has always been and continues to be a text-centered endeavor. For Coker, the primary issues in Bible translation revolve around what the original author/editor wrote and how best to convey/translate that in a modern context. The primary focus of debate has been theories of translation based on dynamic equivalence and literal translation. However, as recent scholarship has shown in hermeneutics, a simple shift of emphasis from text to translator can radically challenge the foundations of the discipline. And so Coker argues that by decentering the text, by focusing more attention on the social location of the translator, and by emphasizing translation as a place of intersection between text and translator, we may explore new possibilities for Bible translation.

From here, Scott Elliott tackles the significance of narratology[1] for translation studies (and vice versa) in “Translation and Narrative: Transfiguring Jesus.” Both approaches, argues Elliott, have experienced similar changes in scope and application as a result of engagements with critical theory (changes that, as it turns out, are reflected in the more recent work of Bal, beginning with the revised edition of her classic *Narratology*, published in 1997). Both have come to be seen as ubiquitous, multifunctional, integral to cultural mediation and human cognition, and fundamentally and inescapably ideological. Translations and narratives are both marked by an inherent paradox: each purports to give voice to an original text or story, to represent something that precedes the translation or narration itself. However, a source text needs a translation in order to come into being as a source text, and any ostensibly preexisting story or historical event is expressed, described, and conveyed (or translated) only by means of the narrative discourse that claims to represent it. Therefore, translations and narratives also have within them the seeds of their own subversion as each possesses an inherent countertendency to prevent access to that which they claim to recount. Elliott explores this internal paradox by focusing on the Gospel accounts, in which we are presented not only with double translations wherein the utterances of Jesus are translated from speech to writing and from Aramaic to Greek (Aichele), but in fact triple translations whereby Jesus himself is translated into a character, a literary figure, as he is discoursed through narrative. Elliott goes on to consider the implications and consequences of this intersection between translation and narratology in the characterization and employment of Jesus.

In “Postcolonialism, Translation, and Colonial Mimicry,” Raj Nadella introduces the crucial issue of colonialism (and its attendant structures) in the struggles over the preferred approaches to translation, caught as they still are between preferences for “literal” and “dynamic” equivalencies in source and target languages. Specifically, argues Nadella, there has not been much focus on the different layers of colonial mimicry that have manifested themselves in the translation process both during and after the colonial era. Suggesting that there is a not-yet-fully explored interconnectedness between postcolonial theory and translation studies, he demonstrates how insights from the former can help foreground layers of colonial mimicry in Bible translations. Nadella's particular example is drawn from his home in Andhra Pradesh, India. He seeks to explicate issues of culture, subcultures, competing identities, and power as they pertain to Bible translations from English into several South Indian languages, especially Telugu, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this context, one may juxtapose two layers (or types) of colonial mimicry in Bible translations perpetuated by two divergent groups: missionary translators and Indian nationals. Nadella argues that the second layer (perpetuated by Indian translators), which is not usually highlighted by postcolonial critics of South Asian origin, is as colonial in its orientation as the first layer, the focus of many postcolonial critiques.

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[1] Understood here as the structuralist-inspired theory of narrative, seen, for example, in the early work of Mieke Bal.

The response to these four chapters is by George Aichele, "The Translator's Dilemma." Aichele draws upon his immense skills in critical theory, especially the work of Derrida and Benjamin (upon whom Derrida relies), as well as Barthes and Quine. Yet Aichele also has his own preferences, determined heavily by Benjamin's effort to recast the very notion of "literal" translation neither in terms of communicating a message nor of (a) meaning, but in terms of manifesting the text itself. Throughout this endeavor runs a deep desire to forestall the effects of an undesirable logocentrism.

Six of the remaining nine contributions are drawn from various sessions of the Ideology, Culture, and Translation group from 2005 to the present, at both the Annual Meeting and the International Meeting of the SBL. Two (Nielsen and Voth) were first presented elsewhere and commissioned for this collection. The section concludes with a response from John Eipper.

