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Speculations – On Translation

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Jacques Derrida's "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" was given as a lecture to a conference of professional translators in 1998. Lawrence Venuti's English translation followed in 2001, entitled "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?" but, until *Was ist eine "relevante" Übersetzung? Arbeiten mit Derrida*, there hasn't been a German translation. Translating Derrida is notoriously difficult, but Esther von der Osten and Caroline Sauter have courageously undertaken the German translation, and here, in this well-prepared volume, we are presented with Derrida's original French text, the German translation entitled "Was ist eine 'relevante' Übersetzung?" and then five elucidatory essays on Derrida's text.

Derrida's text defies summary, and so the procedure I will adopt in this review is to read Derrida—to read as many lines as my co-editors will allow and in as many languages as possible. I defer that polylogue for a brief moment, however, in order to venture a *précis* of what is centrally at stake in Derrida's essay, namely Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Antonio, a Venetian merchant, defaults on a loan provided by the Jewish money-lender Shylock. The terms of the loan initially surprise Antonio (they seem generous, insofar as Shylock doesn't charge interest), but Shylock does ask, should there be a default, for a pound of Antonio's flesh as an equivalent recompense for the unreturned monies. Since Antonio does default, Shylock's demand for his pound of flesh amounts to demanding Antonio's death. Portia, disguised as a male Doctor of Law, pleads with Shylock for Antonio's life. She asks for mercy: "The quality of mercy is not strain'd. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven on the place beneath," she says in act IV, scene 1. Indeed, mercy is "An attribute to God himself," and all earthly kings should show the same divine mercy: "And earthly power doth then show likest God's / When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew, / Though justice be thy plea, consider this: / That in the course of justice none of us / Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy / And that same prayer doth teach us all to render / The deeds of mercy."

Two things are to be retained as relevant: firstly, Shylock considers justice for him to be the payback he requires—the pound of flesh he deems equivalent to the money loaned to Antonio. The theme of justice is hence broached: is justice always a matter of equivalence, of this-for-that, and indeed intertwined with the logic of 'economic' recompense and reparation where equivalence is also the relevant benchmark? Secondly, Portia pleads for a higher justice, beyond justice modeled on the basis of parity and equilibrium, that is, and does so

in the name of a concept of appreciably Christian mercy whereby forgiveness of the contracted debt would be preferable—indeed, enact a forgiveness in the image of Gods and sovereigns. For sovereigns have the prerogative to pardon persons of their crimes or sins, and so if Shylock were to act in the light of such sovereigns, in the light of God's own example indeed, then he should show mercy and grace by forgiving Antonio his debt and write off the contract instead of insisting on a literal-minded adherence to the letter of the contract signed between himself and Antonio.

We already sense the stakes for translation, given the fidelities translation is supposed to show to the 'letter' of source texts. Should translation betray its literal-minded fidelities, however, in the name of some 'higher' fidelity, disguised as it might be as betrayal nonetheless, by preferring the (Christian? Non-Jewish?) 'spirit' of the text? In any case, German and French translators have work to do if the critical line in Shakespeare's English, "When mercy seasons justice," must be rendered into those languages. What to do with "season"? We'll see. Let's now start with a line-by-line reading of Derrida's French, and proceed as long as is economically possible for the *Yearbook* to grant me in terms of word-count and page-length. First line: "Then must the Jew be merciful" (p. 9). Derrida cites this in English, and then says "Je ne traduis pas cette phrase de Portia dans *Le Marchand de Venise*" (p. 9). Judith Kasper, in her essay "Derridas Travestie" (pp. 127–142), rightly observes that Derrida's refuses to assume the—Christian—imperative contained in that "must" and hence refuses to reenact the forced conversion (also a kind of translation) of Shylock into a Christian—the Jew is more or less constrained into proving himself an example of Christian mercy. Kasper writes: "Diesen Satz zu übersetzen hieße, den Imperativ anzunehmen, die eingeforderte Beugung unter das Gesetz der Gnade, die auferlegte Kon-

version des Juden zum Christen gleichsam zu vollziehen"[1] (p. 132). Derrida then says: "Portia dira aussi, '*When mercy seasons justice*…' que je proposerai plus tard de traduire par '*Quand le pardon relève la justice*…"'[2] (p. 9). One should always attend to the activities of Derridean delay and deferral: we have it here in "plus tard." But Derrida's rendering, of course, is the crux of the matter: not only does Derrida prefer the word "pardon," he also deploys the verb "relever."

We already have to pause here. For this is not the first text by Derrida where "relever" is invoked—it's deployed in his seminal essay "La Différance" (1968) and, in another essay which is devoted to Hegel, "The Pit and the Pyramid" (1971), an important subsection is entitled "Relever – What Talking Means." Both essays can be read in Alan Bass's English translation in *Margins of Philosophy* (see Derrida 1982). In "La Différance," to only advert to this one for now (the subsection of "The Pit and the Pyramid" I'll turn to later), Derrida proposes various uses of "relever" to "translate" (a word I use rather guardedly, however) Hegel's term 'Aufhebung'—the key 'elevating' moment of the dialectic. It's not necessarily the standard French rendering, however: the distinguished French scholar of Hegel, Jean Hyppolite, uses 'supprimer' ('suppress') and 'dépasser' ('surpass') in order to mark the ambiguities of an *Aufhebung* that surpasses the previously established positions of thesis and antitheses, but so doing potentially suppresses those previous positions altogether. Derrida prefers "relever" in order to preserve the elevation, the 'lift' or 'relift' at work in

1 "To translate this sentence would mean to accept the imperative, to submit to the law of grace as demanded, to accomplish the forced conversion of the Jew to a Christian" (my translation).

2 "Portia will also say, *When mercy seasons justice*, which I shall later propose to translate as *Quand le pardon relève la justice*…" (Derrida 2013: 350, transl. by Venuti).

the *Aufhebung*, and also in order to discreetly counter-pose the French 're' against the German 'auf,' whereby thoughts of repetition suggest themselves in French, and perhaps re-sist the upward, suppressive and supercessory movements of *Aufhebung*.

But in view of Derrida's translation of Portia's statement, then we have "When the pardon relieves justice," or "When the pardon relifts justice," perhaps even "When the pardon sublates justice." Of course, I have just offered English translations of Derrida's French, and perhaps it's better to remain in French and, for now, simply bear in mind Derrida's "*Quand le pardon relève la justice*." But once Hegel is involved, then we confront two questions: when justice is subject to *Aufhebung*, is it that justice is lofted to a higher plane of justice (namely mercy) but still remains justice? Or is it that once justice is raised like this, then mercy abrogates, suppresses, supersedes or *replaces* justice, as if justice is relieved of its duty and prerogative to be justice, to enforce itself and to enact itself? In the latter case, it may be that justice then disappears entirely. And, in consequence, there is no justice for Shylock, since mercy, forgiveness and pardoning have effectively trumped all that Shylock considers to be justice for him—the reparative justice whereby he receives his pound of flesh in conformity with the contract he signed with Antonio. Is it that what Portia asks for is a 'relève' or *relieving* of justice, law and economic reparation that amounts to destroying justice altogether? A subversive thing for a lawyer to ask for, clearly.

Next, Derrida makes the *captatio benevolentiae*, invoking the work of translators and seemingly paying them a compliment: "Devant vous," he declares (but possibly the "before you" is a nod to the experience of a plaintiff coming before a professional tribunal, as if on trial in a courtroom, coming before the magistrate's bench), and then Derrida, saying "vous" to his

audience, asks how it is that you "faites de cette tâche sublime et impossible votre désir, votre inquiétude, votre travail, votre savoir et votre savoir-faire?"[3] (p. 9). How do you make of this "task" your desire? Note "tâche." *Aufgabe* in German, of course: will we think of Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" and possibly recall Paul de Man's (1986) insistence on one meaning of *aufgeben*, namely 'to give up'? Is Derrida being as complimentary as he seems? Sublime, yes, but "to sublimate" perhaps puts us on track towards *aufheben* once more. Impossible—how so? Is translation an experience of the impossible? "Desire" comes first in this list—Derrida will shortly assess the translator's desire. "Work" comes later—*Arbeit* might resonate with *Aufgabe* in German, given the alliteration, but 'travail' begins with 'tr' as does 'translation.' Nicely, therefore, von der Osten and Sauter title their essay "'Sachen auf *tr*.' Trouvailles du travail de la traduction" (pp. 105–125) in order to instantiate translation between German and French right there in their own title, and in order to discuss the "trouvailles," the lucky 'finds,' they jointly managed to elicit from the German language.

In the third paragraph, Derrida continues by confessing (or feigning to confess) to a certain anxiety inasmuch as he declares himself to be someone inexperienced in the field of translation. How, he asks, dare I present myself

> comme quelqu'un qui dès le premier instant, dès ses premiers essais (que je pourrais vous raconter *off the record*), a fui le métier, la belle et terrifiante responsabilité, le devoir et la dette insolvables du traducteur, ne cessant ensuite de se dire '*jamais*, au grand jamais': 'non, justement,

3 "[…] before you ... who [...] make this sublime and impossible task your desire, your anxiety, your travail, your knowledge and your knowing skill?" (Derrida 2013: 350, transl. by Venuti, who retains the French travail in his English version. Ellipses are mine.)

