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George Steiner's Hermeneutic Motion
and the Ontology, Ethics,
and Epistemology of Translation

**Engaging with Translation.
New Readings of
George Steiner's *After Babel***

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George Steiner's Hermeneutic Motion and the Ontology, Ethics, and Epistemology of Translation

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Abstract: This chapter is organized around three phrases from Phil Goodwin's idealizing reading of George Steiner's hermeneutic motion: (1) "there is a certain violence involved," (2) "This imagery offended some readers," and (3) "this second stage of translation will always feel like a violation." In response to those remarks, my research questions are (Q1) What is the *ontology* of that "certain violence," and why did it "offend some readers"? (Q2) What is the *ethical* significance of Steiner's passage through violence in the hermeneutic motion? (Q3) What is the *epistemological* significance of "feeling" in the recognition that "this second stage of translation will always *feel* like a violation"? The trajectory of my argument, in other words, is from *ontologization* (Q1) through *ethical regimes* (Q2) to the *epistemology of feeling* (Q3).

Keywords: Hermeneutic motion, Ontology, Ethics, Epistemology, Feeling.

1 Introduction

George Steiner was, as Elizabeth Marie Young (1997: 240) notes, "one of the scholars who inaugurated the current interest in the ethics of translation," specifically through the "multi-step interpretive process that he calls 'the hermeneutic motion' and defines as

‘the act of elicitation and appropriative transfer of meaning?’” Famously, or perhaps infamously, literary translators through the ages have abased themselves before the brilliant source text, regarding themselves, in what I have called SIDOLT (the standard inferiorizing definition of literary translation, cf. Robinson 2017c: 98–99), as *by definition* inferior to the source author and so as *by default* incapable of rendering its beauties in the target language; but, Young adds, according to Steiner “this crippling sense of adoration for the source text is only half the story,” because there is also an invasive and aggressive violence to the translator’s hermeneutical act.

In his passionate defense of Steiner’s “four-fold hermeneutic” as a much-needed ethics of translation, by contrast, Phil Goodwin (2010) takes a cautious distance from this tendency to focus critically and narrowly on the violence of the second step, which in Goodwin’s words was of course for Steiner (1975/1998: 314) “an act of appropriative aggression, or penetration. Steiner uses the image first conjured by Jerome, of military conquest and ‘bringing home the meaning, captive’” (Goodwin 2010: 31). He continues:

It is penetrative because it is inevitably intrusive, and *there is a certain violence involved*. The idea is that the text must be completely “opened up” and laid bare. Steiner made heavy-handed use of images of rape here, talking of “the cognate acts of intellectual and erotic possession” (ibid. [314]). *This imagery offended some readers*; a more acceptable analogy might be the operating table. The patient is “opened up” and his or her inner workings are open to the translator’s gaze in a way that is quite unnatural but essential for the process of understanding. For example, a poem is dissected, and its syntax and imagery examined in detail, so that the translator receives not only the impression which a general reader would receive, but understands how that impression is achieved. We will recall from earlier in the argument that for Steiner a language is a skin—like the surgeon’s knife, *this second stage of translation will always feel like a violation*, and this is why it has to be an ethically-governed procedure. (Goodwin 2010: 31; emphasis added)

I have italicized the three phrases that I want to isolate here for investigation: “there is a certain violence involved,” “[t]his imagery offended some readers,” and “this second stage of translation will always feel like a violation.” Here are my research questions, which will also be my section headings, according to each branch of philosophy:

1. What is the *ontology* of that “certain violence,” and why did it “offend some readers”?
2. What is the *ethical* significance of Steiner's passage through violence in the hermeneutic motion?
3. What is the *epistemological* significance of “feeling” in the recognition that “this second stage of translation will always *feel* like a violation”?

Goodwin goes on to insist that “Steiner's frank recognition of the brutality of these processes [sc. second/aggression and third/assimilation] is one of his most important contributions. It is also the reason for the existence of the other two motions (the first and fourth). Without the first movement of ‘radical generosity’, and the final movement of ‘restitution’ translation would quite simply be robbery with violence” (Goodwin 2010: 34). In other words, for Goodwin the frank revelation of the translator's aggressive rape/conquest of the source culture is not what *makes* Steiner's hermeneutic motion ethical; it is what *necessitates* the compensatory shift in the fourth step to an ethics of restitution. And that compensatory necessity is mobilized through feeling: “This second stage of translation will always *feel* like a violation, and this is why it *has to be* an ethically-governed procedure” (ibid.: 31).

There is, however, a tension at the core of Goodwin's reading. On the one hand, the line “[w]ithout the first movement of ‘radical generosity’, and the final movement of ‘restitution’ translation would quite simply be robbery with violence” (ibid.) suggests that for Goodwin's Steiner (2/3) aggression and assimilation *are* “robbery with violence” and (1/4) trust and restitution *are* ethical restorations of a disrupted balance. The passage through aggression and assimilation, in other words, is like a translational Dark Night of the Soul, which, as in Figure 1, the ethical translator *frames* with restorative beneficence. The horizontal line across the middle of that diagram would obviously cordon off (2/3) “robbery with violence” from Steiner's salutary attention to (1/4) “ethical translation”; but also, at least implicitly, “*Ethical Translation*” across the top of the diagram might well serve as a definitive title for the entire process, both anticipatorily and retroactively thematizing 2 and 3 as

two darkish *stages* of ethical translation. They may not be ethical in themselves, but the trust-to-restitution frame redeems them.

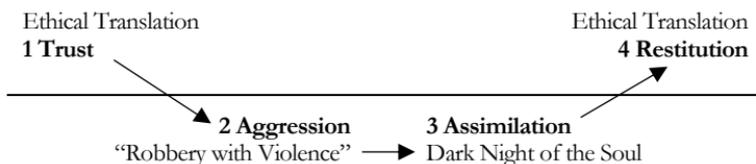


Fig. 1: A possible reading of Steiner’s hermeneutical motion, based on Goodwin (2010: 34)

On the other hand, Goodwin’s syntax points us in a rather different direction. The antecedent for “it” in “[t]his second stage of translation will always feel like a violation, and this is why *it* has to be an ethically-governed procedure,” after all, is not “translation” but “this second stage of translation.” Reading that “it” as referring to “translation”—the whole four-stage translational motion, with trust and restitution as its benevolent ethical frame, as in Figure 1—would tend to exclude, or at least marginalize, the violent second and third stages of Steiner’s model from translational ethics: it is precisely because of the violence in the middle stages that “*translation culminating in restitution* has to be an ethically-governed procedure.” Recognizing that “it” refers grammatically not to translation as a whole, however, but to the translator’s violent penetration into the source culture, and the conquest and capture of source-textual properties, leads us to the rather more disturbing conclusion that “*second-stage aggression* has to be an ethically-governed procedure.” How that might work is my second research question.

It’s also possible, of course, that Goodwin’s syntax there was simply careless, and that he did actually mean for the “ethically-governed procedure” to be the sunny passage from trust to restitution *and not* the dark passage through aggression (conquest, rape, abduction). If so, I am guilty of reading too much into an unfortunate slip.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Goodwin also chides me for what he calls my “unsympathetic” (2010: 36) reading of Steiner’s herme-

neutic motion in Robinson (1998). Given my deep and complex veneration of Steiner's book, however—given the fact that, as I've hinted at least three times in print,¹ *After Babel* constituted nearly my entire primary education in Translation Studies—that word “unsympathetic” rankles a bit. As I see it, my reading of Steiner in Mona Baker's *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* is not at all unsympathetic, but rather is “critical,” in the sense not of an aggressive attack—a conquest or a rape, say—but of “critique.”

