THE HEBREW WHO TURNED CHRISTIAN: THE FIRST TRANSLATOR OF SHAKESPEARE INTO THE HOLY TONGUE

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The first two translations of plays by Shakespeare into the Holy Tongue were the work of a convert, a Hebrew who did indeed turn Christian. He not only converted, but became a Presbyterian minister and a missionary to the Jews. It is thanks to his unique life-story that the first translations of complete plays were made directly from the English rather than from Russian or German, the languages more familiar to nineteenth-century Jewish intellectuals, and from which most of the early Hebrew and Yiddish translations were made.[1]

In this article, I shall investigate the connection between this translator's personal religious biography and the first Shakespeare play he chose to translate. I shall argue that this translation reflects his own spiritual journey and forms an integral part of his missionary work. Furthermore, I shall suggest that the clue to its appreciation is viewing the transformation of Shakespeare into biblical Hebrew as a textual conversion. So, it is within the religious discourse of conversion that I shall consider the first translation of Shakespeare into Hebrew.

Isaac Edward Salkinson was born in a small *shtetl* in Belorussia, within the Jewish Pale of Settlement, in 1820.[2] His parents were orthodox and he received a traditional Jewish education. He was orphaned young, but carried on his religious studies in various yeshivas. He studied in Wilna, at that time an important centre of Jewish studies. It was there that he studied the Bible with its glosses, becoming an expert in Hebrew grammar, and also took up German

and read German literature. He then left for America to pursue his Jewish studies there, but never reached the United States. Instead, he

[1] A comprehensive account of Shakespeare translations into Hebrew is given by Dan Almagor, 'Shakespeare in Israel: A Bibliography, 1950–1965', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 17 (1966), 291–306; and 'Shakespeare in Hebrew Literature, 1794–1930: Bibliographical Survey and Bibliography', in *Festschrift for Shimon Halkin* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 721–84 (in Hebrew).

For a more recent, analytical discussion see Harai Golomb, '"Classical" vs. "Contemporary" in Hebrew Translations of Shakespeare's Tragedies', *Poetics Today* (Theory of Translation and Intercultural Relations issue), 2 (1981), 201–7, and 'Shakespearean Re-generations in Hebrew: A Study in Historical Poetics', in *Strands Afar Remote: Israeli perspectives on Shakespeare*, ed. Avraham Oz (Newark, 1998), pp. 255–75.

See also Leonard Prager, 'Shakespeare in Yiddish', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19 (1968), 149–63.

[2] Biographical information on Salkinson is scarce. The fullest account is Israel Cohen, *Monographies*, vol. 3 (Tel-Aviv, 1976), 'Isaac Edward Salkinson: His life and Literary Works', pp. 333–420 (in Hebrew). Some contemporary material can be found in John Dunlop, *Memories of Gospel Triumphs Among the Jews During the Victorian Era* (London, 1894), pp. 373–87. This Jubilee report of the British Society for the Jews was compiled by the Revd John Dunlop, its Secretary, and published about ten years after the death of Salkinson. It includes a 'Brief Autobiographical Sketch', pp. 373–5, covering the years 1849–79. See also the short entry on Salkinson in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

stopped in London on his way and was converted by the London Missionary Society.[3]

In 1849 he entered the British Society's College, where he studied for four years. Later, he attended Divinity Hall in Edinburgh and was ordained in Glasgow in 1859. Salkinson was engaged as a missionary to the Jews by the Jewish Society in Scotland, which was subsequently incorporated into the United Presbyterian Church, and later by the euphemistically named British Society for the Jews. He was stationed first in Glasgow, then in Pressburg, and in 1876 moved to Vienna, where there was a large Jewish community, numbering about 70,000. He died in Vienna in 1883.