> jamais ne n'oserai, je ne devrais jamais, je ne pourrais jamais, je ne saurais jamais m'en acquitter'? (P. 9)
>
> [as someone who, from the very first moment, from his very first attempts (which I could recount to you, as the English saying goes, off the record), shunned the translator's metier, his beautiful and terrifying responsibility, his insolvent duty and debt, without ceasing to tell himself 'never ever again': 'no, precisely, I would never dare, I should *never*, could *never*, would *never* manage to pull it off'? (Derrida 2013: 350, transl. by Venuti)]

Let's pay careful attention to this. As if citing himself, and doubly moreover, since "jamais, au grand jamais" is split off from the self-quotation that follows the full-colon (citation is an issue I'll return to presently), Derrida admits to being inexperienced—not as *seasoned* as the professionals before whom he appears and to whom he presents himself. From his first "essais": the allusion, I think, is to his translation of Husserl. In English, the text is his (and Husserl's) *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry* (1989). More on that later. "Off the record," he says in English. That's a confiding gesture, but when one appears, or is summoned to appear ('comparaître' is the apposite French verb here) before a court, one is not only compelled to be present (though to be present is not the same thing as to 'paraître,' 'apparaître,' appear or co-appear), one also goes *on* the record—and this is what Derrida hesitates to do. And he doesn't cease to repeat "jamais." But the temporality of 'never' is always, in Derrida, in tension with less definitive and decisive temporalities—Derrida likes to say 'perhaps' in the face of predictable time so that eventualities defying what is peremptorily declared to be forever and never possible might still come to pass, and when and if such eventualities do come, and come to pass as Events, they come from the unforecastable 'to-come,' the 'à-venir' Derrida is always keen not to foreclose upon. "Jamais": deconstruct the word and we have a vital 'mais,' a 'but,' so that we can say 'Never,' but also something

like '*But* not never.' So, he may have fled the métier of translation, saying 'never again' to himself, *but* it doesn't seem as if Derrida ever quite called it quits with translation, ever acquitted himself adequately of the translator's task, was ever fully acquitted by a judge and jury of more professional, more seasoned translators of his crimes and misdemeanors in the domain of translation, or ever quite absolved himself of his debt to translators and translations either.

Why does Derrida talk of responsibility, duty, debt and moreover insolvable debt? Is it that translators owe a debt to original texts? Do they owe such texts a fidelity that is practically impossible to fulfill? Is it a duty (a 'devoir') translators acknowledge, but find impossible to discharge, or acquit themselves of? When they pledge fidelity or fealty, as if to a sovereign, knowing all the while that they will betray that pledge, are they perjuring themselves? (I should, right here, relay my remarks to Derrida's *Le Parjure et le Pardon*, 2019) If we speak of owing ('je dois' in that sense) like owing a sum of money, are we speaking of an 'economic' logic of translation? If we speak of 'having-to,' of 'I must' ('je dois' in this sense) in respect of pledged fidelities, are we using legal language, and countenancing a translator's legal and contractual obligations? It's all of this, of course.

Some translation scholars desire to liberate translators from scenarios of debt, obligation and (impossible) recompense, tethered as they seem to be to the dictate of translatory fidelity and the seemingly inevitable betrayal that results nonetheless. Here's Lawrence Venuti in *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic* (2019): "STOP using moralistic terms like 'faithful' and 'unfaithful' to describe translation. START defining it as the establishment of a variable equivalence to the source text" (Venuti 2019: ix). But perhaps they're not just "moralistic" terms, they're legalistic terms as well, and much

depends, moreover, on how "variable" that equivalence can permissibly be before translators are held to be in breach of contract, and ethically compromised into the bargain (to deliberately use an economic metaphor). The main problem is how to measure the latitude for such variability since if one has no measurement, then the risk is that "equivalence" is entirely lost as a meaningful point of reference and measuring benchmark. For lack of such measurement, the risk is a translation that might become too variable, too at variance to its source text, go beyond measurable and permissible latitude, and cease being an exercise in seeking any kind of equivalence at all. Venuti, for all his polemical STOP/START invitations, doesn't measure that extent for us, and maybe that's the point Derrida is pressing upon us. Moreover, a certain Shylock might be keen to know, in light of his pound of flesh, how one weighs equivalences before the 'economy' of equivalence is tilted so much out of balance that the scales of (translatory) justice are rendered redundant.

Let's put it differently, and deploy George Steiner. The contributors to this volume don't cite him, but hopefully he is useful here. Consider *After Babel*, and Steiner's remark that "Fidelity is ethical, but also, in the full sense, economic" (Steiner 1975/1992: 318). One wonders what Steiner means by "in the full sense." Steiner adds: "The translator-interpreter creates a condition of significant exchange" (ibid.). Imagine Shylock saying something similar: Antonio created a condition of significant exchange and the Jewish money-lender is surely within his rights to demand that the exchange—either money or a pound of flesh—be enacted. Justice, in the full sense, Shylock might assert, is indeed economic. Derrida, for his part, I think, is certainly looking for ways to liberate translators too, as Venuti might desire, but then again, he might ask whether it's so easy to simply STOP invoking notions of "fidelity" and "infidelity"

and, for that matter, so easy to STOP invoking economic, financial, and legalistic frameworks for translatory practice where insolvable debt seems to be the inevitable consequence of undertaking a translation at all.

Indeed, if one pursued matters further, one question that arises is whether debt structures all existence, including the existences of translators. This is Nietzsche's question, of course. Moreover, if we open the debt-dossier properly, then the question is whether it's possible to construct a model of the subject (the translatory subject or any other) without presupposing a subject deemed to be permanently susceptible to debts and obligations of all sorts. Has it ever been possible to model a subject without resorting to moralistic or legalistic frameworks? Hardly so. The exercise has surely been the opposite, namely an exercise in ensuring that the subject is permanently possessed of a moral conscience—aware of that key verb 'devoir,' that is—and hence capable of prosecuting himself, as if in a private courtroom, before the moral law he has given himself to obey. This is Kant, of course. Or we can replace the Kantian court of the conscience by the Christian confessional —we're always confessing our sinful culpability. So it might be for translators too, bidden as they so often (or always) are to apologize for having betrayed original texts. To put it differently, and to invoke Heidegger, it's a matter, perhaps, of the translator's *Schuldigsein*. Whether Derrida, when he came before that professional body of translators, was willing to inscribe himself into that tradition and offer a sincere, rather than merely feigned *mea culpa* for his own translations, non-translations and quasi-translations, is perhaps the question here.

Judith Kasper, in any case, is right to say that it is a matter of realizing

> dass jede Übersetzung in einem Schuld- und Schuldenverhältniss steht bezüglich dessen, was im Original unübersetzbar ist und doch zugleich permanent danach ruft, übersetzt du werden. (P. 133)
>
> [that every translation is in a relationship of guilt and debt with regard to what is untranslatable in the original and yet at the same time constantly calls out to be translated. (My translation)]

But if one does acknowledge some kind of well-nigh "permanente Schuld," as if it's the case that to translate at all is to be guilty *ipso facto*, then it doesn't seem as if there's any way to avoid being guilty of one transgression in particular, namely the inability to offer the original text recompense for what translation has transported away. Consider Steiner again. What Steiner wants is "ideally, exchange without loss" (Steiner 1975/1992: 319). But before any exchange can occur, ideally or not, it must be appreciated that translators have taken something away from the original text: "There is imbalance. The translator has taken too much" (ibid.: 317). If he has, then can he give back what he took away and thereby enact an exchange which, *ideally* (what a word!), would be one where neither the source text nor the translated text lose? "The hermeneutic act must compensate," Steiner writes. "If it is to be authentic, it must mediate into exchange and restored parity" (ibid.: 316). I don't know what Steiner means by "authentic," but the key question—it's the question Derrida is also raising—is what form that compensation should take in order to restore "parity." And it's not just Derrida who wants to know what that form should take, Shylock does too. Let's insist: once translators have taken something away, can they return it? Possibly not, and so if there is a giving-back, a pay-back indeed, it can only be a donation of symbolic equivalence. Shylock leans forward expectantly: is that symbolic equivalent the pound of flesh? Let's carry on with Derrida. In the next paragraph he writes of a discouragement, and

> le renoncement précoce dont je parle et dont je pars, cet aveu de faillite devant la traduction, ce fut toujours, en moi, l'autre face d'un amour jaloux er admiratif: passion pour ce qui, s'endettant infiniment auprès d'elle, appelle, aime, provoque et défie la traduction, admiration pour ceux et celles que je tiens pour les seuls à savoir lire et écrire: les traductrices et les traducteurs. (P. 9)
>
> [this premature renunciation of which I speak and from which I set out, this declaration of insolvency before translation was always, in me, the other face of a jealous and admiring love, a passion for what summons, loves, provokes, and defies translation while running up an infinite debt in its service, an admiration for those men and women who, to my mind, are the only ones who know how to read and write—translators. (Derrida 2013: 350–1, transl. by Venuti)]

To be pondered, besides the term "faillite," namely "bankruptcy," is "précoce': is one way to avoid these scenarios of translatory culpability and debt (note *infinite* indebtedness) to precociously, namely first of all and prior to everything else, renounce translation? Derrida does that in the very first sentence of his lecture. Note the "par" of "parle" resonating with "je pars" (I de-part), and relay that to the "par" of "par-don". It's not just that words beginning with "tr" are important—equally important, I think, are those "par's." The German *pares* that down to "diese Entmutigung, dieser vorzeitige Verzicht, dieses Eingeständnis des Scheiterns vor der Übersetzung" ("this discouragement, this premature renunciation, this admission of failure before translation") (p. 47). But what, to me, is absolutely key is how "auprès d'elle' (referring to "*la* traduction") enters into a relay with "appelle," where "elle" is made very salient. (Let's not ask von der Osten and Sauter to cope with that—it would simply be unfair.) The feminine is now being highlighted, made *relevant(e)*. Note how "ceux et celles" puts masculine plural first and then feminine plural second, but, in the last line, feminine "traductrices" come first and masculine "traducteurs" second. Gender privilege has been switched from masculine to feminine. "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?"

we might ask. Well, *relevant* might precisely be the feminine agreement "e." And why does Derrida say that only translators, of both genders, are capable of knowing how to read and write? Is it because both activities are "translations" at bottom and in essence? Is it only speech that doesn't involve translation? One hardly dares to answer since the problems of *Of Grammatology* loom massively here, I think.

Next paragraph:

> Autre façon de reconnaître un appel à la traduction dès le seuil de toute lecture-écriture. D'où l'infini de la privation, la dette insolvable. Comme ce qui est dû à Shylock, l'insolvable même. (P. 10)
>
> [Which is another way of recognizing a summons to translation at the very threshold of all reading-writing. Hence the infinity of the loss, the insolvent debt. Much like what is owed to Shylock, insolvency itself. (Derrida 2013: 351, transl. by Venuti)]

Consider that "seuil," that threshold, and possibly even the d'où—the "from-where." Note also the resonance between "d'où" and "dû." Think of Kafka's "Vor dem Gesetz": do all translators tarry on the threshold of the law? Are *Übersetzer* always *vor dem Gesetz*? What does that law prescribe for them? Things that are due, "dû" and owed? Or is it that, in a contractual sense, it's a matter of the legal preambles, the *protocols*, the preliminary signings-up to the contract that only has one clause—it concerns, of course, equivalence? What, moreover, is "l'insolvable même"? Consider reading this, a bit inaccurately to be sure, as if Derrida is speaking of "*the* insolvable *Same*." Is it that translators confront the categorical privilege of the Same and the "Même" and perforce always fail in their tasks of achieving *sameness* given their necessary investment in *different* languages? Or perhaps what Derrida means by "l'insolvable même" is death. That cannot be resolved into the economy of Sameness, since there is no equivalent for it. Death cannot be substituted for, and this is what Portia anxiously knows (Faust

too, one might add). Once death is into the bargain, good luck finding something to put in its place.