It seems to me to go without saying, in fact, that a scholar's intellectual veneration of any great thinker from whom s/he learns must invariably be critical. I certainly not only always disagree on key points with my great intellectual heroes—Peirce, Wittgenstein, Austin, Bakhtin, Burke, Steiner, Felman, Sedgwick, and so on—but consider such disagreement an importunate ethical expectation for all academic argumentation. There are always problems to identify and work around. Critiques of those problems are always—*must* always be—goads to rethinking and reframing, and do not imply the tiniest shred of disrespect or lack of “sympathy.”

I mention this because I will be thinking through Steiner's hermeneutical motion *critically* here again, and thus laying myself open once more to the charge of “unsympathetic” reading—and do want to go on record as valuing not only critique but full-bodied and thought-transformative engagement with that critique. By contrast with the approach that I favor, Goodwin's inclination to gloss over some of the obvious problems with Steiner's model by saying uneasily (but quickly) that he “made heavy-handed use of images of rape here,” and in so doing “offended some readers,” seems to me insufficiently attentive to the explosive range of Steiner's hermeneutical brilliance.

Another way of putting that: I do not believe that the hermeneutic motion of *my reading* of Steiner's hermeneutic motion should

1 Cf. Robinson (1991: 19): “I find *After Babel* a monumental achievement, the most impressive and comprehensive philosophical study of translation ever published,” and, for mentions that Goodwin could not have seen in 2010, Robinson (2015: 41) and Panda (2017: 94). For my first critical reading of Steiner, see further Robinson (1991: 18–21, 89–92, 294–295).

ideally culminate in “restitution,” the Edenic restoration of some imagined “balance.”² I aim instead toward what I take to be the ethical and epistemological supervalue of principled and thoughtful *transformation*. In the framework of Steiner’s hermeneutic motion specifically of translation, that might mean that a translation may bring something epistemically new into the world *without* the restitutive ethics of balance and harmony. For Goodwin, following Steiner, restitution seems to be the only acceptable ethics of translation, the only restorative movement that will justify the middle two steps of aggressive incursion and extraction and forcible assimilation. I offer instead the perhaps compromised Heraclitean epistemology of πάντα ῥεῖ/*panta rhei* “everything flows.” Change is inevitable; there is no restitution that actually restores any kind of ideal balance. In the translation chain, celebrated in Robinson (2017c: 123) as the definitive literary act and genre, every new translational iteration brings change, and thus a salutary newness into the world.

Does that mean, then, in Steiner’s terms, that by forswearing the utopian ethics of restitution I am embracing and even celebrating the dystopian violence of aggressive incursion and extraction and forcible domestication? Are those the binary options between which I must choose? “In Steiner’s [third-stage incorporation] imagery,” as Goodwin (2010: 33) reports,

the warrior returns home having captured the beautiful slave girl. He now has to make a place for her in his own world, where she will be a blessing and also a problem. Is the captive going to be dressed in the manner of her new home, or left in her own costume? To what extent is she to be taught the customs of her new home?

Is that the only possible scenario left to me? And if so, is there a possible ethics of that scenario?

When Douglas Hofstadter published *Le Ton Beau de Marot*, back in 1998, he invited me to speak to his graduate seminar on

2 As Goodwin (2010: 34) summarizes this fourth step: “The first three steps have left the system ‘dangerously out of balance’ (ibid. [Steiner 1975/1998: 316])—the source language has in some sense been despoiled, and the target language has been unbalanced or infected. Balance needs to be restored somehow.”

translation at Indiana University; before my arrival he sent me a clever little English poem and asked me to translate it into any language I liked, and to be ready to write my translation on the board and talk about it. I translated it into Finnish—and was quite proud of my cleverness in managing the poem in translation. Was that poem a “beautiful slave girl”? Did I capture her in some foreign land that I was busy invading? If that is difficult to imagine, it is even harder to imagine my experience of translating the poem into Finnish as “returning home” with a captive slave girl. (I was born in Indiana, but into an English-speaking home. I didn’t hear the Finnish language, or know anything about it, until the summer before I turned 17.)

I realize, of course, that I’m pushing Steiner’s model—and especially Goodwin’s idealization of that model—to the breaking point. Translating into the L2, to paraphrase Jacques Derrida (1972/1988: 9) on *writing* in the phonocentric context of Austin’s spoken performative, “carries with it a force of breaking with its context, that is, the set of presences that organize the moment of its inscription.” The “presences” that organize Steiner’s reinscription of German Romantic translation theory are idealized translators into the L1—specifically, for Schleiermacher and the others, German translators of “foreign” texts into German as not only the “local” language but as a Romantically elevated *national* local language, the proleptic (future) language of *die deutsche Nation*, the German Nation. This assumption that “one” normatively translates from “the foreign language” to “the local language” continues to serve the theorizing of Steiner, Venuti, and other post-Romantic translation scholars as a stabilized and universalized context, like some transcendental Realm of Forms or Saussurean *langue*. I am, therefore, “breaking the rules” or “breaking frame” by seizing upon an experience of translating into “the foreign language,” namely Finnish—which I confess does not feel foreign to me (but neither does it feel native). Friedrich Schleiermacher (1813/2002: 88) infamously condemned that blurring of the felt line between foreignness and nativeness as „gegen Natur und Sitte“/“in defiance of nature and morality,” a „frevelhafte und magische Kunst“/“wicked

and magical art” by which a writer „ist ein Ueberläufer geworden von der Muttersprache, und hat sich einer andern ergeben“/“becomes a traitor to his native language by surrendering his verbal life to another” (Robinson 1997/2015: 236). By instantiating translation into the L2, I am deliberately disrupting the hegemonic *Umwelt* of German Romantic thought, and so, in Goodwin’s reading of Steiner, perversely transgressing the bounds of ethical translation.

The question before us, however, is: how does all that *work*? The trajectory of my icosic/ecotic argument in this chapter is from *ontologization* (Question 1) through *ethical regimes* (Question 2) to *the epistemology of feeling* (Question 3). I theorize icosis as a feeling-powered entelechy from normativized group opinion to ἐπιστήμη/*epistēmē* (knowledge) not *of* but *as* ontology (truth, reality); I theorize ecosis as a feeling-powered entelechy from normativized group opinion to ἦθος/*ēthos* (character) as ethics (good and bad, virtue and vice) (cf. Robinson 2016: 6–9). If icosis and ecosis are affective-becoming-conative entelechies (ἐν/*en* “in” + τέλος/*telos* “end” + ἔχειν/*ekhein* “to have”) whose τέλος/*telos* is either ontology (icosis) or ethics (ecosis), icosic and ecotic *theory* is an entelechy whose τέλος/*telos* is epistemology: not knowledge-as-truth but knowing about knowing; coming to know more clearly and complexly how we know things, why we believe things, what fuels our ontologizing and ethicizing impulses.

2 Question 1: What is the ontology of the “certain violence” in Steiner’s second and third steps, and why did it “offend some readers”?

Goodwin does not name the readers who were offended at—or perhaps just ideologically disapproving of—the violence in Steiner’s hermeneutic motion, but one was certainly Lori Chamberlain, who wrote of it:

The first step, that of “initiative trust,” describes the translator’s willingness to take a gamble on the text, trusting that the text will yield something. As a second step, the translator takes an overly aggressive step, “penetrating” and “capturing” the texts (Steiner calls this “appropriative penetration”), an act explicitly compared to erotic possession. During the third step, the imprisoned text must be “naturalized,” must become part of the translator’s language, literally incorporated or embodied. Finally, to compensate for this “appropriative ‘rapture,’” the translator must restore the balance, attempt some act of reciprocity to make amends for the act of aggression. His model for this act of restitution is, he says, “that of Lévi-Strauss’s *Anthropologie structurale* which regards social structures as attempts at dynamic equilibrium achieved through an exchange of words, women, and material goods.” Steiner thereby makes the connection explicit between the exchange of women, for example and the exchange of words in one language for words in another. (Chamberlain 1988: 463)

Just how that exchange-analogy would work in practice, of course, is difficult to work out: how exactly does the translator achieve, through “restitutive” translation, a balance of verbal trade that is analogous to the balance of trade in women and goods? There is a loose conceptual idealism to Steiner’s use of the Lévi-Straussian structuralist model of patriarchal society (in which men trade women for goods) as a utopian analogue for translation (in which translators trade target-language words for source-language words)—and that analogical equation doesn’t track well in either direction. Who in the translation marketplace gives what to whom, and how exactly is the resulting balance of trade measured?