In the short autobiographical sketch published by Dunlop, Salkinson stated that his mission was to live among 'his brethren', i.e. the Jewish community, be in personal and intellectual intercourse with them, correspond with them and, especially, write treatises, in Hebrew, on their behalf.[4] Apparently, he was not too successful in converting other Jews, but set his heart instead on the literary aspect of his mission, which he regarded as his real vocation. He decided, therefore, to 'translate classical pieces into Hebrew', saying that

Hebrew translation seems to be the only talent given me, and it I have consecrated to the Lord. It is my alabaster box of precious ointment which I pour out in honour of my Saviour, that the fragrance of His name may fill the whole house of Israel.[5]

From his first attempt at translating Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* (1855), through *The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation* (1858),[6] Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1871), and C. A. Tiedge's *Urania* (1876),[7] and up to his crowning work, the translation of the *New Testament*, begun in 1877 and published posthumously in 1885, all his translations were serviceable to his vocation. The exception was Shakespeare, whom he claimed to have translated 'in my hours of recreation'.[8]

Salkinson was well aware of his peculiar position as a translator who was a baptized Jew. In a published Hebrew correspondence, he states that, in his translation of *Paradise Lost* into Hebrew, he has not attempted to judaize the book by removing its foreskin, that he has refrained from circumcizing the text by excising anything from it. Instead, he says, he has attempted to present *Paradise Lost* to the Hebrew reader exactly as it issued from its author's womb, adding or subtracting nothing.[9] In the very act of denying its relevance to his translation of Milton, Salkinson had created the self-conscious metaphor of the Hebrew translator as a mohel circumcizing the text by cutting out references to Christian doctrine.

In the translation of the New Testament, Salkinson had to exercise even greater caution. He attempted to render it into strictly biblical Hebrew, without, however, compromising its Christian message. In its consistent use of the biblical linguistic register, Salkinson's translation was judged by many to be superior to that of Frantz Delitzsch, published not many years earlier.[10] The British missionaries believed the New Testament would have a special appeal for the People of the Book if it could stand side by side with the Old Testament, as though it too were handed down on Mount Sinai. They also

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[3] On the remarkable role of the idea of Jewish conversion in Protestant England in the nineteenth century, see Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: 'The Jewish Question' and English National Identity* (Durham, 1995).

[4] See Dunlop, *Memories of Gospel Triumphs*, p. 373.

[5] Ibid., p. 382.

[6] Attributed to 'an American citizen' by the Revd Principal Davidson in his assessment of the translation, in Dunlop, *Memories of Gospel Triumphs*, p. 376.

[7] Some of the publication dates given in the Autobiographical Sketch are mistaken.

[8] Dunlop, *Memories of Gospel Triumphs*, p. 374.

[9] Letter by Salkinson to Alexander Halevi Langebank, in 'Critical letters', *Beit Otzar ha-Sifruth*, Magazin für hebräische Literatur und Wissenschaft, vol. 1, ed. Eisig Gräber (Jaroslau, 1887), p. 32 (in Hebrew).

[10] The New Testament, tr. Frantz Delitzsch (Leipzig, 1877). On some contemporary evaluations of Salkinson's translation, see Dunlop, pp. 383–6. To this day, the standard Hebrew translations of the New Testament are those of Delitzsch and Salkinson, superseding two earlier ones.

realized that, for the observant Jew, the New Testament was the forbidden book, but that, with the spread of Enlightenment and secularization among the Jews, there was growing interest in some circles in reading it.

The English Evangelical Revival coincided with the Jewish Enlightenment movement.[11] In the nineteenth century, the East-European Jews were increasingly eager to restore a national, historical and cultural identity for the demoralized Jewish people. The bonding of the dispersed Jews could only be achieved through the revival of Hebrew with its treasure house of literary and historical associations.[12] The struggle to bring about the re-birth of the ancient tongue formed part of the national movement, which culminated in the founding of the State of Israel.

Thus the Jewish national revival movement shared with the British mission a common interest in Hebrew as a viable language for translation.[13] Salkinson received praise and encouragement from both Church circles and Jewish intellectuals. The latter, however, while they appreciated the quality of his work, distanced themselves from its missionary aims.

Despite the critical acclaim with which they were initially received, Salkinson's translations of Shakespeare never became the classics they were meant to be. Modern Hebrew developed so rapidly and with such revolutionary fervour that they dated very quickly. They have come to be seen as no more than historical curiosities and are generally ignored by scholars of Hebrew literature.