Derrida next speaks of his own teaching and of the academic profession:

> Parler, enseigner, écrire (ce dont je fais aussi profession et qui au fond […] m'engage corps et âme presque tout le temps), je sais que cela n'a de sens à mes yeux que dans l'épreuve de la traduction. (P. 10)
>
> [Speaking, teaching, writing (which I also consider my profession and which, after all [...] engages me body and soul almost constantly, I know that these activities are meaningful in my eyes only in the proof of translation. (Derrida 2013: 351, transl. by Venuti)]

Achim Geisenhanslüke, in his contribution, "Sklaven des Buchstabens" ("Slaves to the letter"), rightly points out that one could read portions of Derrida's essay with his *Du droit à la philosophie* (1990) in mind, one of a number of texts where Derrida meditates on university teaching, translation, and the teaching "body." Let's stress "corps et âme," since in *The Merchant of Venice* the Christian spiritualities of "soul" are pitted against the "body," including the Jewish body: "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" exclaims Shylock in the name of his Semitic brethren. Derrida proceeds by talking of the singular word:

> je ne l'aime, c'est le mot, que dans le corps de sa singularité idiomatique, c'est-à-dire là où une passion de la traduction vient le lécher – comme peut lécher une flamme ou une langue amoureuse: en s'approchant d'aussi près que possible pour renoncer au dernier moment à menacer ou à réduire, à consumer ou à consommer, en laissant l'autre corps intact mais non sans avoir, sur le bord même de ce renoncement ou de ce retrait, fait paraître l'autre, non sans avoir éveillé ou animé le désir de l'idiome, du corps original de l'autre, dans la lumière de la flamme ou selon la caresse d'une langue. (P. 10)
>
> [I only love it, that's the word, in the body of its idiomatic singularity, that is, where a passion for translation comes to lick it as a flame or an amorous tongue might; approaching as closely as possible while refusing at the last moment to threaten or to reduce, to consume or to consummate, leaving the other body intact but not without causing the

> other to appear -- on the very brink of this refusal or withdrawal—and after having aroused or excited a desire for the idiom, for the unique body of the other, in the flame's flicker or through a tongue's caress. (Derrida 2013: 351, transl. by Venuti)]

Frankly, one could approach Derrida's attitude to translation by building it out of "d'aussi près," or indeed that term "retrait." Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, in his essay "Derridas Gewürzmischung. Axiome, Übersetzung, Theater" („Derrida's spice mixture. Axioms, translation, theater") (p. 159–181), rightly highlights "consumer" and observes that when Portia suggests that mercy must season justice, we are invited to think of "seasoning" in a culinary sense. Michael G. Levine, in his contribution, "Die Erfahrung des Unmöglichen" ("The experience of the impossible") (p. 143–157), also draws attention to how this spice-mix seasoning—if it were sprinkled on original texts—gives "more taste" to one's native language. Thus another answer to Derrida's question "What is a 'relevant' translation?" is a culinary one: "*Relever* bedeutet 'Geschmack geben' [*donner du goût*]" (p. 155).

Still, what Derrida describes here isn't just a matter of culinary seasoning: it's about whether to tarry on the brink of consuming the text, namely eating it. Eating books is a theme in Derrida, in fact. And perhaps one ought put more stress on the corresponding motif of consuming in the sense of flames that lick at the original text, which (if they do more than just lick) might consume the text and burn it up. For this is a highly important motif in Derrida, as we know from *Cinders* (1991). That text partly involves a meditation on what "Holocaust" means, namely all-burning where nothing would remain of that incineration. But, for Derrida, there is no such thing as all-burning, since something remains after the burning, namely cinders or ashes. The question of the remainder is a vital topic in Derrida: it takes us to all those moments in his writing that concern

restance and resistance. Since Levine cites Derrida's "Speculations – On Freud" (I'll explain later why my title is "Speculations – On Translation"), one might also add Derrida's *Resistances of Psychoanalysis* (1998). In any case, when Levine asks "Wie bleibt der Geschmack, den sie gibt, im Mund?" (How does the added taste remain in the mouth?) (p. 156), one is struck by the verb "bleiben" ("remain"), and, evidently, there's much to be made of Derrida's culinary gesture to a "*plat de résistance*." Here, it's preferable to quote the German so we can appreciate Derrida's play with the verb "aufheben" and his emphasis on other activities involving "heben": "Es ist angerichtet, hier nun *le plat de résistance*. Ich habe seinen gehobeneren, feineren Geschmack für das Ende aufgehoben" (It is served: here now, is the plat de resistance. I have saved [aufgehoben] its more refined, finer taste for the end) (p. 72). But if we retain, as I suggest, the motif of cinders that resist the all-burning of the translator's ardent flame, it's in order to envisage Derrida's resistance, or *Widerstand* to the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. What resists the *Aufhebung* or the "relève"? For some answers, one might deploy *Glas* (1974), where Hegel is subject to severe examination, or inspect the quotations from *Glas* in *Cinders*, precisely. If, then, we ask what resists a "relevant" translation, our questions now concern untranslatability *and* unsublatability. Our questions now concern what remains as traces—irreducible traces of the original language, or of the idiomatic body, perhaps. Derrida now translates that issue into two discourses, each of which seemingly promise it "all": eating up all the original text so that possibly nothing remains in what Levine specifies as the *mouth*, or a holocaustic burning such that no ash remains either. Yet, as *Glas* insists, something gags in Derrida's throat, or rather Hegel's, as if there's an indigestible morsel Hegelian dialectics can't assimilate without remainder. Let's keep asking "What resists a 'relevant' translation?" Once one puts

that question to Hegel, we are enlisting translation in the service of a resistance (a *Widerstand*) to what Derrida considers to be the philosophical operation par excellence—dialectics itself. *Cinders*, and "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" as well, I think, stand their ground against the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, and that scanty ground might be strewn with flakes of ash, whereby something trace-like remains despite the operations of *Aufhebung* and "relève."

This is my little contribution not just to Levine's essay, but also to Geisenhanslüke's section of his "Sklaven des Buchstabens" entitled "Zwischen Wort und Geist: Derrida und Hegel" ("Between Word and Spirit: Derrida and Hegel"), since I'd suggest positioning something else between word and spirit, namely the body of the idiom. In any case, there's clearly lot's more to say about this desire-provoking body, particularly insofar as Derrida relays flames to ardent scenarios of passionate desire where gustatory and flame-like "consuming" is related, if not to what we, in English, call *French kissing*, then at least to the act of sexual consummation, as in the way one says that the marriage was *consummated*. Derrida stages the translator's desire as desire for the intact body. Two things connect here: firstly, a concern for virginity, and secondly the question of touching, or rather of leaving a body in-tact (virginal still, therefore, the hymen intact). Translators must know how to touch, or indeed touch-without-touching. Recall Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator":

> Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point – establishing, with this touch rather than with the point, the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity – a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense. (Benjamin 1996: 261)

Assuredly, when Sauter and von der Osten speak of "das, was sich genau richtig anfühlt, den Kern trifft" ("what feels exactly

right, gets to the core'') (p. 91), I think that's indeed what translators desire—a particular rendering that feels just right, where one feels, or senses, that one has got to the core meaning. Still, in the context of this moment in Derrida's text, matters of touching and feeling, especially in respect of a certain core or kernel, are rather more complex. Leaving aside Derrida's text "Me-Psychoanalysis" (2007a), his foreword to Nicolas Abraham's *The Shell and the Kernel*, what is at stake, I think, is Derrida's suggestion that what's untouchable, or which shouldn't be touched, provokes all kinds of desire, or just desire itself, and so it would be if one wanted to model the translator's desire as well. Partly, it's therefore a matter of whether a core or kernel epitomizes the untouchable as such, and because it does, that's what provokes desire in the first place (in Derrida's *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy* (2005b), the inaccessible core is relayed to matters concerning Nancy's untouchable heart). Partly, it's because untouchability breeds thoughts of virginal intactness. Compare *Cinders*: "We literally unveil nothing of her, nothing that in the final account does not leave her intact (that's the only thing he loves)" (Derrida 2014: 23). Note the pointedly heterosexual scenario there. Consider matters in terms of Benjamin: what cannot be touched is what he envisages as sealed, like the core of an apple or a peach, within a linguistic skin, i.e. where "content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin" (Benjamin 1996: 258). Perhaps the translator desires that core, but it's a core the translator ought not—out of tact—try to rip open and touch too aggressively. Otherwise translation becomes violent. Here we can again cite Steiner and his blithely unexamined model where "penetration" (Steiner 1992: 319) is one of the hermeneutic motions involving an act that Steiner relates to an erotic or sexual scenario: he speaks of the "Augustinian tristitia which follows on the cognate acts of erotic and intellectual posses-

sion" (ibid.: 314). I pause to register my alarm at Steiner's deeply question-begging use of the word "cognate." Translators need to learn how not to violently consummate the "marriage" between original text and translation. They must learn how to pull back from that brink (*coitus interruptus*?). They need to learn not just how to touch the original text, à la Benjamin, so lightly, at only one point, as if that point is the only place permissible for translation (and its fingers) at all, but also to learn how to caress: Levinas, who offers an account in *Totality and Infinity* of the caress, is the reference Derrida might be pointing to here.