Virginia Burrus's essay, "Augustine's Bible," revisits the ancient dispute between Jerome and Augustine regarding biblical translation, and it does so in dialogue with Naomi Seidman's 2006 monograph, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation.* Seidman recognizes Jerome's troubling appropriation of an earlier Roman imperialist understanding of translation but nonetheless applauds the famous champion of the *Hebraica veritas* for reintroducing dialogue into the theory and practice of translation while also proffering a more full-bodied understanding of the translator's task. In contrast, Augustine's faithfulness to the Septuagint tends to come across as both unconvincing and unappealing, not only in its transcendentalism (Seidman's main emphasis), but also in its text-critical naiveté, its heavy-handed resort to the authority of ecclesial tradition, and its implicit anti-Judaism. However, in her chapter, Burrus revisits Augustine's claims for the Greek text, as these surface not only in his correspondence with Jerome but also in his *Confessions* and *City of God*. In that light, she then positions herself to complicate the history that Seidman relates: even as Jerome's view of the *Hebraica veritas* colludes with that of the rabbis, so Augustine's particular embrace of biblical translatability aligns him with the thought not only of the Alexandrian Philo, but also of the German-Jewish translator and translation theorist Franz Rosenzweig, to whose work Burrus turns briefly at the end of the essay.

In " 'His Love Has Been Our Banner on Our Road': Identity Politics and the Revised Version," Alan Cadwallader considers the revision of the Authorized Version of the Bible, which ran from 1870 until its published release in 1881. That revision generated one of the most bitter instances of political struggles involved in the translation of a sacred book. Cadwallader sets out to examine three aspects of the pluriform political commitments that attached to this Bible translation: the relation between an imperial, sovereign nation and the position of an established church; the integrity and authenticity of denominations within a nation; and the competitive tensions of national and international prestige and responsibility. Each of these aspects exposes how commitments to espoused identities were impressed onto the translation, fueled the dynamics of the translators, and manipulated the structures established to achieve the translation. Through the analytical tools of the politico-literary theories of Umberto Eco and the sociopolitical critique of identity politics initiated by Erving Goffman applied to a range of primary, often unpublished sources, these aspects are analyzed for what they reveal about the interests and conflicts that are hidden from the consumers (and antagonists) of the resultant production.

With Jaqueline du Toit's "Seeing Is Believing: Children's Bibles as Translation Negotiated," we shift focus to consider children's Bibles as visually interactive, child-appropriate renditions of the narrative sections of adult translations of the Hebrew and Greek source texts. Legitimacy for these "Bibles" is founded in their claim to authority as "translation" of the source texts despite obvious adaptation of the adult version of the canon. Du Toit considers the implicit inclusion of visual language in these Bibles despite the aniconistic preferences of the Judeo-Christian tradition. She emphasizes how the visual language interacts with title and text in order to render the biblical narrative appropriate to a child audience. This implies significant adjustment to the interpretation of canon tolerated by the religious tradition because of Ruth Bottigheimer's (1996) observation that children's Bibles historically adhere to societal context rather than textual content. Simplification, addition, adaptation, deletion, and rearrangement therefore happen at will and are regulated most often by the preconceived contemporary societal notions of didactics and entertainment value rather than any adherence to source text. Du Toit's chapter therefore considers the significance of visual translation of the Bible for children and the implicit interaction between text and picture in children's Bibles for our understanding of what a society considers worthy of transfer to the next generation. Much may therefore be deduced regarding the influence and interpretation of the Bible on culture and society by considering the norms and values embedded in the interplay between text and picture in the translation of children's Bibles.

