

Imperial and Anti-imperial Translation in Native American Literature

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Abstract: In this paper I trace a brief history of translation of Native American texts, looking at both imperial and anti-imperial practices and strategies. The opening section discusses a series of omissions and false substitutions by imperialistic translators, whose goals may have been directed more at conversion and domestication than translation proper. I then focus on ethnographic and ethnopoetic translation strategies practiced by anthropologists and literary translators that were less imperial and more open to inclusion and diversity. Finally, I turn to Arnold Krupat's conception of "anti-imperial translation" that allows Native American terms, sounds, and structures to co-exist in the English language, thereby enlarging the both English and Native American cultures and pointing to a new way of thinking about translation in a (post)translation fashion.

The American Indian is the vengeful ghost lurking in the back of the troubled American mind. Which is why we lash out with such ferocity & passion, so muddled a heart, at the black-haired young peasants & soldiers who are the Viet Cong. That ghost will claim the next generation as its own." Gary Snyder (Rothenberg 1972, 475)

Preface: On Thanksgiving

In light of my being from Massachusetts, I wish to first mention a ceremony held annually on Thanksgiving Day at Plymouth Rock, just south of Boston, Massachusetts, the site where the William Bradford and the Mayflower Pilgrims landed in 1620. Every November, there is a large and well-attended recreation of the first Thanksgiving in Plymouth, celebrating the day when the Pilgrims gave thanks to the Native Americans for helping them through that first year. This celebration in "America's Hometown," attended by hundreds of thousands of people, lasts three days, with food festivals, concerts, waterfront activities, and live streaming web feeds. The counterceremony I wish to cite, however, is led by

the Wampanoag Indians, and is called “Thanksgrieving.” While Thanksgiving is not a Christian Holiday, it is a day that most Americans celebrate, and it has shifted from the white immigrants thanking the Indians for their help during the difficult early years, to whites offering prayers to God, thanking Him for providing a bountiful harvest. The ceremony held by the Wampanoag, however, is a bit different. It involves the people forming two concentric circles: an inner circle, which is quite tight and is comprised of all Indians; and an outer circle, where the non-Indians—mostly whites coming to observe and witness—stand at a respectful distance. The Native people hold hands, and, while there is some chanting, the Indians mostly just hold each others’ hands and cry—and there is much crying. After a while, the Native Americans break the circle and walk down to the ocean’s edge where the Pilgrims landed and throw objects into the water, with more tears and more holding on to each other. The white observers are not asked to come. At the end, the Indians quietly leave, and the observers are asked to stay in silence until the Indians have passed (Ayvazian 2011, A6).

Introduction

This paper stems from my interest in what I have been calling “hidden” translation, exploring translational phenomena that take place out-of-sight, behind the scenes, *sous ratour* or under erasure (Gentzler 2008, 10–13). These translations often take place in very private spheres—in the communities of so-called “lesser-known” languages, or “languages of limited diffusion.” They take place in private meetings, in families, between fathers and sons or grandmothers and granddaughters. Often they involve trauma, repressed memories that are hard to talk about in the first place, let alone in translation. Most frequently, they are oral, intimate, whispered. The chanting, tears, and hand-holding that take place in the Thanksgrieving ceremony cited above serves as just one example of such an intimate, private space. Another space where hidden translations occur is in creative writing, passages adapted/recreated/reinscribed in original work, blurring the boundaries between translation and creative writing, which I will discuss toward the end of this paper.

There are often good reasons for keeping such translations out of sight, as invariably the ideas and knowledge communicated

do not fit with the dominant language and culture, such as the immigrant, enslaved, and indigenous languages in the United States, or the experimental, subversive, and nontraditional forms and genres comprising contemporary writing. In the United States, the English-only policy is a powerful one, dating back to the pre-Revolutionary War period. Invariably, the discipline of translation studies tends to study texts and not oral tales, empirical printed matter rather than oral stories, memoir, song, and dance. The discipline tends to focus on what gets translated and omits what does not get translated, thereby coming up with little or no explanation for the gaps, silences, repressions, and omissions that are also part of any given translation and any literary or cultural system of translated texts. Translation studies as a discipline is generally guilty of conforming to the most traditional definitions of translation; although these may vary from culture to culture, unless the texts being studied are designated as translations by some normative definition, most translation studies scholars have avoided them. Many of the “texts” I study have probably not been classified as translations nor entered into any computer databases and made available to corpus studies scholars.

How is such research carried out? Larger conceptual frames are needed, ones which extend beyond what is normally considered under the domain of translation studies. As Saussure has shown, one cannot study sameness without also studying difference. Most of my examples in this paper from the translation of Native American texts are chosen precisely because they illustrate how a focus on sameness covers up differences. English-only linguistic policies, European political philosophy, capitalist economic policies, and Christian beliefs and missionary causes aimed at colonization and assimilation have led to the eradication of indigenous cultures. Their wider adaptation by educational systems and governmental programs, not to mention the ideological dominance, makes it impossible to study Amerindian translation without the broader understanding of the pervasive influence of English literary forms, European economic and philosophic structures, and Judeo-Christian ideas across all Native American writing.

Surprisingly, postcolonial scholars and translation studies scholars have done little work on indigenous Amerindian texts. Given the nature of Native American writing, it seems as if it might

be perfectly suited for such postcolonial investigations. The subject matter of resistance to colonization, the use of non-Western forms of communication, the hybrid and heterogeneous nature of most texts, and the embedded secret codes are perfectly suited for post-structuralist, postmodern, and postcolonial investigations. Certainly the subversions, parodies, plays on words, and performances lend themselves to deconstructive analysis. The concerns with opposition, oppression, marginality, and otherness are perfect for post-colonial investigations. The social conflicts between tribals versus whites, manifest in everyday life as well as periods of war, the economic disparities, the power relations between tribal versus European languages, and the native forms for art and poetry versus European forms all might lend themselves to sociological, historical, and literary translational studies investigations, but they really have not. Apart from Eric Cheyfitz's *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (1997), the field is pretty wide open. Even scholars such as Mary Louise Pratt in her *Imperial Eyes* (1992), which well documents the history of European colonization of the Amerindian tribes, does not really touch upon translation questions other than to talk about the eradication of indigenous languages. There is so much else that could be discussed about the language issues in the contact zone, from translation into indigenous languages, to translation of the Indians into the European languages, to combinations thereof, to developing a *lingua franca*, to ethnocentric translation, nonethnocentric translation, ethnographic translation, adaptation, and transcultural translation. Even nontranslation could be subject to a translational analysis. This paper hopes to begin such a discussion.