No matter how we want to fill in the gaps in that analogy, however, Chamberlain’s point stands: that Steiner’s model is ontologically masculinist; that for Steiner’s ideal translator, women *are* (at least metaphorically) the objects that are captured, penetrated, and hauled home as wives/slaves. And following up on that “*are*”: the issue I want to explore in this First Question is the *ontologization* of metaphors. Schematically (this is my report of other people’s thinking):

- a. In Lévi-Strauss, “primitive” patriarchal societies *are* organized around the exchange of women for goods (cf. also military conquest, rape, and abduction).

- b. In Steiner, the translator *is* someone who invades the source culture, captures source-textual properties, and hauls them home.
- c. The figurative analogy between (a) and (b) implies a universalized patriarchal ontology in Steiner's conception of translation and the translator, and thus, by (psycho-/ideo)logical extension, in Steiner himself.

Therefore, the ontologizing thinking goes, the ὄντως/*ontōs*/"being" of George Steiner on translation *is* masculinist.

I note this ontologization, however, not to point fingers, or to take sides, but to *sharpen awareness* of the affective-becoming-conative-becoming-cognitive processes at work in this icotic regime. How does a vague affective response to this *talk* of violence first get channeled through a group (say, feminist translation scholars), then project onto the talk a negative valence as a harmful attitudinal and behavior action-potential associated with a group commonly associated with violence, especially against women (say, men), and finally come to identify and critique the theoretical model as a "truth" or "reality" (ontology)?

When Sherry Simon picks up the thread of Chamberlain's critique, she notes that,

[u]sing aggressively male imagery, Steiner describes the act of penetration of the text through which 'the translator invades, extracts, and brings home' (Steiner 1975: 298). Steiner's four stages of entry into the text might begin in a passive moment of trust, but they end with a gesture of control. (Simon 1996: 144)

In a superficial sense, of course, they end not with "a gesture of control," but with "restitution": the "gesture of control" by which the captured woman-analogues are "brought home" and naturalized/controlled is actually the third stage. In a deeper reading, however, the idealized ethics of "restitution" might emerge as just another euphemized regime of control: a rhetoric of translatorial reassurance ("nothing to see here, folks, everything's fine, no source-cultural products or reputations have been hurt in the making of this translation") that is more spin than reality. (We'll come back to this reading toward the end of Question 2.)

As Simon also notes (1996: 28–29), the Brazilian deconstructive translation theorist Rosemary Arrojo (1995) launched a disturbingly persuasive critique of the feminists condemning the masculinist “violence” and “aggression” of Steiner’s model. Citing Susan Bassnett (1992), Arrojo notes the discord between Bassnett’s “orgasmic” feminist theory of translation and the actual examples that Bassnett celebrates, such as the work of Barbara Godard, whose approach to feminist translation Arrojo (1995: 73) identifies as unabashedly “invasive” and “appropriative”. She also compares what Bassnett calls “the Canadian School” with “our Augusto de Campos’s theoretical views as expressed, for instance, in a well-known text in which he declares that ‘translating’ is ‘his way of loving’ the authors he admires, with the important observation that here ‘translating’ is a synonym for ‘devouring’” (ibid.). Bassnett too, Arrojo notes, finds “echoes of de Campos’s ‘metaphors of cannibalization and vampirism’ in Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwoods’s [sic] discussion of her translation of Lise Gauvin’s *Letters from An Other*” (ibid.). So if de Campos’s cannibalistic and vampiristic metaphors are both (a) strongly congruent with Steiner’s metaphors of invasion, conquest, and incorporation and (b) strongly attractive to a radical feminist translation theorist like Lotbinière-Harwood, does a feminist really have any right to take Steiner to task for his tropes? “At this point,” Arrojo asks,

it is almost impossible to avoid asking Susan Bassnett a simple question: why is the ‘feminist’ translator’s ‘affirmation’ of ‘her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing’ the text which she deliberately ‘womanhandles’ positive and desirable whereas Steiner’s ‘masculine’ model is merely ‘violent’ and ‘appropriative?’ (Arrojo 1995: 73)

But it’s not just, Arrojo goes on, that feminist translation theories tend to ontologize translatorial “manhandling” negatively and feminist “womanhandling” positively, despite the manifest similarities between the two—“their authorial ‘will-to-power’ and their ‘manipulation’ of the texts and authors they translate” (ibid.). It’s also that the gender binary on which Bassnett’s orgasmic theory of translation rests is a displaced version of the old patriarchal ontology according to which men are aggressive and women are passive,

men are fighters and women are lovers, men are hierarchical and women are egalitarian, and so on:

The search for a “pacifistic” theory of translation, based on the possibility of a “respectful” collaboration between author and translator, sponsored by some trends of contemporary feminism, is not simply “utopic” or “idealistic.” It is incompatible with what is perhaps the most human of all characteristics in a world in which meaning is not intrinsically attached to words and objects: the need to make reality (and, consequently, also texts and objects) our own, the need to fight for the power to determine and to take over meaning. However, the recognition of such a need, which is one of the most revolutionary insights we can learn from contemporary thought, does not have to be associated to the death, the destruction, or even the betrayal of the “original.” Rather, it can be truly liberating. It can help us, for instance, see the “masculine” bias in Steiner’s model, as Lori Chamberlain has showed us, and it can help us truly deconstruct the logocentric polarities between male and female, “original” and translation, fidelity and infidelity, violence and non-violence, which have been (at least, partially) responsible for the marginal roles both women and translations have played in our culture. (Arrojo 1995: 74)

Arrojo does not explicitly identify the ontologizing moves in the feminist “‘pacifistic’ theory of translation” that she critiques, in fact; but her Derridean loyalties do implicitly point to her desire to “deconstruct the logocentric polarities between male and female, ‘original’ and translation, fidelity and infidelity, violence and non-violence” as a poststructuralist assault on what Derrida calls the “metaphysics [read *ontology*] of presence.”

1995 was of course too early for Arrojo to move beyond that gender binary by “queering translation,” or finding what Elena Basile (2018) calls the “fuck”—or what I call the genderfuck or equivallencefuck (cf. Robinson 2019)—of translation: we had to wait two more decades for that move.³ For Arrojo in 1995 the issue is simply deconstructing the *ontological* “polarities between male and female.” Still, the fact that by the second half of the second decade in the twenty-first century we have a much clearer sense of what it might

3 See e.g. Spurlin (2014), Ruvalcaba (2016), Epstein/Gillet (2017), Baer/Kaindl (2018), and, beyond that spate of translation-queerings, Gramling/Dutta (2016) and Robinson (2019) on translating transgender.

mean not only to deconstruct but to *queer* those binaries only serves to strengthen Arrojo's case.

In her response to these charges, Sherry Simon reluctantly admits that Arrojo has a valid point—but also expresses her hope that there might be more to it than just a resigned acceptance of “the [human] need to make reality (and, consequently, also texts and objects) our own, the need to fight for the power to determine and to take over meaning.”