Let's move on. Speaking to his audience, Derrida says: "Mais je ne tarderai pas advantage à vous dire 'merci,' en un mot à vous adresser ce '*mercy*,' en plus d'une langue"[4] (p. 10). In one word? Is that the preferred "economy" of translation, one word for one word? But then again, what about "in more than one language" (or "tongue")? Does the word "merci" translate into the English "mercy"? A little later, Derrida says,

> De votre côté, pardonnez-moi d'abord de me servir de ce mot '*merciful*,' comme d'une citation. Je le *mentionne* autant que j'en *use*, comme dirait un théoricien des speech acts un peu trop confiant dans une distinction maintenant canonique entre *mention* et *use*. (P. 10)
>
> [For your part, forgive me from the outset for availing myself of this word *merciful* as if it were a citation. I am *mentioning* it as much as I am *using* it, as a speech act theorist might sat, a bit too confident in the now canonical distinction between *mention* and *use*. (Derrida 2013: 351, transl. by Venuti)]

When Derrida deploys the imperative "pardonnez-moi," perhaps he's asking the audience, on their side, to respond by a

4 „But I won't put off any longer saying 'merci' to you, in a word, addressing this mercy to you in more than (and no longer) one language" (Derrida 2013: 351, transl. by Venuti, who adds the parenthetical "(and no longer)").

use of the formulation, e.g. "Je vous pardonne Jacques Derrida," and a sincere use, at that. Derrida "cites" the terms mercy, merciful and pardon (me), perhaps only feigning thereby to ask for such things, since it may be that he doesn't think he has committed any sin, crime or transgression for which he needs to be pardoned. Or perhaps he does?

"Autrement dit" ("in other words"), Derrida continues (all translation operates the "autrement dit," of course),

> je ne tarderai pas à vous remercier sans doute de l'honneur insigne qui m'est fait, mais aussi, à travers ce mot de gratitude et de '*mercy*,' à vous demander pardon pour toutes les limites, et d'abord mes propres insuffisances, qui m'empêcheront de m'y mesurer dignement. Mes insuffisances, je vais sans doute tenter en vain de les dissimuler grâce à des artifices plus ou moins naïvement pervers. (P. 10)
>
> [I certainly won't delat in thanking you for the signal honor you have accorded me, but also, via this word of gratitude and *mercy*, in asking your forgiveness for all the limits, starting with my own inadequacies, which hinder me from measuring up to it. As for my inadequacies, I will no doubt make a vain effort to dissemble them with contrivances more or less naively perverse. (Derrida 2013: 351, transl. by Venuti)]

"Insigne" is an interesting word. The lack of measure is important also, since it tests not just the fullness of what it is to be merci-*ful*, but also the measurements supposedly securing translatory fidelities, economies, and equilibriums. There is delay here too—I will not delay, Derrida seems to say, but he precisely is delaying, taking his time, and perhaps it's already too late, "trop tard," to ask for mercy or the audience's pardon—it would be, as Derrida well knew, a long lecture, and he had hardly yet begun. When Derrida asks for pardon for "toutes les limites," moreover, that's not necessarily the same thing as asking for pardon for *his* inadequacies ("mes insuffisances"). "Sans doute" is repeated. Are those uses sincere or feigned? Are we sure what dissimulations and disguises Derrida is wear-

ing, vainly or successfully? Perversely: for what and for whom is Derrida playing the Devil's Advocate? For Shylock?

Kasper makes some of these connections in connection not just with Shylock, but with Portia, travestied as a man as she is. Kasper rightly wonders, as I have just done, about how many travesties or disguises Derrida is wearing: "'Derrida-the-Jew' spielt Portia und 'Derrida-Portia' spielt Shylock" ("Derrida-the-Jew plays Portia and Derrida-Portia plays Shylock") (p. 130). She also asks how many languages Derrida will travesty in translation until his use of English and French words (e.g. the word "relevant") becomes outright catachresis—the abusive use of words acceptable neither to the Académie Française nor to the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary. Kasper also cites a later moment in Derrida's text which reads: "[la traduction] est la loi, elle parle même le langage de la loi au-delà de la loi, de la loi impossible, représentée par une femme déguisée, transfigurée, convertie, travestie, traduisez *traduite* en homme de loi"[5] (p. 21). Here's the signal *relevance* of a gender "translation" once more: it falls to Portia, a woman, to speak in the name of the law grammatically gendered female in French. Close here, I suggest, is the phallic symbolics, explored in *Glas*, of the erect and unbending Law (per Hegel's envisioning of *Recht*) as opposed to supple femininities promising a flexible, one might even say *merciful*, application of the law-beyond-the-law of the masculine imagination and masculine privilege.

Derrida continues to plead his case (or feigns to do so), asking for mercy, pardon and grace without having necessarily confessed his sins, or identified that for which he is culpable.

5 "[Translation] is the law; it even speaks the language of the law beyond the law, of the impossible law, represented by a woman who is disguised, transfigured, converted, travestied, read *translated* into a man of the law" (Derrida 2013: 360, transl. by Venuti).

Now, however, he seems to do just that: "Avant ces grâces rendues ou cette grâce demandée, j'avoue en premier lieu une faute de langage qui pourrait bien être un manquement aux lois de l'hospitalité"[6] (p. 11). It's the logic of the pardon: before ("avant") one asks for a pardon, one must admit ("avouer") to having committed a crime or fault. Hence, in the first place, "en premier lieu," that admission of guilt must be made. Here, to use Derrida's terms from earlier, "d'abord," on the "bords" or borderlines of a lecture that has hardly begun, that "lieu" must be staked out. And, in terms of the crimes and culpabilities of translation, it chiefly concerns the grounds either for the condemnation or the pardoning of the one transgression in which translation specializes, or which it will necessarily commit, namely "une faute de langage." One fault: the mis-appropriation, or mis-translation of the word "relevant," perhaps, especially if that word—hovering somewhere between French and English—purports to translate Hegel's word *Aufhebung*.

But the other transgression seems to concern the laws of hospitality. Consider how Derrida continues:

> Le premier devoir de l'hôte, du *guest* que je suis, n'est-ce pas en effet de parler un langage intelligible et transparent, à savoir celle du déstinataire, donc sans équivoque ? Et donc de parler une seule langue, à savoir celle du déstinataire, ici de l'hôte (*host*) […] Une langue traduisible en un mot ? (P. 11)
>
> [Is it not the first duty of the *guest* [hote] that I am to speak a language that is intelligible and transparent, hence without equivocation? And therefore to speak a single language, namely that of the addressee, here of the *host* [hote] [...] A language that is, in a word, translatable? (Derrida 2013: 352, transl. by Venuti)]

6 "Before these thanks rendered, this pardon begged, I must first acknowledge a defect of language that could well be a breach in the laws of hospitality" (Derrida 2013: 352, transl. by Venuti).

Geisenhanslüke devotes good pages to this moment, and obviously the first thing to bear in mind is that the word "hôte" can mean both "host" and "guest." The difference can disappear in French and so, in order to discriminate "hôte" (*host*) from "hôte" (*guest*) Derrida translates himself into English, and offers "guest" so as to stabilize the binary opposition that French ambiguously deconstructs, so to speak. But if we translate in our turn, and deem Derrida also saying that the first duty of hosts is to show hospitality to Derrida the guest, where would that "premier devoir" be shown? Derrida has earlier said "en premier lieu": where is the first "lieu" of hospitality, the place of the host's welcome to a guest? Well, as Derrida's text on hospitality notes, it's the doorstep—the "pas" of the "porte" (cf. Derrida 2000). (I'm not going to risk a pun on "porte" and Portia, but I'm tempted to.) Put it this way: when we speak of translation and its hosting of the foreign language, what are the hospitable protocols governing translatory domestication and foreignization? Derrida invokes "devoir" and "savoir," and hence allows us to discern the verb "voir" ("to see") which then motivates the idea of a visibly transparent language, to be sure, but while Derrida can say "en un mot" concerning the double meaning of "hôte," at issue is whether one really lock down that one word into one meaning (*either* guest *or* host) or whether, in fact, that one word is endlessly translatable between those two meanings, such that one cannot be sure which kind of "hôte" Derrida really thinks he is, or presents himself as, and moreover to what audience and to what language he is trying to be hospitable. (And, one should note that he first uses "un langage" in the masculine and then "une langue" in the feminine. Something is discreetly happening here, one suspects.)

Two meanings in one word: Derrida loves such words, like *pharmakon*, for instance, since they precipitate the crisis not

just of deconstruction, but of translation. Consider how that crisis is fomented in the following paragraph: "Or, voici l'un des aveux que je vous dois à de multiples titres. D'abord au titre du titre, et de parler, comme je le ferai dans un instant, de façon tout intraduisible, du titre du titre"[7] (p. 11). Kasper is alert to the difficulties here, noting that the German translators had to leave many of those "titres" in French. It's very hard: it's as if he's saying that, in multiple ways, I'm firstly going to talk on the topic of titles and do so by addressing the credentials, authorities, prerogatives and entitlements of the title. Well, if it's almost impossible to give a sense of how "titre" is variously used in French, one can at least say that Derrida is always interested in exploring the entitlements of the title. And Derrida is rather keen to retain his entitlements to his own titles: one way he does so is by deliberately choosing titles that forbid easy translation. It's why, for instance (or above all), the English translation of "Des Tours de Babel" (2007b), Derrida's other great text about translation, is forced to retain Derrida's French title, rather than opting for "On Towers of Babel," since that translation would miss the play between plural towers ("des tours") and "détours." (The German version, interestingly, is "Babylonische Türme. Wege, Umwege, Abwege," which over-determines "Babel" as a certain "Babylon," and permits itself to plot certain "Wege" that I don't think Derrida really ever takes—the straight path is not one Derrida thinks one can take around those towers.) Let's return, or detour back to "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" though. Derrida tries to explain himself:

7 "Now, here is one of the admissions I owe you on several scores. First, on the score of my title and on the score of speaking about my title, as I shall do in a moment, in an entirely untranslatable manner" (Derrida 2013: 352, transl. by Venuti).