Instead of translation studies scholars' investigations, I draw upon the work by scholars of Amerindian texts, in which translation is everywhere present. While many of these scholars—Eric Cheyfitz, Arnold Krupat, Gerald Vizenor, David Treuer, and Winfried Simerling—are not well versed in translation studies discourse, their work is informed throughout by translational phenomena: translation between languages, translation from oral to written, translation of marginal into central, cultural translation, adaptive translation, mistranslation, and silencing in translation. In many ways, the entire corpus of Native American literature is already *in* translation, for, with very few exceptions, the oral histo-

rians and storytellers have either passed away, or the remaining native speakers have all died. What is left is the presence of a language, traditional forms or performance, and memories of events in a lost or hidden culture. Most remaining elements consist only of the traces. In *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture*, Arnold Krupat coined the term “anti-imperial translation” (Krupat 1996, 32) to refer to the way that contemporary Amerindian writers use fiction to translate their ideas and beliefs into English, which very much informs this paper. In his theory, there is a reversal of source and target texts: rather than translating *from* the native language into English, Krupat and his followers, while writing in English, maintain that they are translating English *into* the Native culture. Thus the Native American creative writing is viewed less as “original” writing and more as a “translation” of English into the Native, creatively remaking and rewriting American English to include spaces for Amerindian ideas and forms of expression. I find this to be a new and original idea for translation studies, and one worth pursuing.

A quick note on terminology: there are great difficulties in writing about this topic because neither the translation studies discourse nor social studies discourse are adequate to the task. “American” and “Indian” are misnomers, European labels applied to the land and people first encountered. Thus I use a variety of naming strategies, varying the terms “indigenous,” “aboriginal,” “Indian,” “Amerindian,” and “Native American,” none of which are adequate. I also am not that happy with the term “postcolonial,” as colonization continues in many Indian reservations and lands, none of which, with the possible exception of certain Pueblo lands, might be considered homelands anymore, and dispossession is widespread throughout the United States.* I thus use both terms such as “postcolonial” and “(post)colonial,” as well as “anticolonial” and “anti-imperial,” to describe the ongoing situation. I am attracted to the concept of “posttranslation studies,” as coined by Siri Nergaard and Stefano Arduini (2011, 8). I feel a strong need to move beyond empirically based corpora and source- or target-based approaches that limit seeing all those variable, exceptional, and creative texts

* See article within this article by Winfried Siemerling, 87.

and performances that border on translation, but are not called such by scholars. I am currently leaning toward (post)translation studies to indicate an expansion of the kinds of texts considered and an expansion of the kinds of methodologies used to analyze the new translational phenomena, retaining many of the older methodologies for analyzing empirical phenomena, but adding new tools for assessing elements that extend beyond translation proper.

The paper is divided into two parts: (I) “Imperial Translation,” which includes sections on conversion, elimination, imperialism, and domestication; and (II) “Anti-imperial Translation,” which includes sections on anthropological translation, total translation, disguise in translation, and anti-imperial translation.

I. Imperial Translation

1. Conversion

In my Thanksgiving example, above, does translation play a part in this story? It certainly does. Tisquantum, also known as Squanto, a member of the Patuxet tribe, a now extinct band belonging to the Wampanoag confederacy, served as the first interpreter for the Puritans. He had learned English because he had been kidnapped earlier in his life by one of John Smith’s soldiers, taken to Spain, to be sold into slavery by the English. Rescued by local friars, who saw his value in terms of converting Indians to Christianity, Tisquantum made his way to London, and then back to the colonies, only to find that many Massachusetts tribes had already been decimated by infectious diseases brought by the white colonists. In the 1620s, he settled with the Pilgrims, to whom he taught survival skills in the new world, including fishing and planting techniques, as well as serving as a guide and translator, especially in communication with the Wampanoag *sachems*.

The 1630s and ’40s saw a massive increase in immigration into New England and Massachusetts. Over twenty thousand new settlers arrived during this period, often referred to as the Great

<http://www.nativenewstoday.com/2013/03/01/squanto-paw-tuxettisquantum-january-1-1585-november-30/>

Tisquantum (January 1, 1585 – November 30, 1622), also known as Squanto, was the Native American who assisted the Pilgrims after their first winter in the New World and was integral to their survival. He was a member of the Patuxet tribe, a tributary of the Wampanoag Confederacy.

Migration, and new towns were formed west of Boston, including Hartford, Springfield, Northampton, and, a few years later, my hometown of Amherst, founded in 1658, “purchased” for 200 wampum and a few small gifts. All of these new settlements encroached upon the land of the native Algonquin-speaking tribes, and tensions predictably escalated. In addition to the unjust encroachment upon the land, the English colonists were committed to their missionary work: in 1646, the Massachusetts General Court ordered that “efforts to promote the diffusion of Christianity among aboriginal inhabitants be made with all diligence” (Samworth 2011). In 1649, the English Parliament enacted an “Ordinance for the Advancement of Civilization and Christianity Among the Indians” that created The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, the first Protestant missionary society. For the next ten years, Eliot dedicated himself to the task of translating the Bible, with the assistance of a Massachusetts Indian named Wassausmon, also known in English as John Sassamon, whose ability to speak and write English

<http://raunerlibrary.blogspot.com/2011/09/eliot-bible.html>



proved invaluable to Eliot. (I will come back to Wassausmon later.) Thus, at first, the early English policy for converting the Natives was that of learning their languages and translating the Bible into those languages—an early national translation policy, as it were. However, it soon became apparent that that policy was not going to work; it was simply too difficult to learn the various indigenous languages. In his book *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), Cotton Mather, for example, a prominent Puritan minister, author of hundreds of books, sermons, and pamphlets, and well known for his role in the Salem witch trials, claimed to be utterly baffled by the Algonquin language (Samworth 2006). With Cotton Mather and subsequent Puritan leaders, the two-way flow of Amerindian–British communication ended. I would suggest that the mistrust and misunderstandings that ensued over the next two centuries can

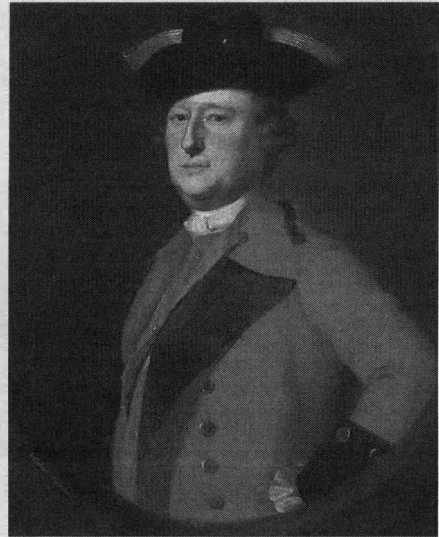
largely be attributed to the lack of effort by the colonists to learn and understand the languages and cultures of the indigenous peoples.