It was a key figure in the Jewish Enlightenment movement, the writer Peretz Smolenskin, who persuaded Salkinson to take up the translation of Shakespeare. In his Hebrew foreword to the translation of *Othello*, Smolenskin celebrated the publication of the first Shakespeare play in Hebrew as an act of cultural retaliation:

Today we shall revenge ourselves on the Britons. They have taken our Holy Scriptures and done with them as they pleased, translating and disseminating them into the four corners of the earth, as though they belonged to them. Now shall we pay them back, take the books they hold no less than Holy Scripture – Shakespeare's plays – and bring them into the treasure house of our holy tongue. And is not this revenge sweet?[14]

Smolenskin saw the Hebrew appropriation of Shakespeare as a counter-measure to the English appropriation of the Old Testament, and expected it to do no less for Jewish culture. He perceived the first step in translating the works of Shakespeare as an important move towards restoring the self-confidence of the Jews in their ancient culture at the moment in which they were being enticed away from it by the European Enlightenment.

Othello was followed by *Romeo and Juliet* (1878), but Salkinson's work on Shakespeare was halted by a complaint lodged against him to the Church authorities, that he was using the Holy Tongue for translating secular literature, Shakespeare's licentious plays. Salkinson was banned from office for a year, in which time he was required to finish his translation of the New Testament.[15]

The issue of baptism and conversion in which *Othello* is steeped must have been of great personal interest to the Hebrew who turned

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11 On the English Evangelical Revival, see Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion, passim.*

12 For the different views within the Jewish Enlightenment movement on biblical Hebrew, see Shimon Federbush, *The Hebrew Tongue in Israel and the Nations* (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 342 (in Hebrew).

13 For the views of the Jewish Enlightenment on translation, cf. Golomb, 'Shakespearean Re-generations', pp. 259ff.

14 Peretz Smolenskin (Peter Smolensky), 'Foreword' to *Ithiel the Moor of Venice*, tr. from English into Hebrew by J. E. S [Isaac Edward Salkinson] (Vienna, 1874). My translation of the paragraph differs considerably from that of Golomb, who quotes it in 'Shakespearean Re-generations', pp. 255–6. The difference in translation reflects our different interpretations of the tone and meaning of the paragraph, which I take to be only half-serious.

15 See Cohen, *Monographies*, pp. 359–60, 411.

Christian and missionary. Like Othello in Venice, Salkinson was an outsider in England. Yet, his very otherness, the knowledge he brought from his earlier, pre-baptismal existence, made him uniquely serviceable to his new, chosen faith. The wheeling stranger Othello was sent by the Venetian Senate to fight the Turks in Cyprus; similarly, the foreigner Salkinson was sent by the British mission to convert the Jews in Vienna.

Salkinson was interested in the Moor's religious conversion, not in his colour.[16] Like Desdemona, he saw Othello's visage in his mind. Salkinson would feel especially close to Othello if he understood him as a convert from Islam, rather than from paganism.[17] He could then see in Othello his own dual nature as both circumcized and baptized. One can perceive a dynamics of baptism being set in motion between the conflicting factors that make up both Salkinson's person and his work. His vocation was to baptize the circumcized, but, by translating this play into biblical Hebrew, Salkinson was judaizing the text.

Despite his open embrace of the Christian message and his commitment to it, Salkinson was always regarded as a Jewish convert, whose translations needed Church endorsement on their rendering of doctrinal matters. Thus, for example, J. J. Stewart Perowne, the Dean of Peterborough, approved the translation of *Paradise Lost*:

I have examined many portions of the translation, and especially those in which there is a reference to the Divinity of the Messiah, and I have no hesitation in saying that the translator has rendered the work faithfully.[18]

Conversion was perceived as a profound change of identity, perhaps akin to today's change of gender or change of sex. And like them, it was looked upon with suspicion by Christian society, which questioned the possibility of such a profound transformation and always anticipated recidivism.

Conversely, Jewish society traditionally viewed converts with great animosity. Salkinson was well aware of this Jewish attitude, which he expounded to his fellow missionaries:

The thoughts of the Jew are like the following: Here is one who brought shame upon his parents, betrayed the national faith, rebelled against God; and this great sin is light to him, so that he now seeks to cause Israel to sin. Then, again, measuring others with themselves, they suppose it is impossible for a Jew ever to become a true believer in the Saviour of the Gentiles; hence the missionary is regarded as a hypocrite, given to filthy lucre.[19]

So great was Jewish dislike of converts, and especially of missionaries, that Salkinson and his publisher found it expedient to hide the identity of the translator of *Othello* behind an acronym.