> Pourquoi mon titre resterait-il à jamais intraduisible? En premier lieu parce qu'on ne saurait décider de quelle langue d'origine il relève. Et donc en quel sens, entre hôte et hôte, *guest* et *host*, il travaille, *travels*, voyage. (P. 11)
>
> [Why would my title remain forever untranslatable? In the first place, because one can't decide the source language to which it is answerable [*relève*]; nor, therefore, in what sense it travails, *travels*, between *hôte* and *hôte*, *guest* and *guest*. (Derrida 2013: 352, transl. by Venuti)]

Here, again, one sees the ambiguity, or outright undecidability of "hôte" counter-posed with the relative stabilities of the English *guest*. Notice "en premier lieu" again. Arguably, translation is occurring here, in that "lieu" between ("entre") various languages. Isn't translation a thought of the "entre" and hence hesitant to countenance the firm terrain of the "lieu"? So much happening here. Translation is, and isn't happening—it is between *guest* and "hôte," but it isn't, if Derrida thinks his titles, entitlements and credentials (his "titres") are untranslatable. So much for Dr. Derrida, whose academic credentials are presumably untransferable to anyone else, but what about Dr. Portia, who illegitimately transfers the credential of a male PhD in law to herself? Gender issues are discreetly here in any case: Derrida uses the feminine "langue" but his masculine "titre" is supposed to *come from* ("il relève") that feminine language or tongue. Ponder that. It gets worse: "Impossible de décider de quelle langue de départ relève par exemple le mot 'relevante' que je laisse pour l'instant entre guillemets"[8] (p. 11). Again the deliberate choice of the feminine "langue" over the masculine "langage." For example? That's not just any example. When did that impossibility begin? When did that departure begin, when French became mixed with English? (Notice once more

8 "It is impossible to decide on the source language to which, for example, the word 'relevante' answers [*relève*], a word that I leave within quotation marks for now" (Derrida 2013: 352, transl. by Venuti).

the resonances of the "par" of "départ.") Did it begin with the departure of William the Conqueror from the shores of France across the English channel (a body of water slim enough that it was easy for him to transport, if not translate himself across)? Why does Derrida say that he leaves the term "relevante" for an instant (which often just means, in French, "for a moment," or "for a while") in quote marks? Are we so sure Derrida ever gets round to *relieving* the word "relevante" from it's protective "guillemets," and so it remains, not just for an instant, but for a good while longer (if not forever), as a *citation*, and hence remains unamenable to what a certain speech act theorist has to say about the difference between *use* and *mention*? There is, in any case, a good deal more to say about his title: one could dwell lengthily on the way Derrida then says a little later "Ce que je vous proposerai sous ce titre"[9] (p. 12) ("What I shall propose to you under this title"; Derrida 2013: 352, transl. by Venuti). One would have to begin by the carefully-chosen word "sous," and perhaps visit at least one text of Derrida's on Blanchot where what occurs *underneath* the title is at issue. Let's briefly refer to it: the text is entitled "Title to Be Specified," and underneath that title in italics is "*The T-i-t-l-e-e-r*," and then the text proper of Derrida's discussion (originally an oral lecture) begins. Derrida explains that the Old French here is "titrier" which, in Tom Conley's translation, is then rendered as "*titleer*" (Derrida 2011: 198). *Titleers* were monks in charge of the book titles collected in monastic libraries. Conley's note is interesting, bearing in mind how von der Osten and Sauter are also interested in words beginning with "tr": "the twice repeated grapheme *tr* of t i t r i e r marks another obsessive shape in the French version of the text" (ibid.: 260). Derrida is a titleer, al-

9 "I shall propose to you under this title" (Derrida 2013: 352, transl. by Venuti).

ways concerned with "titres," but concerned just as much to defer his own titles, "titres," and entitlements, and hence allow *différance* to occur, right at the borderline separating title and text, so that what is postponed is precisely the title he feigns to promise (another speech act that might worry a certain J. L. Austin) he will specify later. At any rate, and to return to our text, Derrida hints at such issues by continuing via another verb containing "sous":

> Je soulignerais *laborieuse* pour annoncer quelques mots en *tr*. – et que le motif du *labour*, du travail d'accouchement mais aussi du travail transférentiel et transformationnel, dans tous les codes possibles et non seulement dans celui de la psychanalyse, entrera en concurrence avec le motif apparemment plus neutre de la traduction, comme transaction et comme transport. (P. 12)
>
> [I announce *laborious* to announce several words in *tr*: and to indicate that the motif of *labor* [*travail*], the *tr*avail of childbirth, but also the *transferential* and *tr*ansformational *tr*avail, in all possible codes and not only that of psychoanalysis, will enter into competition with the apparently more neutral motif of *tr*anslation, as *tr*ansaction and as *tr*ansfer. (Derrida 2013: 353, transl. by Venuti)]

Consider the "translation" from the English *labour* to "travail d'accouchement": we've already seen the motif of virginity, now we seem to need translation to impregnate a text and seed a new-born that will entail someone pregnant going into labour (or *labor*, to translate myself back into U.S. spelling). Again, the pointed shift towards the feminine, when matters concerning the work or labor of translation is concerned. Speaking of neutrality, in any case, Derrida is quite aware that, in French, there's no grammatical neutrality. Once French picks up ("relève") an English word, then French will allocate it a gender. Derrida writes:

> Le féminin français de ce mot (une traduction '*relevante*') sonne encore plus anglais et nous rappelle à la signature et à quelque enjeu de la différence sexuelle partout où il y a traduction, traductrice ou traducteur. (P. 13)
>
> [The French feminine of this word (une traduction *relevante*) sounds even more English and takes us back to the signature and the sexual difference at stake wherever translation or translators (in the masculine or feminine) are involved. (Derrida 2013: 353, transl. by Venuti)]

Indeed, there is "quelque enjeu sexuelle" when one is translating between French and English. But Derrida, in French, might have already decided the matter: consider the pointed echoes between "rapp-elle" and "sexu-elle" when the word "difference" is at issue. German, of course, has a neutral case. Whether the psychoanalysis of the German-speaking Freud is adequate to that neutrality is perhaps one of the discreet questions Derrida is raising in connection with the Freudian *Übertragung*. Still, if one wants to consider the importation of this English word "relevant" into French, then Derrida specifies himself: just earlier, he says

> Cette acculturation, cette francisation, n'est pas *stricto sensu* une traduction. Ce mot n'est pas seulement en traduction, comme on dirait en travail ou en voyage, *traveling*, *travailing*, dans un labeur, un labour d'accouchement. Dans le titre proposé il vient ici, d'un pli supplémentaire, qualifier la traduction, et ce qu'une traduction pourrait devoir être, à savoir *relevante*. (P. 13)
>
> [This acculturation, this Frenchification, is not *stricto senso* a translation. The word is not only *in* translation, as one would say in the works or in transit, *traveling*, *travailing*, in *labor*. In my proposed title, it serves through a supplementary fold [*pli*], to qualify translation and to indicate what a translation might be *obliged* to be, namely *relevant*. (Derrida 2013: 353, transl. by Venuti)]

Again the reference to pregnancy's labor. The German translation has "im *labour* des Gebärens" ("in the labor of birthgiving") (49). But whatever languages this word—the word "relevant"—seems to travel in (or "en") it's only the *strictu senso* def-

inition of translation that forbids us from regarding that travelling, travailing and voyaging as translation. Why not? Well, because the "sides" or "shores" of *translatio* should be clearly delineated and moreover reachable—there should be a language of departure and a language of arrival. Only quasi-translations, a term Kasper rightly makes much of, risk departures that perhaps never reach their destination and instead wander still, travel yet more, detour endlessly around certain Babel towers, ceaselessly postponing their arrival. I think Derrida is being very knowing when he speaks, *strictu senso*, of what translation could and should be, could have to be, in view, let's say, of the Latin etymology of *translatio* and what it supposes for translation's "voyage." Especially knowing, given that "pli supplémentaire": we could explore another relay here, and proceed to a different moment in Kasper's essay, where she makes instructive mention of Mallarmé, the French poet and English teacher, author of a whimsically "Cratylist" text entitled "Les mots anglais" (see p. 139). For it's also in connection with Mallarmé, particularly "Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard," that Derrida, in "The Book to Come," an essay included in the 2005 volume *Paper Machine*, activates the notion of the "fold" or "pli," and obviously, the supplement is one of Derrida's core terms. Thus we might ask: is translation, when it isn't bound to the *strictu senso*, to the strictures (a term key to *Glas*, not incidentally) of its own definition and etymology, in Latin at least, and in Derrida's French for that matter, an activity of supplementation or a folding of one language into (or over, *über*) another?

At this juncture in my review essay, I feel inclined, or obliged to offer some apologies for my constant detouring around Derrida's text, my detouring at a certain distance from the essays collected in this volume as well, and indeed, my making quite a few deviations via other texts by Derrida. Pardon

me, *Entschuldigung, pardonnez-moi*. Let's try to take a straighter path, and get to the point. How does one translate Portia's "When mercy seasons justice?" How did French and German translators cope with that line? Kasper is illuminating here: François-Victor Hugo, she recalls, uses "tempérer" (to moderate) to deal with Shakespeare's "to season." Wieland's German version has "wenn die Gerechtigkeit durch Gnade gemildert wird" (p. 137). Kasper is right to praise von der Osten and Sauter for refusing to water down or attenuate Derrida. They produce "wenn Vergebung die Gerechtigkeit (oder das Recht) *aufhebt*" ("when forgiveness abolishes justice (or the law)") (137). Kasper's parenthesis is interesting, though. It's useful that "Vergebung" gives us a "giving," which the French "pardonner" also gives us, whereas "mercy," in English, does not. Now, if it all comes down to donations given or not given, to taking and not giving back, then we perhaps remain in the vicinity of Steiner whom I quoted earlier, and also remain in the contexts of *time*—Derrida's text, at least in part, if not centrally, is concerned with time-giving and time-taking, and this is a topic the contributors take up in interesting ways.

Levine invokes, at the start of his essay, the Freudian question about "repetition" or *Wiederholung* by discussing Derrida's "Speculations – On Freud." And if the question concerns how *time* is implicated in certain repetitions enacted by Derrida, Levine offers valuable remarks on his performativity, where it matters "was er tut und was er sagt" ("what he does and what he says") (p. 144), which is to say, it matters *how* Derrida translates as well as *what* he says about translation in general, and his own translations in particular. I agree with Levine: Derrida's is an ironic performance: "Er hält eine fragende, selbstironische Rede *über* die Übersetzung, in dem er übersetzt und dabei einiges unübersetzt lässt" ("he stages a questioning, self-ironising talk *on* translation in which he translates and

thereby leaves some things untranslated.") (p. 146). And I appreciated his remarks on Derrida's stuttering word-slips and trips, particularly where words—in French, in English, and in between those two languages—begin with "tr." But perhaps one might add: what he *does*, "was er *tut*," is that he quite obviously takes time to give his lecture. And Derrida knows that, which is why he ends, multilingually, by saying "Merci pour le temps que vous m'avez donné, pardon, *mercy*, pardon pour celui que je vous ai pris"[10] (42). In the German: "*Merci*, danke für die Zeit, die Sie mir geschenkt haben, *pardon*, *mercy*, Pardon für die Zeit, die ich Ihnen genommen habe" (p. 86). Can you ever take the time you took from others, and give it them back? I don't think so. That is the ultimate performative circumstance Derrida stages here, it seems to me. It's the performative time-taking of the lecture itself. (One agrees with Müller-Schöll and Geisenhanslüke, nonetheless, that the other performative scenario here concerns the fact that *The Merchant of Venice* is, after all, a theatrical play, one which offers a *mise-en-scène* of a legal trial, moreover, and they both have valuable comments to make in this regard, some of which go beyond Derrida, in fact, since the theatricality of Shakespeare's play is rather ignored by Derrida himself.)