While I find Simon's dissatisfaction honest and poignant, and the complexity of her “yes, but . . .” reply to Arrojo emotionally and intellectually compelling, there is one moment in her response that troubles me:

Arrojo's critique underlines *the ineluctability of violence* in any act of interpretation or writing. Nietzsche, on the one hand, psychoanalysis, on the other, show that *there is no escape from the violence* involved in any attempt to make sense of the world, any attempt to use language in order to master the disorder of what lies beyond language. But beyond this all-englobing understanding of the drive to meaning as the expression of a will to power, there must be exploration of specific writing relationships. Surely what is to be most criticized in many of the masculinist formulations of fidelity in translation is the fact that they suppose a “universal” subject. Steiner's translator is never explicitly defined as masculine, never inserted into a specific historical context. The model that Steiner provides is presented as gender-free, and yet the whole “thrust” of Steiner's argument supposes the perspective of masculine sexuality. The power of feminist reformulations of the translating subject has been to give clear recognition to the specific conditions of the translating relationship, one of those conditions being the gendered nature of the text and of the subject. The feminist translator affirms her role as an active participant in the creation of meaning. In theoretical texts, in prefaces, in footnotes, she affirms the provisionality of meaning, drawing attention to the process of her own work. (Simon 1996: 29; emphasis added)

Yes, I agree that Steiner's universalization of the sexualized male translator as supposedly “gender-free” is a serious problem. What troubles me, however, is Simon's willingness to go along with Nietzsche, Freud, and Arrojo on “the ineluctability of violence in any act of interpretation or writing.” Is violence really so hermeneutically ubiquitous? Isn't violence not only just one trope for hermeneutics, but an audience-effect that cries out for perspectivization?

In the long extract above, the “violence in any act of interpretation or writing” is ineluctable and inescapable; in the paragraph immediately preceding that passage in Simon’s text, however, she expresses the hope that there might be some kind of workaround for this quandary (Simon 1996: 28f.):

There must indeed be a reevaluation of the dialectic between translator and text. How is this movement between reading and rewriting, reception and appropriation, to be reconfigured in such a way as to avoid re-imposing the violence of subjectivity? Can there be a version of the female subject which does not re-introduce new but still vigorous dichotomies?

That hope, however, spawns a raft of new questions:

1. Is it really subjectivity that is ineluctably and inescapably violent?
 - a. If so, is (1) that subjectivity personal, individual, trapped inside the hearts and minds of discrete human beings?
 - b. Would the possible ineluctability of (1a) imply some sort of innate biological inevitability/universality?
 - c. Or could (1) be some sort of collective/cultural subjectivity?
 - d. If (1c), do we still want to (1b) universalize it, or can we allow for a certain degree of cultural difference and transformation?
 - e. Would (1cd) be a collective subjectivity shared through a text by its source author and source reader, source author and translator, translator and target reader?
 - f. Or would (1cd) be an ethical subjectivity whose violence is directed at policing communication (hermeneutical intentionality and uptake)? (See Take Two in Question 2.)
2. Who is doing the “imposing” of the “violence of subjectivity”?
 - a. Is (2) that imposing’s agent (1ab) the individual owners of the subjectivity, (1e) the author-translator/translator-reader dialogue, or (1f) the legislators of legal/judicial/ethical regimes (again, see Take Two in Question 2)?
 - b. Or is (2) some third agency unnamed in “to avoid re-imposing”?

3. What is “the dialectic between translator and text”—“this movement between reading and rewriting, reception and appropriation”?
 - a. Is (3) just (1e) the author-translator-target reader exchange?
 - b. Or is it (1f) the transferential imposition of regulatory subjectivity?
 - c. Or is it some other kind of movement unnamed in Simon's account? (What moves?)
4. What kind of reconfiguration of (3) are we hoping for?
 - a. Would it be an ontological reconfiguration, transforming the essential nature of how translators interact with texts—and possibly even the essential natures of translators and texts?
 - b. Or would it be a theoretical one, transforming how we *think* about (1e, 3a) the translator-text dialectic/movement?
 - c. Who are (4b) “we”?
 - d. What kind of agency might bring it about?
5. Who are the “current [and future] version[s] of the female subject”?
 - a. Presumably the “current version[s] of the female subject” are the ones named in the exchange between Susan Bassnett and Rosemary Arrojo—Bassnett's egalitarian, tolerant, open, harmonious, orgasmic female subject, and the “invasive” and “appropriative” female subject that Arrojo identifies in Barbara Godard's descriptions of her own translatorial work—but what kinds of new versions of the female subject is Simon hoping will emerge, and whence might they emerge?
 - b. If the new “version” of the “subject which does not reintroduce new but still vigorous dichotomies” is specifically female, and not postbinary—genderqueer, genderfuck, transgender, intersex, etc.—is that new version even capable of not re-introducing the “vigorous dichotomy” of binary gender?

Steiner famously borrows the more violent stages of his hermeneutic motion from Martin Heidegger, but not from Heidegger's rather vague and depersonalized remarks on translation (cf. Robinson 1995, 2001), which in fact are closer to Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" (1923/1972), where the translator as a human agent figures more prominently in the title than in the text itself.⁴ In both Benjamin and Heidegger the change agents involved in translation tend to be languages rather than human translators; in Benjamin the bungling translator's "task" (*Aufgabe*) is mainly, as Paul de Man (1986: 80) notes, to "surrender" (*aufgeben*) to the clash of the Intentions in the individual languages which his (not her) bungling activates. Certainly in neither Heidegger nor Benjamin are there (5) female subjects involved in translation; but neither is there any apparent (1-2) subjectivity, violent or otherwise, involved in translation; and if there are traces of a (3) "dialectic between translator and text" or "movement between reading and rewriting, reception and appropriation," it is skewed heavily toward the text, and the languages that supercharge it.

One might want to say that in Benjamin there is (3c) "some other kind of dialectic/movement unnamed in Simon's account" —a dialectic in which the translator's bungling brings about a clash between languages that *starts* a messianic movement toward pure language. In Robinson (2017a: ch. 3) I tried and failed to read Benjamin's messianic movement icotically; in the remainder of this chapter I will sketch the icotic *and* ecotic movements that I believe are at work in both translation (Question 2) and translational hermeneutics (Question 3).

4 What Heidegger (1927/2001) actually says in section 63 of *Sein und Zeit/Being and Time* (Macquarrie/Robinson 1962), the passage from which Steiner takes this notion that all interpretation is violent, is beyond the scope of this article; suffice it to say that Steiner has misconstrued Heidegger, who does *not* universalize that violence. For Heidegger there is among all of the different types of interpretation only one specifically violent kind, which he calls *ontologische Interpretation* "ontological interpretation"; it is designed to smash *das Man* and retrieve the *Dasein* buried deep inside it. The nonviolent kinds don't interest him much.

3 Question 2: What is the ethical significance of Steiner's passage through violence in the hermeneutic motion?

As I theorize ecosis (cf. Robinson 2016: 6–9), it is both the becoming-good of the community and the becoming-communal of the good. It is an entelechy (3c/4b “movement”) of group moral/ethical normativization. It is not, in other words, a checklist on which one vets a thing statically by answering a series of criterial questions, such as “does the translator represent the source author's meaning accurately and faithfully?” or “does the translator restore to the source text everything damaged in the making of the target text?” It is the marshaling and mobilizing of communal plausibilization for the incremental “perfection” of group norms as ethical mandates. It is roughly a socioecological application of what Nietzsche called the „Verinnerlichung der Herrschaft“/“internalization of mastery” for the ongoing ethical policing of emergent properties and productions. As the Aristotelian term “entelechy” suggests, it is a movement—or motion—of actualization.

In that light, in fact, Steiner's hermeneutic *motion* should rightly be understood not statically, as a stop-frame diachrony of translation—four flashes of the strobe light—but dynamically, as an emergent ecotic becoming of translation, a rhetorical idealizing-cum-normativizing of translation that keeps seeking to mobilize communal plausibilization for the progressive *creation and shaping* of perfection-seeking ethical mandates. In other words, understood ecotically the hermeneutic motion would be not a Platonic Form badly imitated by actual translations but an intervenient social-activist regime designed to (keep trying to) bring about a higher ethical order.