2. Elimination

The translation policy became one of nontranslation into non-English languages. The thanks exchanged at early Thanksgivings ceased, the holiday disappeared, hostilities began, and soon immigrant Europeans began their killing, directly, and efficiently at first. My town of “Amherst,” Massachusetts, was named after Lord Jeffrey Amherst, commander-in-chief of British forces in New England in the 1700s, famous for winning battles in the French and Indian War, but also infamous for committing the first germ warfare known to man when he ordered that blankets infected with smallpox be given to Native Americans. Those who survived were forced to assimilate to the English language, customs, and laws, their lands were taken away, and their languages, religions, and native cultures repressed. Estimates vary, but by some estimates there were over ten million Native Americans when the Pilgrims and Puritans arrived; by 1900 there were only 230,000 left. As of the 1880s, the US government required all teachers in Native American schools to teach in English, and many Indian ceremonies were banned. The policy was quite successful: according to Ethnologue (Lewis 2009), over half of the Native American languages have been lost, with only 154 remaining, spoken by just over 300,000 people. Seven are only spoken by one person. About 150,000 speak Diné, a Navajo language (Reyhner 2001).

In *The Name of the War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity*, Jill Lapore (1998) suggests that the defeat of

<http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Spring04/warfare.cfm?showSite=mobile>



Sir Jeffrey Amherst, shown here in Joseph Blackburn's 1758 painting, suggested Bouquet infect the Indians with smallpox. (Mead Gallery, Amherst)

the Indians in King Philip's War (1675–1678), sometimes called Metacomet's War—Metacomet being the main leader of the Native American side, who was called King Philip by the British—the first war between Native Americans and the English colonists, marked the beginning of the new American identity, one built upon

policies of extermination. As opposed to a former identity which considered the colonists as *British* settlers, as the war had largely been fought with *American* soldiers, resources, and supplies only, it lent the new Americans a sense of independence and authority.

The war was one of the bloodiest in American history, drawing in English settlements throughout New England and Indian tribes from a variety of regions. There were many casualties on both sides, and, proportionally, more English died in the war than in any other war in history. But also proportionally, six times as many Amerindians died as British settlers. The eventual English victory secured New England for the British and opened up all of New England for British colonization and appropriation. As Lapore sug-

gests, the new American identity was based upon the elimination of Native American languages and cultures. As Emily Apter has pointed out in *The Translation Zone* (2006), translation policy and military policy are closely connected. Citing Carl von Clausewitz's dictum that war is a mere continuation of policy by other means, Apter claims that war is a logical extension of a policy of mistranslation. She writes that "[w]ar *is*, in other words, a condition of nontranslatability or translation failure at its most violent peak" (Apter 2006, 16, italics in original).

<http://raunerlibrary.blogspot.com/2011/09/eliot-bible.html>



To return to the Wassausmon example, in addition to his work translating the Bible, some argue that he was one of the primary causes of King Philip's War, showing how distrusted translators were. Wassausmon served as a translator and interpreter for both Metacomet and the Native Americans before returning to Puritan society, where he became a minister in the Plymouth colony. Because of his knowledge of language and culture, as well as his contacts among chiefs and educators, he was both respected and distrusted by all parties. Wassausmon is best known today because of his assassination. In 1674, he warned Josia Winslow, then governor of the Plymouth colony, that an attack was being organized by Metacomet. Just a short while later, his body was found at the bottom of a local pond, and the settlers were quick to accuse Metacomet of ordering the assassination. Three of Metacomet's men were arrested, found guilty at a hastily organized trial, and executed. A year later, some say as a result of the trial which Wampanoags say infringed upon their sovereignty, war broke out. The descendants of the Algonquian Wampanoags (Wômpânâk) are the very same Indians who are conducting the Thanksgrieving ceremony of today.

3. *Imperialism*

A few translation studies scholars have written about translation and imperialism, including Eric Cheyfitz, author of *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (1997) and *The (Post)Colonial Construction of Indian Country: U.S. American Indian Literatures and the Federal Indian Law* (2006); Stephen Jay Greenblatt, author of *Marvelous Possessions* (1992), an analysis of travel, judicial, and literary documents on the discovery and appropriation of the New World, and Vicente Rafael, author of *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in the Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (1993), who focused on the analogous example of the Spanish translation and colonization process in The Philippines.

Cheyfitz is one of the best authors detailing the history of imperial practices, and is not afraid to be very blunt about the atrocities committed in the name of European military, social, and religious practices. Here is how he begins the *Columbian Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States since 1945*:

European settlers built the post-1492 Americas on stolen Indian land with stolen African and Indian labor. The very European name “Americas” marks the moment of the beginning of this institutional theft. The United States is no exception. Where the Spanish invaded and settled in North America, stolen Native land and labor were part and parcel of the same violent movement to dominate Native territory and labor through a system of *encomiendas* and *repartimiento* [...] The Catholic Church joined the state in playing a significant role in this violence. (Cheyfitz 2006, vii)

Cheyfitz’s first “chapter” in the *Columbian Guide* goes on for 124 small-print pages, over 85,000 words, a book in and of itself, documenting in detail the wars, enslavement, forced labor, exterminations, language policies, nontranslation policies, and theft of land, rights, and indigenous religious and literary practices—in short, a chronicling of the colonial reconstruction of Indian culture. Translation and religious policies are at the heart of the imperial project in all Indian affairs.

In *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan*, Cheyfitz (1997) lays out his argument that translation was a key factor, perhaps the most important factor, in the Anglo-American imperial policy, first as foreign policy toward the neighboring Indians, and later, after 1824 and the creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as a domestic policy as the US boundary shifted westward. For Cheyfitz, the poetics of imperialism refers to speech itself, the persuasive power of language and rhetoric into which Native American ideas and expressions were translated as fluidly as possible in European terms. Cheyfitz analyzes the elegant orators who speak for Native Americans—from Shakespeare’s Prospero in *The Tempest*, through Edgar Rice Burroughs in *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912), to later Teddy Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, the “great communicator” of the late twentieth century. Cheyfitz’s point is that the portrayal of the Native American in translation has been a fiction rather than fact, and only by unpacking layers of fictional translations can one expose the rhetorical technologies that have supported ongoing Anglo-American imperialism to this day and the role of translation in the construction of power.

Signaling a shift of translation policy from the initial Puritan attempt to learn and translate into indigenous languages, Chey-

fitz cites the *Instructions* given in 1609 by the London Council to the Virginia Company, headed by Sir Thomas Gates, to develop a plan to educate the *veroances* (Algonquian leaders) “in [the English] language, and manners” so that the Indians would “easily obey you and become in time Civill and Christian” (quoted by Cheyfitz 1997, 6). Cheyfitz continues:

The problem of translation, the complex interactions between cultures and histories, is at once announced and annulled. This rewriting has significant repercussions in the conflict between oral and written cultures under consideration here. And we can read these repercussions in the European travel narratives, where what were necessarily the difficulties, discords, indeed absences of translation, are displaced into fictive accords of communication, composed, except for a scattering of transliterated naive terms, wholly in European tongues. (Cheyfitz 1997, 7)

Tracing a pattern of disfiguring and demonizing in rewritings and translation, Cheyfitz goes on to analyze the discourse representing Native Americans in both political and literary texts. Tarzan, for example, is seen as a translator: raised speaking the language of the apes, he teaches himself to read and write English and French. His search for identity is both linguistic, from animal language into European languages, and physical, literally, from “savage” ape into “civilized” man, a process through which he gains imperial power over his savage kin. The power of books, in this case the books Tarzan’s father brought to the wild, is more powerful than the armies that follow, and the idealistic result conforms to the civilizing ideological mission of the colonizers. So, too, in

Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912)

Tarzan is a Translator. Raised speaking the language of the apes, Tarzan teaches himself to read and write English by correlating pictures (fantasized implicitly in this fiction as a universal ur-language) and words in the books that his father transported from England to Africa. Tarzan discovers these books as a boy among the apes, though he does not learn to speak his father’s tongue until the very end of the romance, after he has become fluent in French, his first spoken European language, which his mentor, D’Arnot, taught him. Tarzan’s search for identity, then, is a linguistic search, in which he is literally translated from ape into man; in learning to read, what Tarzan learns centrally is that “[h]e was a M-A-N, they were A-P-E-S” (50), a distinction that the language of the apes cannot make, “for in the language of the anthropoids there was no word for man” (85). Translated through the power of books from ape into written English, Tarzan, with the aid of his father’s knife (the mastery of a written, or European, language and of an “advanced” technology are identical in this romance), gains an imperial power over what appeared to be his kin, precisely because they cannot follow Tarzan or can only follow him partially in his translation: “So limited was their vocabulary that Tarzan could never even talk with them of the many new truths, and the great fields of thought that his reading had opened up before his longing eyes, or make known ambitions which stirred his soul” (91). Tarzan cannot fully converse with the apes because written English cannot be translated into their impoverished tongue, which Burroughs represents in that self-consciously metaphoric language that “savages” typically speak in European discourse. And unable to converse fully with the apes, Tarzan can only dominate them. The failure of dialogue, figured as genetic inability in the other, rather than as a problem of cultural difference, is the imperial alibi for domination.

Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism. Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan*, (Expanded Edition, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 15--16.

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is Caliban presented as having been born a savage—"born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick" (IV.i.188–189)—who subsequently learns English but continues to be viewed as a monster and potential rapist despite his education. Cheyfitz sees Caliban as always in translation (Cheyfitz 1997, 165 and following), between the gabble of the animal and the eloquence of English, perennially in conflict. Significantly, Caliban's war against Prospero is aimed at Prospero's books and the power of his magic. Through such figures as Tarzan and Caliban emerges Cheyfitz's theory of translation:

This theory of translation constitutes a theory of what is human. Put another way, we could say that in the Renaissance and until the founding of biology in the nineteenth century, theories of what is human are theories of translation, theories of culture rather than nature. In *Tarzan of the Apes*, we read how a theory of evolution, a theory of nature, is the repressed form of a theory of translation that blurs the boundary between "human" and "ape" by articulating the boundary as literal, this is, scriptural, rather than natural. In other words, we speculate that theories of evolution are always theories of translation. (Cheyfitz 1997, 167)

Cheyfitz radically expands the notion of translation theory from its linguistic sense to a historical cultural theory of the human. Cheyfitz views Tarzan, the displaced European, as a translator, speaking both the language of the apes, and later French and English. Tarzan translates himself on several levels: from oral to written, from broken to fluent, and from impoverished to powerful. In the process, he gains power. The translation is not merely a linguistic one, but a mental and physical one as well, from animal to full-fledged human. Caliban, the indigenous native, is also multiply translated. His name, a mistranslation of some unknown Native American term for "cannibal," marks him in the eyes of the invading others, and in the eyes of himself, the figurative inscribed upon the body. As Caliban enters Prospero's world, the culture is an imported one: European ideas and values inscribed upon, translated into, the New World. Caliban is forced to learn the language of the oppressor, which only serves to further his enslavement and alienation. In the Native American world, therefore, translation operates not a foreign policy, but a domestic one, carried out from within, and it has drastic material consequences. This all too physical aspect, Cheyfitz

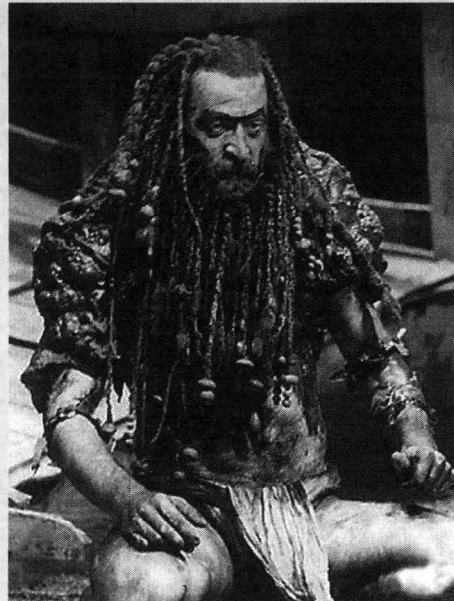
argues, has been repressed by translation studies scholars, who focus considerably on the linguistic and cultural, and less on the human and individual. In the *Poetics of Imperialism*, Cheyfitz looks both at translation as a theory of communication, and at the consequences, socially and psychologically, of translation upon live individuals. And in the case of Native Americans, the consequences have been devastating. Despite learning the language of the colonizer, the translator is never to be trusted, never quite obtaining the eloquence of the master, which remains in a pure/white form. In the end, Caliban, the other, the hybrid, the deformed, remains alone and isolated on the island, only his image remains in the imaginations of the colonizers. Anglo-American policies of Native American translation have served to either fictionalize or marginalize Native American language, culture, and concepts, to the point that little is left. Populations have been eradicated, languages lost, and the few translations reduced to clichés, such as trickster characters refigured or Plains Indians hunting buffalo. Often the representations add layers of obfuscation, making it all but impossible to unpack the images and access any objective “truth.” What remains are mere traces of Indian expressions in oral tales, literary texts, and memoirs passed on in translation from generation to generation.

<http://prettycleverfilms.wordpress.com/2012/03/01/tarzan-of-the-apes-1918/>



Tarzan

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/the-tempest/1982-photo-gallery.aspx>



Caliban

4. Domestication

Perhaps the most influential translation studies scholar of the past twenty years in North America has been Lawrence Venuti. Author of *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) and editor of *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (1992), Venuti criticizes the humanistic underpinnings of most literary translation in the United States and shows how it reinforces prevailing domestic beliefs, forms, and ideologies. Venuti's main thesis is that translation tends to be an invisible practice in the United States, where by invisible he means that translators tend to be self-effacing in their work, denying their own voice. Translations are judged to be successful when they read "fluently," giving the appearance that they have not been translated (Venuti 1992, 4).

The problems with such a situation, according to Venuti, are twofold: first, it marginalizes practicing translators, making them subservient to the author and defining their practice as derivative and secondary, ranking far below high quality creative writing and in-depth literary analysis; and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it erases the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text that the very act of translation purports to carry over into the receiving culture. By rewriting the text according to the prevailing styles of the receiving culture, and by adapting images and metaphors of the foreign text to the target culture's preferred systems of beliefs, translators are not only severely constrained in terms of their options to carry out their task, but also forced to alter the foreign text to conform to the receiving culture's forms and ideas. This kind of translation performs an act of domestication, making the foreign familiar, providing readers with the experience of recognizing their own culture in the foreign, and enacting, according to Venuti, a kind of cultural imperialism, one which preserves social hierarchies, and maintains political and religious conceptions.