But there's another self-ironizing moment in Derrida's text, and it concerns what, for some translation scholars, is the controversial moment where he offers two propositions on translation and translatability. Here they are in French: "Or je ne crois pas que rien soit jamais intraduisible – ni d'ailleurs traduisible" (p. 14). In Venuti's version: "As a matter of fact, I don't believe that anything can ever be untranslatable—or, moreover, translatable" (2019: 355). In the German: "Doch

10 "Merci for the time you have given me, pardon, *mercy* forgive the time I have taken from you" (Derrida 2013: 379, transl. by Venuti).

glaube ich nicht, dass irgendetwas jemals unübersetzbar wäre – und übrigens auch nicht übersetzbar" ("But I don't believe that anything is ever untranslatable—and, incidentally, untranslatable too") (p. 52). Some found Derrida's intervention into the vexed debate about translatability and untranslatability to be unhelpful, and moreover felt that that Derrida was a member of the sinister cohort of those who scant the abilities and successes of translators in the name of flat-out untranslatability. But one needs to read Derrida's French: the categorical terms "rien" and "jamais" are being pointedly compromised by the subjunctive "soit" in between. The German, with that "wäre," does a much better job in that regard than the English, and I prefer the German "Doch" for Derrida's "Or." "As a matter of fact" seems too strong to me. In any event, one should always be on one's guard when Derrida, of all people, apparently offers categorical propositions, or even "theses"—he almost never does. What puts me on my guard is when Derrida uses the verb "to dare" when he writes "Comment peut-on oser dire que rien n'est traduisible et que pour autant rien n'est intraduisible?"[11] (p. 14).

The question, though, is why Derrida dares to express his paradoxical "belief" concerning (un)translatability in a lecture concerned with Shakespeare's play. Definitely, there is a question concerning the (un)translatability between a Jew and a Christian, an (un)translatability, that is, between different conceptions of right, justice, and perhaps fairness ("justesse") as well. As Geisenhanslüke rightly observes, it's a matter of the confrontation with "der vom Christentum installierten Rechtsphilosophie, derzufolge die Juden verrückt intepretieren, weil

11 "How can one dare say that nothing is translatable and, by the same token, that nothing is untranslatable?" (Derrida 2013: 355, transl. by Venuti).

sie Sklaven des Buchstabens seien" ("the legal philosophy established by Christianity according to which the Jews interpret madly because they are slaves to the letter") (p. 123). The "madness" of Jewish interpretation is taken from a remark by the Emperor Justinian and reprised by Pierre Legendre. Portia appeals to the spirit of the law (a spirit secured by mercy) and Shylock appeals to a literal-minded, *buchstäbliche* interpretation of the law, where what is written in that contract is the writ all parties should abide by. And that seems to map onto what is at stake for (un)translatability and untranslatability: the letter versus the spirit. Is it the Jews who are slaves to the letter and the *Buch*? It's a provocative question, of course, whatever one might say (or Levinas, curiously absent from the discussion) concerning the Jews as people of the Book. Geisenhanslüke cites Derrida in German translation: "Dieser Bezug des Buchstabens zum Geist, des Körpers der Buchstäblichkeit zur idealen *Innerlichkeit* des Sinns ist auch der Ort des Übergangs der Übersetzung, dieser Konversion, die man Übersetzung nennt"[12] (p. 123). So if translation models its fidelity on *Buchstäblichkeit*, is that a "Jewish" position to take on translation? If one declares that translation should forget the letter of the text (or the law) and respect the "spirit" instead, is that a Christian position? And what, therefore, to make of Shylock's forced conversion to the Christian position? Geisenhanslüke provides valuable insight into what might be the translator's (or Shylock's) mourning for the literal meaning of a given text one is always forced to relinquish in favor of the mysteries of an ideal *Innerlichkeit* of meaning that *Geist*—a Christian *Geist*—seems privileged to sense, promote and indeed demand. Hence the

12 "[T]his relation of the letter to the spirit, of the body of literalness to the ideal interiority of sense is also the site of the passage of translation, of this conversion that is called translation" (Derrida 2013: 361, transl. by Venuti).

"Trauer um den Buchstaben zur Rettung des Sinns" ("mourning for the letter to save the sense") (p. 124). And so, in view of that "saving," one is perforce asked to operate the "relève" or *Aufhebung* once more—this time in view of "spirit" or *Geist*: "Die Aufhebung des Buchstabens im Geist führt zu einer Herrschaft der spirituellen *Innerlichkeit* über die scheinbare Äußerlichkeit des Körpers" ("the sublation of the letter in the spirit leads to a domination of spiritual innerness over the apparent exteriority of the body") (p. 124).

But this opposition between the spirit, soul, or *Geist*, and the body broaches an enormous topic: we have the binary opposition between the putative innerness of *Geist* and the outerness of the body and are hence invited—that's the Derridean way—to deconstruct that opposition. And if that Derridean way might also involve him playing Devil's Advocate for *Shylock*'s literalism (or the literalism of a certain model of translation—Antoine Berman *je pense à vous !*), then we have to pay attention. Let's take two detours to assist ourselves. First detour is towards Derrida's text on Heidegger, translated into English as "Of Spirit." I'll just cite the following: "There is the first necessity of this essential explanation, the quarrel between languages, German *and* Rome, German *and* Latin, and even German *and* Greek, the *Übersetzung* as an *Auseinandersetzung* between *pneuma*, *spiritus* and *Geist*. At a certain point, this last no longer allows of translation into the first two" (Derrida 2013: 222). Second detour, in order to wonder not just about the translatability that apparently stops once Heidegger, in Derrida's view, insists on a specifically German meaning of *Geist*, but to assess the body as well. Here, I detour back to Derrida's text on Husserl that I mentioned—that Derrida mentioned—earlier. Consider this from Derrida's *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry*: "Husserl always says that the linguistic or graphic body is a flesh, a proper body (*Leib*), or a spiritual corporeality (*geistige*

Leiblichkeit)" (Derrida 1989: 88). So, as early as the Husserl text, Derrida was thinking about the question of the linguistic body and its putative flesh. "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" simply picks up (in the gesture of "relever") on the same topic, I think. Note that "flesh" isn't given in the equivalent German by Derrida, and then that term is succeeded by "proper body" which is provided with the German, namely *Leib*, and then we have "spiritual corporeality," also given in Husserl's German. But "flesh," or *Fleisch*, isn't the same as a body, even there's presumably no body without flesh, and, once one contemplates *geistige Leiblichkeit*, then we have to conjugate a notion of spirit with a notion of bodiliness. All of this is somehow supposed to designate a linguistic or graphic body (not necessarily the same thing). Now compare *The Merchant of Venice*: Portia gets Antonio out of his lethal bargain with Shylock by querying the difference between flesh and body. She tells Shylock that, according to the letter of the law, Shylock asked for a pound of flesh, and if he wants to carve out that flesh, he's welcome to do so, but he must only slice into flesh, and leave the body intact, with no blood spilled. Shylock admits defeat. *Portia, lectrice de Husserl* …

That's partly how I read what's going on in "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" Von der Osten and Sauter are right, in any case, to ask Shylock how he plans to weigh his pound of flesh. For Shylock is specific—just one pound of flesh. Yet, as they observe, if that gives, in Shylock's eyes, a stable "economy" of justice where things—supposedly equivalent things—can be accurately weighed and measured, the problem is that approaches to translation that also propose economic equivalences—recall Steiner—need to explain one weighs the things one is going to put on the translatory scales. Can one weigh words? What scales and balances can we realistically employ here? Thus, another characterization of a "rel-

evant" translation would be this: "Eine relevante Übersetzung wäre in diesem Sinne eine gewichtende Übersetzung. Sie hebt nicht auf, sondern sie wägt ab" ("A relevant translation in this sense would be a weighing translation. It does not sublate, instead it weighs things out") (p. 100). One can only imagine Hegel's reaction if someone said, to his face, that dialectics "hebt sich nicht auf, sondern wägt sich ab" ("doesn't raise itself up, but weighs itself out.").