For that to work, obviously, Steiner would have to enlist, by the sheer persuasive power of his rhetoric, communal voices from the Translation Studies field that would continue to develop his work. And certainly Phil Goodwin's 2010 article would constitute a significant contribution to that socioecological project: even though Goodwin tends to present Steiner as a lone authority, he

nevertheless, by paraphrasing the hermeneutic motion specifically and persuasively as an *ethical* project, adds his voice to the chorus. Elizabeth Marie Young's comments on Steiner in her UC Berkeley dissertation are even more ecotic in their effect: for her George Steiner was "one of the scholars who inaugurated the current interest in the ethics of translation" (1997: 240). "The current interest in the ethics of translation" (*ibid.*) is unmistakably an ongoing ecotic project; Steiner was involved in "inaugurating" that project, but in fact was only "*one* of the scholars" involved in it.

What these preliminary reflections on Steiner's hermeneutic motion as an ecotic project neglect to address, however, is the specific Second Question as I set it up in the Introduction: in what ways are the two *violent* stages of Steiner's model ecotic? Do they contribute to it only negatively, by creating a violent disruption of translation ethics that must be *remedied* ethically? Or is there some sense in which the violence of aggression and assimilation is a determinedly *ecotic* violence?

3.1 Take One

One inroad into that question might take a roundabout route: is there some sense in which the feminist critiques of misogynistic violence in Steiner's second and third stages, and Rosemary Arrojo's critique of those critiques, are also part of an ecosis of translational violence? This question is far easier to answer in the affirmative, because it draws attention to the difference between ecosis, which is an ongoing social ecology aimed at the becoming-communal of the good and the becoming-good of the community, and ethics, which we may be tempted to conceive as a static collection of propositions about the good. If, following "ethics" along the latter lines, we want to state categorically that "sexual violence is wrong"—and who doesn't?—then translating as if one were capturing, raping, abducting, and enslaving women is obviously not ethical. If, however, we want to characterize—say—the #MeToo movement as a powerful ecosis, it would, I would argue, be difficult to exclude from that ecosis the pain and trauma suffered by the

victims of sexual assault, and thus the *fact* of sexual assault. The multitudinous awareness of sexual assault brought about by the #MeToo ecosis takes its clarifying force not just from the millions of human beings tweeting #MeToo and other related hashtags, in hundreds of different languages, but from the actual sexual assaults that prompted the tweets. Without the actual assaults, the #MeToo ecosis would be sheer propaganda—as indeed some nervous men have charged it is.⁵

Something like this ecotic framing might effectively cast Steiner's apparent celebration of violence in the second and third stages of his hermeneutic motion as a signal contribution to an ethical understanding of translation. In this First Take it would not be, as Phil Goodwin seems to suggest, that the violence of aggression and assimilation is ethically *wrong*, and requires the redressive and redemptive trust-restitution frame to restore translation to what is ethically *right*. Rather, as Rosemary Arrojo implies, it would be that violence is endemic to human social interactions, and therefore, as she states explicitly, that violence is an obvious and useful thematization of

what is perhaps the most human of all characteristics in a world in which meaning is not intrinsically attached to words and objects: the need to make reality (and, consequently, also texts and objects) our own, the need to fight for the power to determine and to take over meaning. (Arrojo 1995: 74)

If all human beings harbor the capacity for violence, and the impulse to violence, and the impulse to appropriate meanings in ways that can be usefully thematized as violence, then it serves no ecotic purpose at all to spin our social interactions along “purified” utopian lines, as sweetness and light.

5 See Ilinskaya/Robinson (2018: 376): “Not surprisingly, #MeToo has also spawned a vigorous backlash calling it an “attack on men.” The assumptions undergirding this backlash are that (1) sexual misconduct is extremely uncommon (it's just a few bad apples), (2) women are blowing all kinds of minor offenses out of proportion (#MeToo is reverse sexism), and (3) violence is inherently human and will never be eradicated (so stop whining). The facts—the World Health Organization's report that globally one woman in three has experienced sexual assault—have little impact on this kind of thinking.”

3.2 Take Two

That First Take, however, still sounds excessively idealized, still too brawny with sweetness and light. Let us take one further step—let us “penetrate” more deeply into this problematic, “violate” more egregiously the utopian mythos traditionally spun in and around ethics. Let us hark back to 1f in the series of questions I directed to Sherry Simon and ask whether it is not also true that the imposition of an ethical regime, no matter how subtle, no matter how affective and therefore virtually unconscious, is also a violent act?

Consider, for example, that the Heideggerian hermeneutical violence that Steiner celebrates in the second and third stages of his hermeneutic motion is effectively a Dark-Romantic expression of personal freedom, steeped in the mystique of the outlaw, the bandit, the freedom fighter (or terrorist)—and that the orderly bourgeois regime of restitution that he institutes as his “ethical” fourth stage is a straitjacket, a violent kind of controlled “harmony” that first aggressively penetrates the Byronic hero’s rebellious heart, and then infuses that scene of defeat with the fog of fairness and justice. From the Dark-Romantic rebel’s perspective, (4) “ethical” restitution is Nietzschean slave morality—or, in Steiner’s terms, it is (2) capture and conquest followed by (3) assimilation, appropriation, cooptation, ingestion.

[*Fourth stage:*] The translator, the exegetist, the reader is *faithful* to his text, makes his response responsible, only when he endeavours to restore the balance of forces, of integral presence, which his appropriate comprehension has disrupted. Fidelity is ethical, but also, in the full sense, economic. By virtue of tact, and tact intensified is moral vision, the translator-interpreter creates a condition of significant exchange. The arrows of meaning, of cultural, psychological benefaction, move both ways. There is, ideally, exchange without loss. In this respect, translation can be pictured as a negation of entropy; order is preserved at both ends of the cycle, source and receptor. The general model here is that of Lévi-Strauss’s *Anthropologie structurale* which regards social structures as attempts at dynamic equilibrium achieved through an exchange of words, women, and material goods. All capture calls for subsequent compensation; utterance solicits response, exogamy and endogamy are mechanisms of equalizing transfer. (Steiner 1975/1998: 318–319)

The “restoration” of an order—a balance, an “exchange without loss,” an “equalizing transfer”—that never has existed and never will be achieved is a dream of total control, a Platonic utopia of totalitarian rule perfected through phantasmatic economics. In the terms Jacques Derrida (1992) borrows from Walter Benjamin’s “Zur Kritik der Gewalt”/“Towards a Critique of Violence” (1921/1999: 186–190), Steiner’s (2) aggression and (3) assimilation would be „die rechtsetzende Gewalt“/“the law-imposing violence” that *founds* (4) restitution as „die rechtserhaltende Gewalt“/“the law-preserving violence”⁶—but it would be that latter violence with a further twist, disguised as a law-preserving *ethics-without-violence*. As Derrida insists, in fact, the move from law-imposing violence to law-preserving violence is not just a causal sequence:

the very violence of the foundation or [im]position of law (*Rechtsetzende Gewalt*) must envelop the violence of conservation (*Rechtserhaltende Gewalt*) and cannot break with it,” because the structure of law-imposing violence “calls for the repetition of itself and founds what ought to be conserved, conservable, promised to heritage and tradition, to be shared. A foundation is a promise. (Derrida 1992: 38)

“Position,” he argues—namely, foundational violence—“is already iterability, a call for self-conserving repetition. Conservation in its turn refounds, so that it can conserve what it claims to found” (ibid.). The figure of law-imposing violence, that “ungraspable revolutionary instant that belongs to no historical, temporal continuum but in which the foundation of a new law nevertheless plays[,] [...] inscribes iterability in originarity, in unicity and singularity” (ibid.: 41).⁷

6 An English translation by Edmund Jephcott (1978/1986) appears in Peter Demetz’s edited collection *Reflections*; the translations I use here are however my own.