This form of translation has characterized generations of translators of Native American texts. Let me give just one example, which has often been anthologized and serves as representative—Henry Row Schoolcraft's early nineteenth-century translation of "Chant of the Fire-fly":

Ojibwa/Chippewa:
Wau wau tay see!
Wau wau tay see!
E mow e shin
Tshe bwau ne baun-e wee!
Be eghuan—be eghuan—ewee!
Wau wau tay see!
Wau wau tay see!
Was sa koon ain je gun
Was sa koon ain je gun.

(Schoolcraft's transcription, as cited by Day 1951, 27–28; Hymes 1981, 39; see also Treuer 2006, 17)

For which Schoolcraft's literal translation is:

Flitting-white-fire-insect! waving-white-fire-bug! give me light before I go to bed! give me light before I go to sleep! Come, little dancing white-fire-bug! Come, little flitting white-fire-beast! Light me with your bright white-flame instrument—your little candle.

(Schoolcraft's literal translation, quoted by Day 1951, 27–28; Hymes 1981, 39)

While Schoolcraft's literary translation is:

Fire-fly, fire-fly! bright little thing,
Light me to bed, and my song I will sing.
Give me your light, as you fly o'er my head,
That I may merrily go to my bed.

(Schoolcraft literary translation, quoted by Day 1951, 27–28; Hymes 1981, 39; see also Clements 1996, 127–128)

The Schoolcraft translation of “Fire-fly” well illustrates Venuti's portrayal of domestication in translation: adapting the complex compound nouns to quite simple English terms, eliminating repetition, deleting the performative quality, adding new terms not present in the original to make it more fluid and accessible, and, especially, trivializing the ideas and marvel at nature and turning it

into an infantile children's lyric. Here is what Hymes has to say about the Schoolcraft version: "Thanks to Schoolcraft's scholarship, we can appreciate in depth how bad his translation is. Almost anyone sharing modern standards and taste [...] will prefer the *literal* translation as more satisfactorily poetic, both in what it avoids and in what it contains" (Hymes 2004, 40). Unfortunately, the Schoolcraft style of translation, as Venuti successfully argues, was prevalent in the United States in the past century, and, for example, greatly influenced poets such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (see his *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855)) as well as other poets of his generation. It continued well into the twentieth century, often based more on empathy than on linguistic talent; intuited meaning rather than cross-cultural skills. Generations of translators relied on translation cribs and adapted Amerindian texts to English forms, expressions, and, especially, Anglocentric worldviews. For decades, the use of domesticated words when no word exists in the receiving language and the racial discrimination in language were readily visible in such translations.

II. Anti-imperial Translation

1. *Anthropological translation*

In works such as *Rethinking Translation* (1992) and *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), Lawrence Venuti suggested that in twentieth-century translations into North American English have tended to be fluent and domesticating. This may have been true for many literary translators, but not for all. For example, most anthropological translations, especially of Native American texts, have tended toward the literal and foreignizing. Franz Boas, for example, a German Jew who came to the United States in the early twentieth century, was well versed in physics and geography, after which his geographic interests took him to Canada and the American Northwest, where he studied Inuit/Eskimo groups and recorded, transcribed, and translated Amerindian work. Perhaps because of growing resentment towards Jews in Europe, he took his first job in anthropology at Clark University in Worcester, MA, and stayed in the United States, moving to the Field Museum in Chicago and later to Columbia University in NYC, where he founded the first

PhD program in anthropology. Boas and his students, including Edward Sapir, Paul Rivet, L. J. Frachtenberg, Melville Jacobs, and later followers such as Dell Hymes, pioneered the recording and preservation of Amerindian texts. Their approach combined linguistics and cultural factors, paying particular attention to sounds and the perception of sounds, showing how different cultures perceive sounds in various fashion. Boas and his students would live with the tribes being researched, conduct work in the native language, and collaborate with native speakers. Their descriptions of texts were very scientific and based on empirical observations, but still included musical and cultural data (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dance_Song_of_the_Thompson_River_Indians.ogg).

Boas's group argued that one could only understand cultural traits by observing behaviors, beliefs, and signing practices in their local context. He and his students not only described the language and grammar, but also the myths, folktales, beliefs, and even recipes. The focus was not just on generalities and common behaviors, but also on relationships, difference of opinions, and individual agency within a language culture. Boas and his students were very active in terms of combating racism in research and practice, particularly against blacks in New York, and Native Americans in the Northwest. This method later led to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which holds that the structure of a language determines how one conceptualizes the world, and is widespread in translation studies, especially those who challenge meaning-based and functional theories of translation and theories that posit laws or universals of translation.

This hypothesis of linguistic relativity challenged the sense of European and white Anglo-American superiority in terms of language and cognition and changed the way translators translated. Interests expanded to a new focus on music and image as well as linguistic meaning. New forms of movement and dance lent variations to tones and meaning. Certain songs were recorded in multiple versions, highlighting the importance of the performer and individual variation of the texts (Krupat 1989, 109). Their commitment to science led them to prefer the most literal versions. Here is an example of the transcription of one of the Coyote tales from the Pacific Northwest:

Coyote was coming. He came to Gôt'a't. There he met a heavy surf. He was afraid that he might be drifted away and went up to the spruce trees. He stayed there a long time. Then he took some sand and threw it upon that surf: "This shall be a prairie and no surf. The future generations shall walk on this prairie." Thus Clatsop became a prairie. The surf became a prairie. (Boas 1894)

Or another example:

At Niâ'xaqcê a creek originated. He went and built a house at Niâ'xaqcê. He went out and stayed at the month of Niâ'xaqcê. Then he speared two silver-side salmon, a steel-head salmon, and a fall salmon. Then he threw the salmon and the fall salmon away, saying: "This creek is too small. . . ." On the next day he went again and stood at the month of the creek. He did not see anything until the flood tide set in. Then he became angry and went home. He defecated. He spoke and asked his excrements: "Why have these silver-side salmon disappeared?" His excrements said to him: "I told you, you with your bandy legs, when the first silver-side salmon are killed spits must be made, one for the head, one for the back, one for the roe, one for the body. The gills must be burnt." "Yes," said Coyote. (Boas 1894)

These excerpts illustrate the anthropologists' preference for more literal strategies, aimed at keeping indigenous place names, preserving syntactical structures, and maintaining an oral quality. In terms of the content, the deep attachment to, and even conversation with, nature is preserved, as are scatological references and expletives, often taboo in literary circles at the time.