Let's not forget, in any case, that we are trying to grasp Derrida's "theses." But when Derrida explains what he means by nothing is untranslatable, it's important to read what he says. For when Derrida expands on the reasons why he thinks that nothing is untranslatable, he writes:

> [S]i à un traducteur absolument compétent dans au moins deux langues et deux cultures […] vous donnez tout le temps et toute la place, et autant de mots qu'il lui faut pour expliquer, expliciter, enseigner le contenu de sens et les formes d'un texte à traduire, il n'y a aucune raison pour qu'il rencontre de l'intraduisible et qu'il y ait un reste à son opération. (P. 15)
>
> [If to a translator who is fully competent in at least two languages and two cultures [...] you give all the time in the world as well as the words needed to explicate, clarify, and teach the semantic content and forms of the text to be translated, there is no reason for him to encounter the untranslatable or a remainder in his work. (Derrida 2013: 355–6, transl. by Venuti)]

Retain "tout le temps et toute la place," and contemplate all those apparently available words. Retain also the terms "reste," (i.e. "remainder"), or, in German, *Rest*, and wonder what might be *restlos* following such a translation. Derrida continues:

> Si on donne à quelqu'un de compétent un livre entier, plein de N.d.T. (Notes du traducteur ou de la traductrice), pour vous expliquer tout ce que peut vouloir dire en sa forme une phrase de deux ou trois mots (par exemple le '*he war*' de *Finnegans Wake* qui m'a occupé ailleurs, ou bien '*mercy seasons justice*' du *Marchand de Venise* [...]), eh bien, il n'y a aucune raison, en principe, pour qu'il échoue à rendre sans reste les in-

> tentions, le vouloir-dire, les dénotations, connotations et surdéterminations sémantiques, les jeux formels de ce qu'on appelle l'original. (P. 15–16)
>
> [If you give someone who is competent an entire book, filled with *translator's notes*, in order to explain everything that a phrase of two or three words can mean in its particular form (for example, the *he war* in *Finnegans Wake*, which has occupied me in another place, or the mercy season's justice from *The Merchant of Venice* [...]), there is really no reason, in principle, for him to fail to render—without any remainder—the intentions, meaning, denotations, connotations and semantic overdeterminations, the formal effects of what is called the original. (Derrida 2013: 356, transl. by Venuti)]

In view of these passages, I permit myself to rehearse a few remarks from my "Translation: Its Events and Non-events," published in the third volume of the *Yearbook*: (2023), since what Derrida says here is a focus of my own essay. All the time, all the space, all the words in the world have never been given to a translator such that he or she might overcome a moment of untranslatability in a given source text—such is the restricted, or rationed "economy" to which translators are beholden, just as it's the same "economy" to which a book review, like the present one, is beholden to as well. Moreover, part of that "economy" is a *quantitative* economy where translators are told not to proliferate too much beyond the word-count of the original text in a welter of paraphrases, glosses, or translator's notes. Derrida specifies that

> il faut que, hors de toute paraphrase, explication, explicitation, analyse, etc., la traduction soit *quantitativement* équivalente à l'original. Je ne parle pas ici de la quantité en général ni de la quantité dite prosodique (le mètre, le rythme, la césure, la rime, autant de gageures classiques et de limites en principe et en fait insurmontables à la traduction. (P. 16)
>
> [the translation must be *quantitatively* equivalent to the original, apart from every paraphrase, explication, explicitation, analysis, and the like. Here I am not speaking of quantity in general or of quantity in the prosodic sense (meter, rhythm, caesura, rhyme -- all the classic con-

> straints and limits that are in principle ad in fact insurmountable by translation). (Derrida 2013: 356, transl. by Venuti)]

Given the fact that Derrida is emphatically not speaking of prosody and equivalences, I found it confusing that Geisenhanslüke aligned Derrida with Henri Meschonnic. Meschonnic does indeed, e.g in *La Rime et la Vie*, bid for prosodic equivalences and quantities, and may well have rehearsed a pretty classical problematics of (poetic) translation, but that's not at all what Derrida seeks. Moreover, when Geisenhanslüke speaks of "Derridas Poetik der Übersetzung" ("Derrida's poetics of translation") (p. 112), while a poetics of translation might be Meschonnic's goal, I don't feel that's Derrida's goal here.

In any case, when Derrida says that, *in principle*, nothing should be untranslatable, and that one might accordingly envisage a translation so successful that nothing would remain untranslated, where there would be no remainder, "reste," or Rest, provided that a translator were given all the time and space in the world, Derrida is questioning what a theory of translation based on the rigor of philosophical *principle* might have to say. Clearly, Derrida knows that *in practice* no such expansive pages have yet been given for translator's notes that could explain all the meanings resident in a word or two. But note that, besides referring to "mercy must season justice," Derrida also refers to *Finnegans Wake*. I discuss this reference in my own essay, but very briefly, I think that because Derrida is aware that some will view all of this to be, if not utopian, then at least pretty preposterous, Derrida is at pains to give a practical example. Firstly, perhaps his own commentary on that Anglo-Irish-German pun *he war* (in "Ulysses Gramophone, Two Words for Joyce") is an exercise in supplying an exhaustive N.*d*.T on *two words*, precisely. Secondly, perhaps *Finnegans Wake* is an example of where an apparently untranslata-

ble text has been translated—and pretty successfully too. Is there any example of a literary text other than *Finnegans Wake* that defies translation so adamantly as Joyce's text? But in being translated, the impossible seems to have been rendered possible, the untranslatable translated, nonetheless.

Once scenarios of the apparently impossible yield to the possible, we have the profile of the Derridean event: an event, for Derrida, is that which defies currently established determinations of what is and isn't possible. In defying such determinations, the event shows that these determinations weren't as hard and fast, or as categorical, as one might have thought. The event, if and when it occurs, hence possibilizes the impossible. And Derrida is no more willing to preclude events like that for translation, whatever is currently said about untranslatability, as he is for any other circumstance where peremptory claims are made concerning what is not, and never will be possible (recall my earlier remarks on Derrida's use of "jamais"). That, not incidentally, is why one must be careful in calling Derrida a naïve utopianist: his "Not Utopia, the Im-possible," included in the *Paper Machine* volume, repays close reading in this regard. Hence, while Geisenhanslüke rightly speaks of "Die Übersetzung als ein anderer Name für das UnMögliche" ("Translation as another name for the impossible") (p. 111), one might just as well speak of "Die Übersetzung als ein anderer Name für das Mögliche" ("Translation as another name for the possible"). But it all depends on the profile of the Derridean event, and how the conditions of possibility for that event are set up by the unforecastable "à-venir" ("the to-come"). Perhaps, Derrida seems to say, one day to come, an unprecedented event of total translatability will come to pass. In the *hic et nunc*, that event hasn't yet arrived (unless it already has when *Finnegans Wake* was translated), but let's still keep our horizons open, nonetheless.

This, in my view, is why, when Derrida dares to speak of untranslatability, scholars who accuse him from being too pessimistic about the prospects of achievable translatability might be missing the point, especially when they only focus on the practicalities of translation and neglect what Derrida says about matters of (philosophical) principle. I prefer to think that it's a carefully balanced optimism he offers here—balanced *between* matters of practicality and of principle where much hangs on one's attitudes to the im-possible eventualities of the Derridean "événement." Geisenhanslüke is therefore right to invoke Derridean motifs of the "à-venir" (untranslatable into German, one notes) and indeed, à la Levinas, to speak of the "coming of the Other," or "das Kommen des anderen" (p. 111). He moreover cites from the German version of Derrida's text on hospitality, namely *Von der Gastfreundschaft*, of "eine Frage des Fremden. Eine vom Fremden kommende Frage" ("a question of the stranger. A question coming from the stranger") (p. 111). And he offers illuminating remarks, offered in a footnote, on what is at issue when Derrida, in "Des tours de Babel," pointedly speaks of "l'à-traduire"—the-to-be-translated. For here, Derrida describes a vista for translation cast towards the the "à-venir" whence might possibly arrive events that demonstrate, in the teeth of so-called impossibility, that a translation of everything contained in a source text is possible. Geisenhanslüke, in this regard, cites Alexander García Düttman's remark concerning his German translation, "Babylonische Türme. Wege, Umwege, Abwege," where "Das 'Zu-Übersetzen' muss man also vielleicht immer auch als ein 'Ent-Übersetzen' verstehen" ("The to-be-translated must also perhaps always be understood as a 'de-translation'") (p. 111). I'm therefore inclined to ask: "Was ist eine Ent-Übersetzende Übersetzung?" ("What is a de-translating translation?"). Perhaps the answer is a translation, or a de-translation, that de-constructs

all that we currently understand as translation, and indeed all that currently holds sway as the laws and ethical principles governing translatory practice.

Derrida's essay is a rich, but difficult text. It demands patient reading, and all of the contributors to this volume commendably display that patience, reading Derrida closely, and with due attention to some of the apposite texts in the Derridean corpus to which "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" discreetly alludes. Given that this is the first German translation—and the translation, as far as I am competent to judge, is excellent—then we can, in all confidence, adjudge this book to be a landmark moment in translation studies in Germany. An event, you might say. But if we are still circling around Derrida's question—What is a "relevant" translation?—then let me conclude by floating the idea that one way of grasping what is going on, partly, at least, is that Derrida's text is self-consciously re-engaging with moments in the "La Différance" essay and also that part of "The Pit and the Pyramid" subtitled "*Relever*—What Talking Means." Consider, firstly, this passage from "La Différance":

> Elsewhere, in a reading of Bataille, I have attempted to indicate what might come of a rigorous and, in a new sense, 'scientific' *relating* of the "restricted economy" that takes no part in expenditure without reserve, death, opening itself to nonmeaning etc., to a general economy that *takes into account* the nonreserve, that keeps in reserve the nonreserve, if it can be put thus. I am speaking of a relationship between a *différance* that can make a profit on its investment and a *différance* that misses its profit, the *investiture* of a presence that is pure and without loss here being confused with absolute loss, with death. Through such a relating of a restricted and a general economy the very project of philosophy, under the privileged heading of Hegelianism, is displaced and reinscribed. The *Aufhebung* – *la relève* – is constrained intro writing itself otherwise. Or perhaps simply into writing itself. Or, better, into taking account of its consumption of writing. (P. 19)

Alan Bass's footnote relating to this passage sends us off to Derrida's "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve" in *Writing and Difference*, where Hegel is called a great *speculator*. Well, that's the reason for my title: Derrida speculates on Freud, to be sure, but it's in "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" that Derrida wonders about speculation on translation—on matters fiduciary, financial and economic. And if Hegel is the great philosophical speculator, then it's to he one should turn in order to speculate about translations concerning an *Aufhebung* transposed into the French "relève," the English "sublation," and the ambiguous collocation of Franco-English terms gathered around "relevant" and "relieving."

Imagine that, when Derrida wrote "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" he recalled having written that passage from "La Différance" years earlier. Imagine Shylock and Portia wrestling over these differences and *différances*. Portia asks Shylock not to make a profit, asking him instead to *miss* his profit in the name of the pardon and mercy. She does so by opposing Shylock's financial investment, and when she does so, she presents herself travestied as a man. We might use Derrida's own term here: it's about her *investiture* as a male Doctor of Law, vested in those doctoral robes, lecturing Shylock on how the more graceful way is to miss one's own profitable investment, since the price of insisting on that profit is paradoxically, but logically *absolute* loss, namely Antonio's death.