7 “What threatens the rigor of the distinction between the two types of violence,” Derrida (1992: 43) notes again a few pages later, “is at bottom the paradox of iterability. Iterability requires the origin to repeat itself originarily, to alter itself so as to have the value of origin, that is, to conserve itself”. The idea, first developed in Derrida (1972/1988), is that the performative utterance is always a reperformance of past utterances—if it weren’t, it would be incapable of signifying—but it cloaks itself in the guise of originality in order

In Steiner's hermeneutic motion, therefore, if the "revolutionary instant" of (2/3) aggressive/assimilative violence founds the (4) ethical law of restitution, it first founds or imposes or "sets" (*setzt*) that law as (2) a violent (*gewaltsam*) conquest or capture of the translator's violent brigandage, then preserves or conserves (*erhält*) that (4) restitutive law as (3) a violent (*gewaltsam*) assimilation and harmonization, a retroactive naturalization of the regulatory law as originary, as a never-imposed "law of nature." First 2/3 violently founds 4; then 4 violently imposes a 2/3-style organization on 2/3, as if things had always been that way. Because both the imposition of law and the preservation of law are channels of *die Gewalt*—which can be translated either "violence" or "power"—the naturalization of restitutive violence as "ethics," as "responsibility," as "moral vision" only serves to occlude the *continuity* of violence from the Dark-Romantic mystique „des ‚grossen‘ Verbrechers“ (Benjamin 1921/1999: 183, "of the 'great' criminal") in 2/3 to the totalitarian "freedom" (neoliberalism) of 4. As Derrida (1992: 33) explains Benjamin on this point, our fascination with the brigand or Byronic hero is with "someone who, in defying the law, lays bare the violence of the legal system, the juridical order itself." If as Benjamin notes there is an „Interesse des Rechts an der Monopolisierung der Gewalt“ (Benjamin 1921/1999: 183, quoted in Derrida 1992: 33), if the law has an interest in monopolizing violence, and *for that reason* condemns and constrains the violence of "the 'great' criminal" in order to supplant it with its own mystified irenic version of restitutive violence, conversely the mystified Byronic/Schillerian "transgressor" or "criminal" of 2/3 has an interest in unmasking the legal violence of (4) "restitution" and revealing it as a craven and insidious channel of state control.

Or as Derrida writes:

to seem like a first time. As a result, not only is every apparent new first time a repetition, an iteration, but the iterability that makes this dynamic possible "requires the origin to repeat itself originarily, to alter itself so as to have the value of origin"—*even the origin* must be steeped in the repetition of previous origins—and that masked or cloaked repetition makes every ostensible origin(ality/-arity) a self-conservation.

War is another example of this contradiction internal to law (*Recht* or *droit*). There is a *droit de guerre* ... Apparently subjects of this *droit* declare war in order to sanction a violence whose object seems natural (the other wants to lay hold of territory, goods, women; he wants my death, I kill him). But this warlike violence that resembles "*brigandage*" outside the law (*raubende Gewalt*, "predatory violence," p. 283) is always deployed *within* the sphere of law. It is an anomaly *within* the legal system with which it seems to break. Here the rupture of the relation is the relation. (Derrida 1992: 39)

From the moment that this positive, positional (*setzende*) and founding character of another law is recognized, modern law (*droit*) refuses the individual subject all right to violence. The people's shudder of admiration before the "great criminal" is addressed to the individual who takes upon himself, as in primitive times, the stigma of the lawmaker or the prophet. But the distinction between the two types of violence (founding and conserving) will be very difficult to trace, to found or to conserve. (Ibid.: 40)

Applied to the hermeneutic motion, these two quotations would appear to suggest that the mythic translator who (2) conquers and (3) repatriates, (2) rapes and (3) abducts/enslaves, is for Steiner the primitive Nietzschean strong man (*der starke Mensch*, subject of the *droit de guerre*) who then "takes upon himself ... the stigma of the lawmaker or the prophet" in order to institute (4) restitution *as* the prophetic new law—thus concealing the fact that "the rupture of the relation *is* the relation," that (2/3) the Byronic brigandage that supposedly *founds* (4) the new law is in fact "an anomaly *within* the legal system with which it seems to break."

Now I suspect you will say that I'm exaggerating—that, as in Question 1's reminders about the ontologization of metaphor, what we're talking about in the second and third stages of Steiner's hermeneutic motion is not violence but *symbolic* violence, *figurative* violence, and that what we're talking about in the fourth stage is not even symbolic or figurative violence but *doubly displaced* violence, or even, when you come right down to it, no violence at all. The translator is never literally a conqueror or a rapist; the translator never abducts or enslaves anyone; and frankly, the translator never even restitutes or restores balance. All that is merely a *way of talking*, a *representation* of translation in terms of violence and its ethical redress.

In Derrida's reading of Benjamin, however, the movement from founding violence to conserving violence *is* precisely the movement from force to the representation of force:

Here a furtive and elliptical allusion by Benjamin is decisive, as is often the case. The violence that founds or positions *droit* need not be immediately present in the contract (*nicht unmittelbar in ihm gegenwärtig zu sein*. "it need not be directly present in it as lawmaking violence," p. 288). But without being immediately present, it is replaced (*vertreten*, "represented") by the supplement of a substitute. And it is in this *différance*, in the movement that replaces presence (the immediate presence of violence identifiable as such in its *traits* and its spirit), it is in this *différentielle* representativity that originary violence is consigned to oblivion. This amnesic loss of consciousness does not happen by accident. It is the very passage from presence to representation. (Derrida 1992: 47)

It is precisely the otherworldly ideality of Steiner's fourth stage of restitution that *represents* the consignment of "originary violence [...] to oblivion"—and precisely the representativity of his violent-becoming-ethical metaphors for translation that effects the repression or "forgetting" of founding violence.

But ...

But now, having said that, I will admit it: yes, of course I'm exaggerating, to make a point, namely, that the hermeneutic motion as *ecosis* is not necessarily a light-to-light passage from stage-one trust to stage-four restitution that unfortunately deviates through the radically dark and desperate domain of (2/3) "robbery with violence." Rather, whether we thematize Steiner's *ecosis* as an entelechy of ethical clarification (Take One), or an entelechy of violence (Take Two), or preferably, as both at once, it is all of an ecotic piece.

4 Question 3: What is the epistemological significance of "feeling" in the recognition that "this second stage of translation will always *feel* like a violation"?

In *The Translator's Turn*, anticipating the resistance that my arguments for a somatics of translation would meet, I dove down a rab-

bit-hole: "The only person who would dare talk about equivalence in terms of feeling, intuition, body response, is a translator; and among translators, probably only a literary translator; and among literary translators, only a maverick poet with a reputation for erratic brilliance" (Robinson 1991: 18). Translation *theorists*, by contrast, seemed to be focused not on feeling but on "intellection, abstraction, generalization, systematization" (ibid.). But then:

Here as elsewhere, the notable exception is George Steiner:

Words have their "edge," their angularities, their concavities and force of tectonic suggestion. These features operate at a level deeper, less definable than that of either sound or semantics. They can, in a multilingual matrix, extend across and between languages. When we learn a new language, it may be that these modes of evocative congruence are the most helpful. Often, as we shall see, great translation moves by touch, finding the matching shape, the corresponding rugosity even before it looks for counterpart of meaning. [...] Poets can even smell words. (Steiner 1975/1998: 308, quoted in Robinson 1991: 18)

I went on to note, then, that Steiner doesn't always remember his own insistence on the somatics of translation—he tends to objectify the success or failure of certain translations as textual properties, forgetting the somatic origins of those judgments in his own feeling for language—but I didn't raise the issue of *the somatics of verbal violence* in the uptake of his second and third stages of the hermeneutic motion:

[*Second stage:*] In the event of interlingual translation this manoeuvre of comprehension is explicitly invasive and exhaustive. Saint Jerome uses his famous image of meaning brought home captive by the translator. We "break" a code: decipherment is dissective, leaving the shell smashed and the vital layers stripped. ...