Another anthropologist and Boas disciple, sociolinguist Dell Hymes, also worked on languages of the Pacific Northwest, and also focused on language and social relations, but his translations are less descriptive and literal, and instead incorporate more of the poetics and performative nature of the text. Here is an example of the firefly poem in a version by Dell Hymes:

Flitting insect of white fire!
Flitting insect of white fire!
Come, give me light before I sleep!
Come, give me light before I sleep!
Flitting insect of white fire!
Flitting insect of white fire!

Light me with your bright instrument of flame.
Light me with your bright instrument of flame.

(Hymes 1981, 41; Krupat 1992, 25; see also Treuer 2006a, 21)

In contrast to the domesticated version above by Henry Row Schoolcraft, in Hymes's version we see the preservation of the compound nouns, including the repeated lines, retaining an oral performative quality, similar syntactic structures, and literal adherence to the original terms with no additions to make it more fluid, accessible, or aesthetic. The translation demonstrates respect for the indigenous ideas, rhythms, repetitions, and structure of the verse. Hymes was one of the first anthropologists to point out that the ethnologists' literal descriptions and transcriptions, while often reliable, may not be taken as empirical factual accounts, and that literary translation, while often better than their literal counterparts, also at times distort and obscure. Again, what was needed in the field was a methodology to uncover both what was easily discernible as well as what was hidden by either ethnographic or literary translation in the process, however well-intentioned.

2. Total Translation

While Hymes was open to restoring certain aesthetic markers in his translation style, it was invariably with many reservations, always checking against the original, and always in fear of going too far. One translator, who also consulted the ethnographic record but who also versed himself in Native American poetics and performance, was Jerome Rothenberg, who coined a new term for his ethnographic and aesthetic approach as "total translation" (Rothenberg 1972, xxii). In his introduction to *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americans* (1993), Rothenberg lays out his approach, which combines a number of translational methodologies. Rather than picking one approach (faithful versus free, literal versus literary, domesticating versus foreignizing), Rothenberg uses several at a time in his translations, combining ethnography, cultural studies, poetry, art, and performance. While not restricting himself to traditional methodologies for translation, he also does not restrict himself to traditional definitions of a text. He opens himself up not just the aesthetics of the text, but also to

the time and place of the performance, including landscape, audience, body movements, sounds, and responses, applying cultural translation in its broadest sense. Native American culture, according to Rothenberg, represents a vast array of languages, cultures, histories, and modes of communication, not the least important of which include written, oral, and corporeal signs; rhythm and tone; music and dance; and visions and dreams. Rothenberg writes about his combined approach:

As a poet I was able to experiment with more direct approaches to translation: (1) in collaboration with Seneca songmen, who acted at the very least as intermediary translators, & from whom I could get a clearer picture of how the poetry (songs, prayers, orations, visions, dreams, etc.) fitted into the life; & (2) through working with ethnomusicologist David McCallester on cooperative translations [...] I became interested in the possibility of “total translation”—a term I use for translation (of oral poetry in particular) that takes into account any or all elements of the original beyond the words. (Rothenberg 1972, xxii–xxiii)

Here are two examples of Seneca poems translated by Jerome Rothenberg and Richard Johnny John:

(12)

THE SONGS
 I t h e t r i B
 S o n h e r E
 T g s b e P n G
 H e g i s U a I
 E n h e o M m N
 I r e P n P e H
 R U M P g K H E
 N K I N s l l R
 A S i s b N G E
 M t h e e S l l P
 E i r n g i H U
 H a m e i s E M
 I H I G n t E P
 G H H E h h e K
 H E E Y e e y I
 H E E Y e e y N

... Now I'm dumping the whole bag of songs in the middle,
 & each of you can sing whichever ones you want ...

Rothenberg 1972, xxii

notes accompanying many of the poems and the large array of people with whom Rothenberg consulted: translators, linguists, ethnographers, and native speakers obviously, but also performers, dancers, musicologists, poets, and philosophers in the indigenous languages. The commentaries lend an aura of authenticity to the methodology, one which values the creativity as well as the linguistic fidelity.

There is still little consensus regarding the contribution of total translation. Some suggest that his translations tells us more about Rothenberg and the poetry of the age, influenced maybe more by concrete poetry, musical experimentation of the 1960s, and perhaps the peyote smoked by that generation. Others suggest that Rothenberg made a significant contribution to the field, capturing many aesthetic dimensions neglected over the years, and allowing openings for future performances and creative interpretations that are very much in the spirit of the originals. Elsewhere I have talked about the importance of this generation of literary translators in the United States (Gentzler 1996); here I merely want to suggest that Rothenberg's multifaceted theory of translation anticipated contemporary translation theories that are beginning to be more multitheoretical, multicultural, and performance oriented.

3. Disguise in translation

She was a bear and teased me in mirrors as she did the children, and at the same time she said that tribal stories must be told and not recorded, told to listeners but not readers, and she insisted that stories be heard through the ear and not the eye.

(Vizenor 1992, 6)

As a caution against translation theories that show preference for ethnographic strategies and forms, or for those which use an invigorating and multifaceted approach such as Rothenberg's, despite consultations with any number of indigenous informers, one of the hardest things for a scholar or translator to decipher is when members of a tribe being studied behave truthfully, honestly, and naturally when in the presence of an outsider. In a paper titled "Covert and Overt Ideologies in the Translation of the Wycliff Bible into Huao Terero," Antonia Carcelen-Estrada (2010) discusses the concept of disguise in translation. Huao Terero is the language of the Huaorani people, an indigenous group living in the Amazon,

primarily in the jungles of eastern Ecuador. The Huaorani, invariably called savages by outsiders, have proven to be highly intelligent in resisting colonization, and one of their strategies is to learn the norms of the invading group, be it Quechuas, Spaniards, Ecuadorians, rubber industrialists, evangelists, translators, or most recently oil companies, and write appropriate texts, or wear appropriate clothes (jaguar-tooth necklaces, etc.), thus conforming to the clichéd image of their culture by

outsiders so that they can disguise and protect their own. Examples given by Carcelen-Estrada range from Bible translations, in which indigenous deity beliefs are hidden within the translation; court testimony, in which witnesses fabricate and play dress-up for the West; and ethnographic performances, allowing anthropologists to translate their culture into the texts and images that researchers were looking for in the first place. The power of the disguise allows the culture to resist actual translation and appropriation by the West, sacrificing certain elements of their culture to preserve others. Significantly, the most intimately preserved forms of Huaorani culture have to date outlasted all attempts to access and purloin them via translation.

In this context it is not possible to give a comprehensive survey of all the various interests, cultural groups, and cultural systems interacting with the Huaorani people. Figure 1, however, gives an idea of the complexity of the systemic interactions, and, from a Western standpoint, represents a tentative hierarchy of those interacting cultural systems.