To speculate, with Shylock, is to speculate on death. To avoid such speculator-scenarios, one must keep in reserve the unexpected possibility of mercy, a let-off, a pardoning "donation" that is an-economic, since the donation of the "par-*don*" gives without expectation of return: this is also the giving or gift of for-*giveness* and that of "Ver-*gebung*." The gift, moreover, of life. Perhaps that's how one extricates oneself from what

otherwise seems to be, for translation (illustrated by Steiner, as I have suggested), an ineluctable logic of economy, insolvable debt, bargains and prices, weighable equivalents and the balance-scales of Justitia bent on parity and equilibrium. *Différance*: postpone your economic justice, postpone it forever in the name of the higher justice of mercy, Portia effectively says to Shylock. *Difference*: know the difference between money and death—don't confuse the two, don't peddle in death.

The restricted economy of translation would perhaps be an economic or reparative equilibrium like that advocated for by Steiner and Meschonnic: word-for-word, letter-for-letter, etc. In Steiner's view, at least, loss-in-translation can be economically handled—loss can apparently be made up for, accounted for like Steiner's hermeneutic accountant balancing the books. Steiner says exactly that: "A translation is, more than figuratively, an act of double-entry; both formally and morally the books must balance" (Steiner 1992: 319). *More than figuratively?* But that economy of translation can be upended by the an-economic gratuities of giving—of pardoning, forgiving, *Vergebung* and maybe also whatever is really meant by the *Aufgabe des Übersetzers*. Moreover, the problem with economic balancing and accountancy is that it's fine if one can find symbolic equivalents for money (and one could wonder, right here, whether Steiner thinks that such equivalents can be provided by the "currency" of women, since he can say "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" [ibid.: 319]), but what if no such symbolic equivalences can actually be found—neither in the form of flesh, nor of bodies, whether female or not, phenomenological or not?

"The *Aufhebung—la relève*—is constrained intro writing itself otherwise. Or perhaps simply into writing itself. Or, better, into taking account of its consumption of writing." So says Derrida, and we'll quickly need to return to the motif of consumption, of course. That's what Derrida wants to do with Hegel: to resist the elevations of the dialectic that always ascend towards *Geist*, and instead take Hegel down—to de-elevate him, so to speak—and run him down to the ground of writing (and to the ground of the trace and the cinder). This takes us to "The Pit and the Pyramid," and to the subsection "*Relever*—What Talking Means," where Derrida pursues what he considers to be Hegel's rehearsal of the privileging of speech over writing according to which, Derrida writes on Hegel's behalf, "the sign […] not only 'means,' but essentially represents itself as a theory of *bedeuten* (meaning) which is from the outset regulated by the *telos* of speech" (Derrida 1982: 88). But if Hegel, like many philosophers, might wish to *relieve* writing of its graphic marks, and somehow release a meaning preferably secured by the phonetic transparencies of speech, then how would one relate that "relève" to the motif of the consumption of writing? Is *Aufhebung* an activity amounting to eating a written text—and eating all of it? Is that what a "relevant" translation does, if that "relevance" does indeed operate in the same manner as the voracious Hegelian *Aufhebung*? Does such a translation eat and consume? Derrida seems to suggest so, given what was earlier discussed concerning consumption, culinary seasoning and indeed Levine's question of what *Geschmack* remains in the mouth. So we shouldn't be surprised if "*Relever*—What Talking Means" assesses Hegel's own preferences in respect of tasting, touching, looking and hearing.

Hegel, Derrida observes, firstly prefers sight:

> Sight is an *ideal* sense, more ideal, by definition, and as its name indicates, than touch or taste. One can also say that sight *gives its sense* to

> theory—it suspends desire, it lets things be, reserves or forbids their consummation. The visible has in common with the sign, Hegel tells us, that it cannot be eaten. (Derrida 1982: 92)

There you have it. So we can wonder if, by extension, the translator's desire must also suspend itself before both the sexual act of consummation and the voracities of consuming or eating texts. The translator's desire must retreat and reserve itself before such desire enacts itself as those Steinerian acts of penetration and eating. In terms of eating, here is Steiner implying that translation is a kind of eating: "The third moment is incorporative in the strong sense of the term" (Steiner 1992: 314). I don't think one can get away with "the strong sense of the term" of "incorporative" without countenancing translation as a consuming or an eating. Steiner warns of the danger of coping with the "inhaled voice of the foreign text" (ibid.: 315), and speaks of "two families of metaphor, probably related" (ibid.: 315), namely that "of sacramental intake of incarnation, and that of infection" (ibid.: 315). Leaving aside infection, and how Steiner considers that family of metaphor is "probably related" (*probably*?) to sacramental intake or incarnation, surely the former family of metaphor suggests the Eucharistic "Take this and eat it: do this in memory of me."

Derrida continues: "However, if sight is ideal, *hearing is even more* so. It 'relifts' (*relève*) sight" (Derrida 1982: 92). Translators likewise should only look and hear at a tactful distance to the source text, and touch not. Citing Hegel, Derrida writes: "Hearing […], like sight, is one of the theoretical and not practical senses, and it is still more ideal than sight. For the peaceful and undesiring (*begierdlose*) contemplation of works of art lets them remain in peace and independently as they are, and there is no wish to consume or destroy them" (ibid.: 92). Wise words that Derrida, in "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" is perhaps inviting translators to heed—wise, but evidently ironic

words, since they are words of advice expressed by a Hegel who doesn't heed his own advice, given the voracities of the *Aufhebung* where, seemingly, nothing resists the "relève," the subsumption, sublation, and all-consuming dialectical digestion of knowledge itself.

What might re-sist, however, is the very translation, abusive though it may be, of the "re-lève," where "re" might discreetly resist the "auf" of *Aufhebung*, even if Alan Bass still can proffer "relifts" as a suitable translation of *Aufhebung*, and for "relève." In any event, the question seems to be, for "*Relever*—What Talking Means" and for "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" whether anything can resist and withstand the power of an *Aufhebung* that is as potent in Hegelian dialectics as it seems to be, *mutatis mutandis*, in Derrida's modeling of a "relevant(e)" translation. And if I added that feminine agreement or accord, just there, it's to suggest that Derrida enlists women to resist the operations of the Hegelian "relève," just as he pointedly makes relevant and salient the feminine gender of "traductrices," or *Übersetzerinnen* as well.

What re-sists? What re-mains? They're as *re-levant* a couple of questions for translation as they are for the cinder, the trace, and the graphic mark. Just as they are relevant for the Derrida of *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. Relevant too for the virginal body, or indeed for Antonio's mortal body, an envelope, like Benjamin's *Kern* or kernel, wrapped in flesh. So when Derrida writes "If the investment in death cannot be integrally amortized (even in the case of a profit, of an excess of revenue), can one still speak of a work of the negative? What might be a 'negative' that cannot be *relevé*?" (Derrida 1982: 107), isn't that the key question here? What indeed might be a "negative" that cannot be "relevé"? Death? Shylock took out an insurance policy on Antonio and tried to amortize his risk by asking for death to be the reliable (i.e. "relevable") token of that very policy. But

it's risky to *amortize la mort*, evidently, as Shylock found out to his cost—he loses a great deal. Let's ask again: What might be a "negative" that cannot be "relevé"? One answer: the cinder. "Cinder remains," writes Derrida in *Cinders*, "cinder there is, which we can translate: the cinder is not, is not what is" (Derrida 2014: 21). Derrida can *translate* between what is and the "negativity" of what is not, but I can't imagine that sentence translated into the discourse of Hegelian dialectics. Another answer: the untranslatable idiom, in whose name Derrida can assert that "nothing is translatable," and if so, then the idiom is a negativity that resists the "relevant" translation whereby everything is as translatable as everything is *relevable* by the Hegelian dialectic. In either case, I suggest, the "negative" here—a cinder that is not, an idiom that speaks of its untranslatability in terms of a putative "rien"—is what Derrida has been trying to counterpose to the grand philosophical gestures, including those of Hegel. Modest negativities, to be sure, hardly to be dignified as Negativities with a capital "N," but there is discreetly potent resistance mustered here, nonetheless.

So it's about resistances of translation, or translation's resistances to the very metaphors that—as Steiner amply shows—speak to translation's sexual desires and gustatory voracities. Derrida, I think, looks to translation to provide him with a way of thinking about how to ward off the voracities of an *Aufhebung* that processes history, knowledge, and also written texts through its philosophical mill leaving nothing but crumbs behind in its wake. Derrida, crumb-picker, morsel-cherisher, is the philosopher who stays behind and who defends the right of original texts to resist translations that leave nothing of them behind. Derrida, I think, favors non-consummation and non-consumption, and *Ent-übersetzung* as well. Hegel never seems to have considered *Übersetzung* as a master term in his dialectical apparatus—he rarely mentions it. Perhaps, in the end, that's

what Derrida was up to: Derrida must have noted that scarcity of mention and wanted to make use of the fact that *Übersetzung* just isn't a sufficiently dialectical term or scenario for Hegel. What is a "relevant" translation? Hegel would have hated the question, one suspects. Perhaps it's not a question Hegel could have ever posed. Perhaps translation or *Übersetzung* cannot be a "relevant" translation of *Aufhebung* either. Perhaps translation cannot therefore depict the dialectical movement of *Aufhebung*, and because it cannot, then that's a good thing, since something glitches dialectics and we can call that, in as many languages as we can, "translation."

It's magnificent, therefore, that, thanks to Esther von der Osten and Caroline Sauter, we can expand the range of languages in which Derrida might be read and engaged with. No doubt he would have said "merci" to von der Osten and Sauter, as well as *Entschuldigung* (depending on how he used, mentioned, or cited that term), thereby *relieving* his German translators of the *Schuld*—debt and guilt—of having tried to translate Derrida at all. But that, of course, is just me speculating on what Derrida might have said, since alas he didn't escape what all flesh is heir to, namely mortality. What von der Osten and Sauter have secured for Derrida, in any case, is further life—"survie," to use Derrida's French, or *Fortleben*, to use Benjamin's German—for Derrida and his text. Derrida is in their debt. And so are we, since, thanks to the endeavors of von der Osten and Sauter, two translators who have seasoned the idiomatic flavors of "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?" with the Germanic idiom. If I may dare to suggest, of all translations of Derrida's text—and he knew it would be translated—I think the German translation might have been the one he would have looked forward to reading the most. He would have read this *Übersetzung*, I imagine, with pleasure and—dare I say—with *profit*.

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