And from children's Bibles we shift our attention to … Greenland, with two contributions: one, a survey by Flemming A. J. Nielsen of the earliest Greenlandic Bible translation, and the other, a critical reflection on the practice of such translation by Christina Petterson. In "The Earliest Greenlandic Bible: A Study of the Ur-text from 1725," Nielsen points out that Christianity was brought to Greenland when the Norwegian missionary Hans Egede arrived in 1721. His attempts at writing Greenlandic constitute the earliest continuous texts written in any Eskimo language. By 1725 he was able to compile a manuscript containing biblical and catechetical texts in an exotic language that had not been described before. Amazingly, the manuscript has been preserved today but has never been published. Egede's tentative efforts, though very pidgin-like, gave rise to a long tradition of translating the Bible into Greenlandic. Biblical manuscripts were produced and copied by hand in great numbers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but apart from Egede's Ur-text, virtually all of them have disappeared. Printed biblical texts began to appear in 1744. Neilsen's chapter provides a presentation of Egede's manuscript and its background and influence, including the invention of a literary language, the cultivation of new domains in the Greenlandic language, and the beginning of a transformation of the beliefs of an aboriginal culture from shamanism to Christianity.

Following Nielsen's survey, Christina Petterson offers a critical assessment of Bible translation projects in Greenland with "Configuring the Language to Convert the People: Translating the Bible in Greenland." Petterson retraces the steps of those first missionaries to western Greenland in 1721, who were met with a harsh, barren landscape. Dealing with the translational questions surrounding concepts like "God" and "sin" would be difficult enough without the added challenges posed by such seemingly simple texts like Matt 7:16 (with its references to grapes and thorns, figs and thistles) and Rev 5:5–6 (with its description of a lion that is also a lamb). But translating the Bible into Greenlandic meant more than finding adequate words to fix the meaning of the biblical text. As in so many other colonial contexts, it was a later step in a process of conversion and control. *Preceding* the actual translation was what Aichele above calls an "intermedial translation" of the Greenlandic language, namely converting it to a medium of writing, in its particular Western linear and alphabetized inflection. Translation of the Bible set the coordinates within which resistance was possible, and established new parameters for truth. *Following* the translation, then, are the social and cultural upheavals of this intrusion of writing, in terms of class formations and constructions of gender resulting from the education and labor politics of the colonial administration. Set within this framework, Petterson addresses the practice of translating the Bible and other religious texts into Greenlandic and its cultural implications. First, she focuses on the politics of language, that is, the hierarchical relationship between Danish and Greenlandic and the cultural implications inherent in this difference. The second issue is that of Greenlandic religious practice. What happens to this cultural aspect when it meets a dominating monotheistic worldview and religious practice, and what are the cultural consequences of this meeting?

From Greenland we move to Yiddish translations of the New Testament in a study by Naomi Seidman, called "'A Gift for the Jewish People': Einspruch's *Der Bris Khadoshe* as Missionary Translation and Yiddish Literature." As Seidman points out, the earliest known Yiddish translation of the New Testament appeared in Kraków in 1540. From then on, Yiddish translations of the New Testament and other publications designed for missionary work among Yiddish-speaking Jews continued to appear throughout the seventeenth and, especially, eighteenth centuries, along with other material designed to help Christians understand Europe's Jews through the medium of their language. But the most sustained efforts to proselytize Jews through New Testament translations occurred in the context of the much broader phenomenon of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century project of disseminating the Bible first to the poor, in inexpensive editions, and then throughout the world, an outgrowth of the late-eighteenth-century evangelical revival. In the two centuries since 1804, when the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded, the Bible in whole or part was translated under the auspices of an international range of Bible societies into more than a thousand languages. This history, as Homi Bhabha has suggested in his reading of the intersections between the missionary and colonialism projects, evinces not only the triumphant and wondrous bestowal of the Holy Book, but also the deferrals and anxieties of its colonial reception "in which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced."[2] But some Jewish languages, via their Hebrew components, could also provide a sense of recovery, as translators willing to leave behind the familiar and canonical language of Luther's Bible (and the resulting "missionary Yiddish") and mobilize a more correct and "Jewish" Yiddish would eventually discover. Such an embrace of the Hebrew component of Yiddish was not fully realized until the mid-twentieth century, with the 1941 publication of *Der Bris Khadoshe* by Henry (Chayim) Einspruch in Baltimore. Einspruch's translation, unlike earlier versions, left German behind, taking not Luther or his Judeo-German and Yiddish revisers as his model, but rather the norms of literary Yiddish and, more specifically, the great modernist translation of the Hebrew Bible by Yehoash (Solomon Blumgarten), which appeared in 1926. Seidman's contribution traces some of the internal developments in the sociology of Jewish conversion to Christianity that played a part in Einspruch's linguistic choices.