Because biblical Hebrew constitutes a closed linguistic continuum, frozen in time, encapsulating a religion and a culture, it is not a 'neutral' language that can easily accommodate new ideas. It carries with it a whole built-in world of associations, beliefs, stories and prayers, which are intertexts of the language itself. Every word and phrase has its own precise reference and meaning, so that the educated Jew could be expected to identify quotations and even the contexts of particular words.

Within this historical layer of language, any reference to Christianity would sound anachronistic and incoherent. Even Christian interpretations of the Old Testament have necessarily been allegorical or anagogic, rather than literal.

Salkinson had to find ways of dealing with the abundance of Christian concepts in *Othello*

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[16] On the nineteenth-century English perception of 'the African character of the Jew', see Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, pp. 24–6. On the controversy on Judaism as race or faith in relation to Shakespeare, cf., e.g., James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York, 1996), p. 84.

[17] Cf. Julia Reinhard Lupton, '*Othello* Circumcised: Shakespeare and the Pauline Discourse of Nations', *Representations*, 57 (1997), 73–89.

[18] Dunlop, *Memories of Gospel Triumphs*, p. 377.

[19] Ibid., p. 385.

without violating the boundaries of biblical discourse, which has no equivalents for 'baptism', 'redemption', or 'Christian shame'. Unlike his New Testament (which required the closest possible word-for-word translation), his Shakespeare invited a different kind of fidelity. It seemed to demand a re-creation of the work within the target language and culture. Salkinson searched for idiomatic biblical expressions that would convey the meaning of the original without becoming enslaved to the religious doctrine implicit in the source language, and substituted some of the Shakespearian imagery with biblical allusions. He described his translation of *Othello* as a transmigration of the soul of the play into Hebrew.[20]

In the second part of this paper, I look at Salkinson's treatment of some of the passages that relate to theology and religion. There is a certain irony in discussing in English a translation into Hebrew; however, as much of Salkinson's translation is directly based on Scripture, my task is simplified through the handy assistance of the King James Version.

Salkinson substituted the names of the characters, and even the name of the play itself, with biblical equivalents. This was the fashion at the time, but a close examination of Salkinson's names reveals his underlying ideology.[21]

'Othello' became the phonetically similar 'Ithiel' (Proverbs 30.1; Nehemiah 11.7), a Hebrew name meaning 'God is with me'. This meaning must have contributed to Salkinson's attraction to the character and his spiritual biography. But the choice of the name may also have to do with the context in which it appears, in Proverbs. Ithiel is one of the addressees of Agur's words, strangely reminiscent of Othello's 'Rude am I in my speech' (1.3.81):

Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.

(Proverbs 30.2−3)

Although all the characters bear biblical names,

practically all are, unlike Ithiel, the names of gentiles. Thus, for example, Desdemona is called Asenath, after the bride given to Joseph by Pharaoh, the daughter of Poti-phera, priest of On (Genesis 41.45). The one exception is Raddai, i.e. Roderigo, who is called after David's fifth brother (I Chronicles 2.14), whose name was obviously chosen for homophonic reasons alone.

Salkinson isolated Ithiel by giving him a Hebrew name that emphasizes his faith in God and surrounding him with Venetians carrying gentile names. Through the allocation of names, Salkinson re-defined the position of the protagonist as that of a Jew within gentile society, thus emphasizing the religious tensions in the play.

Especially interesting is the transformation of Iago into Doeg. The biblical Doeg was an Edomite. For the children of Israel, the Edomites were a long-standing foe. Edom became synonymous with the enemy of Israel: in post-biblical literature, Rome is frequently called Edom. By naming Iago, in the biblical context, 'Doeg', Salkinson set in motion a train of associations that makes him, in the subtext, the equivalent of the Christian Enemy.