The translator invades, extracts, and brings home. The simile is that of the open-cast mine left an empty scar in the landscape. ... Certain texts or genres have been exhausted by translation. Far more interestingly, others have been negated by transfiguration, by an act of appropriative penetration and transfer in excess of the original, more ordered, more aesthetically pleasing. (Steiner 1975/1998: 314)

[*Third stage:*] This dialectic can be seen at the level of individual sensibility. Acts of translation add to our means; we come to incarnate alternative ener-

gies and resources of feeling, but we may be mastered and made lame by what we have imported. There are translators in whom the vein of personal, original creation goes dry. MacKenna speaks of Plotinus literally submerging his own being. Writers have ceased from translation, sometimes too late, because the inhaled voice of the foreign text had come to choke their own. Societies with ancient but eroded epistemologies of ritual and symbol can be knocked off balance and made to lose belief in their own identity under the voracious impact of premature or indigestible assimilation. (Steiner 1975/1998: 315–316)

The “problem,” I suggest—the problem for us as his readers—is that Steiner has a poet’s feeling for words not only when he reads, but when he writes. The poetic power of his writing makes his claims sound not only true but attractively true. And that also means that, when he extols—or even bemoans—the aggressive “thrust” of translation, he makes translation sound not only violent but attractively violent. Reading Steiner is like reading great poetry: the text sweeps you along in its flow, the feeling of its flow and the flow of its feeling, so that everything seems powerfully true, even, or especially, when it makes you feel most uneasy.

For example, I read “The simile is that of the open-cast mine left an empty scar in the landscape” and think: *um, really?* I can stop and analyze that sentence—interrogate Steiner’s rhetorical strategies, challenge his objectification of “the simile” as a discursive subterfuge, as if it were not his own poetic imagination at work but some kind of deeper universal truth about translation, and dismiss his odd invocation of strip mining in this context—but my analysis feels like resistance to the somatic power of the image, and my resistance feels futile. When I try to test the image against my own experience of translating, and of reading translated literature, I come up short. When have I ever experienced a beloved source text as an “empty scar in the landscape” left by the strip mining of translation? When I was translating Aleksis Kivi’s *Seitsemän veljestä* (1870) as *The Brothers Seven* (Robinson 2017b), I had the two previous English translations of the novel open on the desk around my computer, and vacillated between groans of pain and snide hoots of laughter as I checked how Alex. Matson (1929) and Richard Impola (1991) had mauled this or that magical passage in Kivi’s Fin-

nish—but the execrable translations only intensified my love of the original. So I wonder: does Steiner mean that only *great* translations strip-mine the original? When I was studying Sir Thomas Urquhart's 1653 English translation of Rabelais for *Translatationality* (Robinson 2017c: 71-75), I reveled in Urquhart's "act of appropriative penetration and transfer in excess of the original, more ordered, more aesthetically pleasing"—not to mention more intense, more energetic, more endlessly inventive than Rabelais—without ever feeling the tiniest diminishment of respect for Rabelais's achievement, let alone coming to experience *Gargantua et Pantagruel* as an "open-cast mine left an empty scar in the landscape." And yet the poetic resonance of the image persists. The feeling of truth lingers, and makes me question my own experience, my own intuition, as if Steiner must be right, and I must be missing something.

When Phil Goodwin writes, then, that "this second stage of translation will always feel like a violation" (2010: 31), I tend to read that as applying not to some inevitable response we have to actual translations, but to Steiner's theorization of that second stage. Yes: reading Steiner on translation-as-aggression, we will always feel the violence, because Steiner's poetic brilliance as a writer is somatically so contagious.

What I want to track in response to my Third Question is how this somatic contagion works. Specifically, I'm interested in the epistemology of somatic contagion: how our feeling for words affects what we think we know and how we think we know it; or, more technically, in Aristotelian terms, how somatic contagion transforms δόξα/*doxa*/opinion into ἐπιστήμη/*epistēmē*/knowledge.

Or, to put that aim differently, in the terms I used in the Introduction: in Question 1 I was interested in the *icosis* of the hermeneutic motion, how its metaphors have been ontologized as reality; in Question 2 I was interested in the *ecosis* of the hermeneutic motion, how its four stages, including the middle two, constitute a collective ethical entelechy; here in Question 3 I am interested in bringing icotic/ecotic *theory* to bear on the affective-becoming-conative social ecologies of the hermeneutic motion, teasing out

the epistemic turbulences to and through which that socioecological motion guides us.

One way to approach the social ecology of feeling as hermeneutical guidance might be through Aristotle's notion of τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν / *to endekhomenon pithanon* / "the available persuasivity," as in:

ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν. (Aristotle 1959: 1.2.1, 1355b2)

estō de he rhētorikē dunamis peri hekaston tou theōrēsai to endekhomenon pithanon.

Rhetoric is the ability in every case to see the available persuasivity. (My translation)

The standard practice in translating this passage into English has been to read τὸ πιθανόν / *to pithanon* as "the means of persuasion," a phrase that is also used to translate πίστεις / *pisteis*, which literally means both beliefs and persuasions, and is also translated "proofs" and "arguments." For Aristotle πίστεις / *pisteis* are most typically enthymemes—popular *structures* of persuasion that don't waste words on things everyone knows. Translating both τὸ πιθανόν / *to pithanon* and πίστεις / *pisteis* as "means of persuasion," therefore, tends to assimilate the former to the latter, in an exclusive focus on *techniques* of persuasion. In other words, as J. H. Freese translated that sentence back in 1926, "Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" (1355b, 25–26)—may be defined, in other words, as *figuring out how to build persuasive enthymemes*. But that's not what Aristotle wrote. He wrote that rhetoric is the ability to *see* the available *persuasivity*. The rhetor can't see enthymemes: hence the importance for Freese (and all the other English translators whose Aristotles I've read) of translating τοῦ θεωρῆσαι / *to theōrēsai* / seeing as some sort of nonvisual learning process. If persuasivity is the general mood in a gathering that lends itself to persuasion, the rhetor is someone who can *see* that mood on the bodies of his or her interlocutors—someone who can see it, presumably (Aristotle does not spell this out here), in and on and through that bodily display of feeling that Aristotle elsewhere calls ὑπόκρισις / *hypokrisis* / "act-

ing” (1959: 3.1.3–4, 1403b18–21 and 26–34) and that we usually call body language. I take τὸ πιθανόν/*to pithanon*/persuasivity to be a sociosomatic ecology, which the rhetor guides only insofar as s/he surrenders to being guided *by* it. Any participant in “the available persuasivity” can wield a guiding influence over it—which means that no one wields absolute authority over its directionality, and therefore that any directionality emerges out of the turbulences generated by multiple guiding influences.

For me the most useful affect-theoretical exploration of that sociosomatic ecology is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003: 67–91) theorization of “performativity” as what else is going on *around* the performative. If Aristotle's πίστις/*pisteis* in Austin's terms are persuasive performatives, τὸ πιθανόν/*to pithanon* in Sedgwick's terms is the socioecological performativity that enables and guides those performatives. As Sedgwick (quite persuasively) shows, Austin's theory of the performative utterance as what “I” do to “you” with words remains incomplete, because that dyadic operation ignores the psychosocial shaping influence wielded by “witnesses,” or “them.”

For example, in daring you to do something, “I (hypothetically singular) necessarily invoke a consensus of the eyes of others. It is these eyes through which you risk being seen as a wuss; by the same token, it is *as* people who share with me a contempt for wussiness that these others are interpellated, with or without their consent, by the act I have performed in daring you” (Sedgwick 2003: 69).