We have decided to publish Esteban Voth's essay, "Masculinidad en la Traducción de la Biblia en Latinoamérica," in Spanish, with an abstract in English. Despite the immediate limitations posed to those who do not read Spanish, the rationale for our decision is tied directly to the theoretical underpinnings of this volume. Publishing Voth's essay in Spanish highlights and crystallizes, in the most salient and concrete way, the complex issues of ideology, cultural identity, and the role of the reader-translator woven throughout this collection. Whereas the other chapters speak variously *about* these issues, Voth's essay, both in its subject matter and by its very language and inclusion in the volume, *embodies* these issues in a unique way. Whether and how individual readers choose to deal with this untranslated work will immediately position each in a certain way in relation to the questions raised by the other authors. In other words, Voth's essay points up the inescapable, ever-present task of translation that must *always* be undertaken. For Voth, the practice of translation is never a neutral enterprise. More specifically, he addresses the issues of Bible translation and masculinity in translations of the Bible used in Latin America by focusing on six Spanish Bible translations. These come from different religious traditions and represent different theories of translation. Yet precisely because males have dominated the practice of Bible translation, variations on an underlying masculine ideology are clearly present in all of the translations studied. In order to illustrate this point, Voth also presents a case study based on the most recent Bible translation published in Latin America (*Traducción en Lenguaje Actual* [2003]). Based on the findings, Voth's study makes a plea for all translations to be revised bearing in mind the presence of what might be called a "masculine hegemonic influence" in Bible translation. It is his contention that translations of the Bible can be improved and thus be made more "gender friendly."

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[2] Bhaba 1994, 102.

Finally, Matt Waggoner offers a philosophically nuanced contribution—with a distinct Hegelian "other" present—in "Is There Justice in Translation?" For Waggoner, the theory and practice of translation runs thick with layers of social meaning and political myth. It necessitates attention to issues of difference and identity, host, home and the other, identity, plurality, assimilation, cultural consumption, incorporability, origin and genesis, and various kinds of cultural and political fantasies that mark the desire to speak to the other, to be spoken by the other, or to make the other speak. Translation tinkers with what the Hegelians call the politics of recognition—that is, the risky, uneven process in which self-consciousness is, not without difficulty, confirmed by seeing oneself in another, being seen by another, or being seen through the eyes of another. And it is for that reason that translation is subject to many of the same ethical dilemmas as the Hegelian narrative: To what extent is the other merely the occasion and the material for the fashioning of the self? To what extent is the other consumed in the process of self-fashioning? To what extent does translation harbor, in a life-and-death way, fear of otherness? Or, to what extent does or might translation acknowledge that otherness is constitutive of the self, something without which there can be no self? In the same way that the productive ambiguities of Hegel's narration of selfhood in relation to otherness have contributed so richly to the self-reflection of modern identity (the identity of selves, cultures, races, genders, nations, etc., but also to the identity of the modern), so too is the project of translation implicated, consciously or not, in a whole set of inquiries into modern identity and the constructions thereof. Against the backdrop of issues of contemporary global multiculture, this essay engages the question, What are the ethical stakes of translation work?

In light of the enticing variety of these contributions—from Burrus, Cadwallader, du Toit, Nielsen, Petterson, Seidman, Voth, and Waggoner—one may imagine the challenge presented to the respondent, John Eipper. In addition, Eipper is not a trained Bible scholar; but he has excellent experience in translation, with specialization in nineteenth-century Latin America (especially Mexico), colonial Latin American studies, literary translation, travel literature, and twentieth-century Argentina. All of this is to Eipper's distinct advantage as he weaves his response. On this occasion, we will not say more, hoping that enough has been provided to whet the appetite of the reader.

A rich feast, is it not? Enjoy.