Fig. 1—Systems in interaction with the Huaorani from a Western perspective

Contrary to what one might conclude from Figure 1, the relationship between the Huaorani and other groups is not merely a top-down power relationship. Rather there is a two-way flow; herein lies the hidden form of translational resistance taking the form of silence and invisibility. It is a particularity of the Huaorani to silently resist outsider cultural impositions. This practice is consistent with indigenous politics of difference elsewhere that seek recognition apart from constructs that project illusory homogenous national identities. Indigenous groups in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Guatemala, for example, claim to have survived culturally by keeping the secrets of their ancestors from reaching outsiders despite their seeming assimilation to Western cultural standards. This cultural strategy of survival through silence has been revealed to the world and become widely known through the writing of Rigoberta Menchú about the descendants of the Mayans. Menchú believes that the hardships her people endure must be overcome with the presence of their ancestors and that by hiding their true identity, the people have resisted Westernization and obliteration for five hundred years (Menchú 2005/1985, 220, 245). The deep cultural transformations endured by the Huaorani have likewise taught them to keep their secrets to themselves while superficially appearing to be whatever the observer wants to make of them. Silence is the strongest Huaorani weapon to resist encroachment, just as it has been for the descendants of the Mayans now fighting under the motto "we are still here."

Antonia Carcelen-Estrada, "Covert and Overt Ideologies in the Translation of the Bible into Huao Terero," in *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, ed. Maria Tymoczko (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 77–78.

In many ways, through disguise in translation, the Huaorani mock the invaders, be they industrial capitalists or born-again Christians, making fun of their futile attempts to comprehend and rearticulate their cultural space. Again, developing scholarly methodologies to be able to read texts against the grain, to see processes of adaptation and domestication by the scholars, and, as Carcelen-Estrada points out, self-adaptation to conform to the expectations of the researcher/translator become paramount to the field. While Carcelen-Estrada's study concerns Huaorani in Ecuador, my guess is such practices of disguise might also readily be found throughout the Americas.

4. *Toward post-imperial translation*

Disguise in translation, for whatever reason, tends to satirize the translator; deny, delay, and defer access to any so-called "original," and extend beyond the boundaries of whatever is normally termed translation. As soon as it may be detected, it effaces itself only to reappear in another disguised form later. To return to Arnold Krupat in *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* (1996), his concept of anti-imperial translation defies conceptions of translation practiced by European–American translators, ethnographers, scientists, and scholars in all its guises. Anti-imperial translation is a form of writing in English that allows Native American ideas, concepts, sounds, structures, and meanings to coexist. Translation is conceived less as a one-way process of bringing something across from one language into another and more of a two-way or multidirectional flow that informs and changes both cultures. The new definition of translation changes the very definition of separate and distinct languages. Instead of saying that he is translating Native American culture into English, the argument is reversed: Krupat and his fellow writers, while writing in a language that appears to be "English," claim they are translating *English* into *Native American* languages. For Krupat, all languages are dynamically evolving in a multilingual fashion. Anti-imperial translation produces texts that look like novels and short stories in English, but they are not. For Krupat, they are *indigenous*, part of Native American literature; English, in this case, is the imperial, foreign, or *other* language. In anti-imperial translation, Anglo-American forms and ideas are adapted and integrated into Native American culture. Winfried Siemerling, who discusses Krupat's work in the *New North American Studies*

(2005), suggests that this form of translation involves a “doubling of both ‘target’ and ‘source’ cultural practice” (Siemerling 2005, 63). Native American thoughts and practices are doubled in their expression in native tongues and English. As English narrative forms and genres are incorporated into Native American culture, so too is English doubled, enriched by restoring lost traces and ideas that disappeared during the periods of extermination and extreme language assimilation. The words, ideas, place names, practices, flora, fauna, peoples, genres, and myths have always been American with historical and cultural antecedents before the Europeans arrived, but have been lost and covered up over time. Both cultures thus expand and adapt into each other, forming a kind of oral–written literary hybrid that, I contend, is more indicative of culture in the Americas than any foreignized translation imported into it (Gentzler 2008, 38).

In *Native American Fiction*, David Treuer (2006a) goes even further, suggesting that there has been an overemphasis on translating Native American literature in order to uncover facts about the culture with translators adhering more to the literal expressions and meanings than the art, poetics, style, and form. He suggests that Native American fiction has yet to be studied as literature (Treuer 2006a, 3). The texts should not be viewed as scientific ethnographic documents, but instead should be seen as literary texts, ones that readers can take pleasure in reading. He makes the distinction between reading

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Anti-imperial Translation, Native Writing, and Postcolonial Theory: Thomas King, Gerald Vizenor, Arnold Krupat

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Adapted from *The New North American Studies: Culture, Writing, and the Politics of Re/Cognition*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 62-3.

The encounter between Native humor and what Gerald Vizenor calls the “terminal creeds” of “social science monologues” is also about the need to balance closed interpretations that are often associated with writing in general with principles derived from Native stories and orality. In many Native written texts, the simultaneity and encounter of these two modes of reference lead to inventive trickster strategies and performances.

While such encounters are generally a subject of postcolonial studies, Vizenor, Thomas King, and the theorist Arnold Krupat all suggest specific reservations with respect to the term “postcolonial.” Vizenor uses the term—if at all—in phrases like “postcolonial domination” (1989, 11), as if to drive home Anne McClintock’s critique of the term as “prematurely celebratory” (1992, 88). King’s article “Godzilla vs. Postcolonial” (1990) goes further by discussing how the term actually (re)imposes the temporality of European contact and thus “frames” Native cultures through problematic recognition. Krupat notes in his essay “Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature” that the term is tempting in the context of contemporary Native American literatures; yet after having examined the glosses offered in Arif Dirlik’s “The Postcolonial Aura” (1994)

that locate postcolonialism indeed after the end of colonialism, he finds it of little use (Krupat 1996, 30). In this sense of the term, as Krupat points out, with some notable exceptions “the material condition of contemporary Native ‘societies’ is not a postcolonial one (1996, 31).” Nonetheless, he concedes that Native American fiction, albeit “produced in a condition of ongoing colonialism,” often “has the look of postcolonial fiction” and also “performs ideological work that parallels that of postcolonial fiction elsewhere (1996, 32).”

Instead of the “postcolonial,” however, he proposes the category of “anti-imperial translation,” which is here directly linked to the function of the oral tradition. Anti-imperial translation, as Krupat suggests with reference to a passage by Rudolph Pannwitz (taken up also in Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” (1969) and Talal Asad’s “The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology” (1986)), creates perturbation in the target language and culture. In the case of Native writing, this kind of cultural translation, although it produces “texts that look like novels, short stories, poems, and autobiographies” (Krupat 1996, 36), produces them in an English powerfully affected by tongues that are, in this case, not foreign but rather indigenous (either literally other languages, or figuratively other cultural practices): “The language they offer, in Asad’s terms, derives at least in part from other forms of practice, and to comprehend it might just require, however briefly, that we attempt to imagine other forms of life” (Krupat 1996, 36).