But that interpellation is not iron-clad. Resistance is possible, because people in groups *feel* their way to πίστις/persuading-becoming-believing, and group feeling is malleable. Because the guidance is collective, in fact—because it is an aggregate of affective-becoming-conative pressures from everyone present, and each of those members of the group is simulating the body states of all the others iteratively, with slight interpretive modifications—the guidance is not only malleable but volatile. (The volatility can explode into open conflict or mob rule, of course, but is typically quite sluggish, and therefore typically flies way under the radar.)

As Sedgwick notes of those witnesses to a dare, for example, “these people, supposing them real and present, may or may not in fact have any interest in sanctioning against wussiness”:

They might, indeed, themselves be wussy and proud of it. They may wish actively to oppose a social order based on contempt for the wuss. They may simply, for one reason or another, not identify with my contempt for wusses. Alternatively, they may be skeptical of my own standing in the ongoing war on wussiness: they may be unwilling to leave the work of its arbitration to me; may wonder if I harbor wussish tendencies myself, perhaps revealed in my unrelenting need to test the w-quotient of others. For that matter, you yourself, the person dared, may share with them any of these skeptical attitudes on the subject and may additionally doubt, or be uninterested in, *their* authority to classify you on a scale of wussiness. (Sedgwick 2003: 69)

So if the “compulsory witness” (2003: 72) of which Sedgwick writes is not, by her own account, strictly speaking compulsory, what is it? The answer, I suggest, is that the periperformativity that mobilizes and organizes witnessing around hegemonic norms makes it *feel* compulsory. As Sedgwick insists, periperformativity is channelled through affect. Somehow, however, that *affective* feeling is transmogrified into a *conative* feeling of pressure to conform to group norms—the feeling that one *must* obey the normative impulse mobilized by the periperformative group, or else bad things will happen. That affective-becoming-conative feeling can be resisted, with significant effort—but most often, perhaps, it seems like the effort required to resist it would be excessive, and not worth the candle.

And yet the volatility of periperformativity, the fact that persuasion flows through belief into the feeling of truthiness differently in different members of the audience, also means that the normativizing affective-becoming-conative feeling *is* resistance. The feeling of compulsion, of a single unified will organizing all the individual wills into a hive mind, is a phenomenology, not a neurophysiological fact. Conformity is not a *quelling* of resistance but a turbulent *organization* of resistance.

Think for example of the variable ontologization of Steiner’s violent metaphors in the First Question:

- For Phil Goodwin, those metaphors reflect the actual “brutality of these processes [second/aggression and third/assimilation]” (*the ontology of translation*).
- For Lori Chamberlain and Susan Bassnett, they reflect the brutality of the patriarchal ideology that organizes Steiner's (and by extension most other male translation theorists') conception of the translator and the act of translation (*the ontology of patriarchy*).
- For Rosemary Arrojo, they reflect “the [ordinary human] need to make reality (and, consequently, also texts and objects) our own, the need to fight for the power to determine and to take over meaning” (*the ontology of human hermeneutical desire*).
- For Sherry Simon, they reflect the universalization of the male/masculine translating subject as “gender-free” (*the ontology of transcendentizing psychology*).

These are four interrelated but slightly divergent icotizations of those violent metaphors, reflecting (icotizing?) the turbulence surging through the crowd of witnesses to Steiner's performative troping of “the hermeneutic motion” of translation as a passage from trust through violent aggression and assimilation to the utopian ethics of restitution. Since Steiner's “speech act” is written, of course, it has no univocally identified “you” as its addressee: as Derrida (1972/1988: 14) notes, one of the “essential elements” for “what Austin calls the total context” for performativity is “consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject for the totality of his speech act,” so that “performative communication once more becomes the communication of an intentional meaning, even if this meaning has no referent in the form of a prior or exterior thing or state of things.” As we saw in Question 2's Take Two, Derrida's point is that the reperformability of the performative—in citation, in dramatic performances, in literary texts, and so on—hijacks the spoken performative for the “iterability” or “general citationality” of writing: just as the written text can be read promiscuously, over and over, by an uncontrollable series of random readers, and so is infinitely iterable, so too can the

spoken performative be reperformed in infinite series, and that re-performability is eventually revealed as the very condition of possibility for communication. A similar scission off of Austin's conception of performativity would be Sedgwick's periperformativity when applied to the written "speech act," where every reader is simultaneously a serial "you" and an aggregate "they," both the speech act's target and its witness, and thus at once shaped by the performative and wielding a periperformative shaping influence on the speaking "I."

In that bulleted list of icotizations of Steiner's violent metaphors above, for example, four of the you-readers/they-witnesses are women; together, as a loose grouping, they mobilize a complexly shifting series of periperformative icoses that shape not only their readers' ontologization(s) of Steiner's hermeneutic motion but Steiner's (absent) authorial "presence" as well. Chamberlain and Bassnett construct a misogynistic Steiner crackling with violence against women. Arrojo recognizes "the 'masculine' bias in Steiner's model" and the silencing effect it has on women, but refuses to equate that bias with the violent second and third stages of Steiner's hermeneutic motion: in them, she says, Steiner is articulating "the need to fight for the power to determine and to take over meaning," and thus, for feminist witnesses—though not for any ideologically passivized female you-readers successfully conditioned to identify with the female slaves captured/raped/abducted/objectified by the figurative performativity of Steiner's rhetoric—precisely the ability to resist and reframe the masculinist narrative. Simon feels a strong pull toward the feminist critique launched by Chamberlain and Bassnett, but can't help but be won over, uneasily, by Arrojo's take on the situation as well, and so seeks to advance the feminist response beyond Arrojo's intervention. As women, the four are potentially the hapless "objects" of Steiner's patriarchal performatives—the tokens of Lévi-Straussian exchange, the carnal targets "penetrated" by the "thrust" of Steiner's Byronic bombast—but as a group of female witnesses *commenting collectively* on all that, they also wield the periperformative power to reshape the performance.

In a sense, of course, Phil Goodwin's intervention into this performativity is a voice of resistance to the feminist icosis: while admitting uneasily that "Steiner made heavy-handed use of images of rape here," he tends on the one hand to downplay the disturbing implications of those images, and on the other to naturalize them as an accurate depiction of the ontological "brutality of these processes." Yes, there is violence in Steiner's account of the second stage, but that's because the second stage of real-world translation actually is violent, and Steiner is to be commended for his brave honesty in portraying that violence with unflinching realism. Goodwin's piece is a fairly straightforward defense of Steiner on Steiner's own terms. He doesn't attack Steiner's critics, doesn't seek to undermine the validity of their accounts; he mentions them very much in passing, only rarely mentioning them by name, never addressing the details of their critiques.

As I noted above, however, all witnessing is a kind of resistance. All performativity churns with the affective-becoming-conative turbulences of icosis and ecosis. Certainly Rosemary Arrojo resists Lori Chamberlain and Susan Bassnett, and Sherry Simon resists Rosemary Arrojo. Each swims in the affective-becoming-conative flow, finding much to agree with in the others, but each also sets up a cross-chop that partially redirects the flow. In the turbulence of that icotic/ecotic confluence, Phil Goodwin too is doing what witnesses do: inserting a shaping peripformative hand into the hermeneutical performativity.

That is certainly the drift of his characterization of Robinson (1998) as an "unsympathetic" reading of Steiner—a reading that he may well want to apply *a fortiori* to this chapter—but of course the turbulences in my own admiring/critical response to Steiner also both reflect and redirect the turbulences in the icotic/ecotic flows that I am (participatorily) witnessing. And my chapter is only one of twelve in this collection, and indeed only one of two pieces that I have contributed to it. The Steiner icosis and the Steiner ecosis are alive—testimony to the power of Steiner's 1975 book to marshal and channel the vital currents of the Translation Studies field nearly a half century on.

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