Krupat’s category of “anti-imperial translation” means transformation and doubling of both “target” and “source” cultural practice. Although the “target language” of many written Native texts may be English where anti-imperialist cultural translation produces a critical perturbation and ironic doubling the translation

books as culture and reading books that suggest culture (Treuer 2006a, 5). He wants the reader to think less about what Native American texts tell us about past and more about what they tell us about the future, the future of good writing that knows no ethnic or linguistic borders. Style, innovation, performance, and original insight help create culture, and Native American writing should be seen within that inventive and creative framework. He looks at the work of, for example, Louise Erdrich, who writes both about Native American and German immigrant cultures, and who has a distinctly innovative American voice. Her novel *Love Medicine* (1984), while about Ojibwa life, and in which she uses a Native American form of the story cycle, also contains many Western literary techniques of plot, character, crisis, and resolution. What is interesting in Erdrich’s work is the blended story and multiple techniques as Ojibwa characters search to find their way in the present world, not the world of the past. While Erdrich relies on inherited notions of Indian life, she goes beyond them into the realm of creating new openings for an individual and distinct life and identity in the future, creating, in Treuer’s view, a literary text that stands on its own merits.

Treuer has also done the same as Erdrich in his own creative writing. His *The Translation of Dr. Apelles: A Love Story* (2006b), for example, is a fictional work that is a translation, and a translation that is a fictional work. The

main character, Dr. Apelles, a Native American who works as a librarian and translator of Native American texts, is very self-effacing in his ways, conforming to an orderly yet boring and lonely life. Then he comes across an old manuscript that only he can translate. As he begins this new work, he weaves a tale that moves between and among a variety of forms of translation, including translating a lost Native American text into English, remembering scenes from his own past, trying to make sense of a love story of the present, narrating a second love story within the fictional translation, and, all the while, erasing boundaries between translation and original creative writing. Without giving away the ending, which contains a trick of the imagination that transforms the entire novel, in the process of carrying out such multiple translations the main character begins to find his own voice, one that draws upon past and present, self and other, the power of love and human connections, and especially the creative power of translation over the written word. While there are many “traditional” insights into the oppression of the Native American and the oppression of translators, the use of translation to rework and rewrite not just the past, but the translating self, the disappearance of the translation as it nears completion, takes on a life of its own, with many new insights into the hidden nature of translation in all its aspect. As the translation re-replaces the original, readers are surprised to find themselves wondering what the original was, or if there ever was an original. Through the creative and fictional reworking of the text, the author discovers a language for himself—not the source or target languages, but a language for talking about his own complex identity entwined in Native American and Anglo-American culture, caught between translation and writing original fiction, now doubly translated into

can simultaneously be seen to proceed in the opposite direction, as an adaptation and integration of Western forms into Native practices. The process of “translation” and transformation is here a two-way street: what for one audience only looks like a transposition of Native culture into a non-Native, “Western” medium is, in many ways, also a curative integration of what King calls “the anomalies such as the arrival of Europeans in North America or the advent of non-Native literature in this hemisphere” (King 1990, 12) into a Native frame of reference or, as Alessandro Portelli puts it, an “extension and continuation” (1994, 211) of Native verbal and social practice. This curative, reverse perspective comes to the fore in Thomas King’s discussion of how Native oral traditions and creation stories work (King 1986, 2003). This problematic informs both King’s consideration of the term “postcolonial” and his approach in fictional texts like *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) or *One Good Story, That One* (1993) to the availability of oral and written traditions.

Campaspe might ask about his life. He grew nervous, and he had never thought of himself as a nervous man. And like all nervous men he was anxious to please, and the desire to please her made him feel trapped. His way out – he could not talk of the past and he could not talk of the present because that told her very little – was to talk of his work as a translator. He spoke of translating as though it had something to do with his life.

And so it had become something between them.

"Can I see it?"

"I don't know. No. Maybe."

"Shouldn't we order? Should we get the usual? Two margaritas," she said to the waitress across the bar.

"It's not finished and it's boring anyway. It's only interesting to me. I don't want to bore you with it."

"But I want to. I want to hear it".

"It seems like we always order the same thing. Just like that first time."

"It's not that I wouldn't understand it."

No, no. No. It's a mess is all and I don't know if you'd ever be able to read my handwriting."

But it had become a thing for them.

"Two margaritas." And to her, "Long day."

"How's the translation? How is it?"

"Growing. Always growing."

But it had become a thing for her.

"How's the translation? I'll get her. Margarita? Two."

And so it went. He could not tell her about himself. Not directly. So his translation became the story he told her of himself, as a substitute for the story of his life.

Treuer 2006b, 206.

a no longer oppressed self. This newly transformed narrator is now capable of love—and there is a powerful love story with a colleague at the library where Dr. Apelles works—and empowered to produce new and original work. The novel superbly illustrates anti-imperial translation at its best: no longer a carrying across from one language to another, but rather using translation creatively to invade self, leading to self-realization, and expressing oneself in new and original translational forms that reshape culture from within.

Conclusion

One of the great hidden tools in cultural construction has always been translation. A better understanding of how individuals under specific circumstances react to propagated belief systems, how they conform, how they resist, and how such nonconformity is expressed, can only open the field of possibilities for future actions and translation strategies. I believe that an increased interplay of languages in translation and an increased openness to new ideas via translations can only help construct a freer, more diverse and tolerant society. Some techniques may be simple: the "translation" of a term such as "Thanksgiving" into "Thanksgrieving," by the mere introduction of an additional phonetic sound alters significantly the conceptual field and (re)introduces an Amerindian perspective into the frame, restoring a historical repercussion long missing from the tradition. Others may be more complicated, such as inventing new forms, as Erdrich and Treuer do, creating a multidirectional flow of ideas, forms, translations, and narrative strategies in a truly posttranslation studies fashion. The goal is a rewriting

for the future, broadening the imperial language, allowing private translations and interpretations to enter the public space, thereby opening avenues for healing, acceptance, and diversity.

By way of conclusion, I end with a poem by Gary Snyder, one of the famous beat poets of the 1960s and '70s in the United States, who studied literature and anthropology at Reed College in Oregon in the 1950s and was good friends with fellow student Dell Hymes. Snyder, also known for his Japanese translations, studied the Amerindians of the Pacific Northwest, and lived and worked on the Warm Spring Indian Reservation in central Oregon after graduation and returned on several occasions. I suggest his creative work is infused with similar forms of anti-imperial translation, as he himself is in an inclusive and diverse Amerindian context. In the poem "For All," below, "Turtle Island" is a translation of the Native American term for the continent of North America.

Postscript

"For All"

Ah to be alive
on a mid-September morn
foraging a stream
barefoot, pants rolled up,
holding boots, pack on,
sunshine, ice in the shallows,
northern rockies.

Rustle and shimmer of icy creek waters
stones turn underfoot, small and hard as toes
cold nose dripping
singing inside
creek music, heart music,
smell of sun on gravel.

I pledge allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the soil
of Turtle Island,
and to the beings who thereon dwell
one ecosystem
in diversity
under the sun
With joyful interpenetration for all.

(Snyder 1983, 113)

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