In the Bible, Doeg the Edomite is an especially reprehensible figure. It was he who betrayed to King Saul Ahimelech, the priest who had given shelter to David in Nob. None of Saul's servants was prepared to execute his revenge order, except Doeg, who killed first all eighty-five members of Ahimelech's family, then the rest of the inhabitants of the city of Nob and even its livestock (I Samuel 22). That his name became a by-word for ill-repute can be learned from its use by the psalmist:

To the chief Musician, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of

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[20] 'Translator's letter to the publisher', printed as a second foreword to *Ithiel*, p. xxxiii. See also Cohen, *Monographies*, p. 375.

[21] See Appendix, below.

Ahimelech . . . Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. (Psalms 52.1–3)

This could easily be a character-sketch of Iago. The felicitous choice of the name 'Doeg' was intended to carry these unpleasant associations, including the easy wielding of the sword in the service of mischief.

Iago is perhaps the character most aware of theological issues. He asserts that Desdemona has such a strong influence on Othello that it would be easy for her 'to win the Moor' and even make him 'renounce his baptism, / All seals and symbols of redeemèd sin' (2.3.334–5). 'Renounce his baptism' becomes in Hebrew: 'to be separated from the congregation of God' (Ezra 10.8). 'Renounce. . . all seals and symbols of redeemèd sin' is changed into 'cast his soul',[22] or, in the King James Version, 'adventured his life far', as in Jotham's Parable of the Bramble (Judges 9.17). After recounting his parable, Jotham rebukes the people of Shechem for their ingratitude, for having forgotten how his father, Jerubbaal, i.e. Gideon, delivered them from their enemies. Jotham's highly emotional evocation of his late father who cast his soul for the people of Shechem is a figure for Christ's having died for man's sins. Thus Salkinson indirectly preserves the signification of the 'symbols of redeemèd sin'. Although he substituted the Old Testament story of Jotham for Iago's theology of hell, Salkinson succeeded in keeping the Christian subtext.

Jotham's parable is also used for the translation of the image of the net that Iago promises to make out of Desdemona's own goodness, 'that shall enmesh them all' (2.3.353). The diabolical net is replaced by the biblical 'fire [that] will come out and devour them all' (p. 76), deriving from the bramble's threat: 'Let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon' (Judges 9.15).

Iago also promises to turn Desdemona's 'virtue into pitch' (2.3.351). Doeg recalls Isaiah's prophecy on Edom, that 'the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch' (Isaiah 34.9). Translating back from Hebrew, what Doeg says is: 'And her goodness shall turn into brimstone and all her grace into pitch' (p. 76). In this example, Salkinson has planted Iago's words within Isaiah's apocalyptic vision. However, this infernal landscape manages to remain within the imagistic boundaries of the play, outlined by Othello's 'Fire and brimstone' oath (4.1.231).

Iago's graphic description of the coming together of Othello and Desdemona as a bestial copulation takes off from the image of the Barbary horse:

. . .you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins, and jennets for germans. (1.1.113–15)

In Hebrew, the Barbary horse is transformed into an ass, '*hamor*' (p. 7). The image of bestiality and its monstrous progeny is used metaphorically by Ezekiel, who chastises Aholibah for doting on paramours 'whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses' (Ezekiel 23.20).[23]

Even more forceful are the narrative and structural parallels evoked by the translation, for Hamor is also the proper name of the father of Shechem, whose story is told in Genesis 34. It is the story of the rape of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, by Shechem, the son of Hamor. By implication, Desdemona is being raped by a beast, just as Dinah was by the son of Hamor.

Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, revenged the rape by deceiving the people of Shechem into being circumcized, then, 'on the third day, when they were sore' (Genesis 34.25), attacked the city and killed all the males. Obviously, this allusion is totally uncalled for by the Shakespearian text. But Salkinson used the biblical association because of the meaning of

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Hamor's name, combining the innate bestiality of the ass with the story of the rape of Dinah by an uncircumcized stranger. The multiple references to Brabanzio's bestial progeny, who will neigh to him, were replaced by the reference to the seed or semen of the ass. Thus the grossness of Iago's language found its parallel in this biblical myth of defilement.

Salkinson's allusion to this story can be deconstructed to reveal his fascination with the dynamics of circumcision: the uncircumcized defiles the circumcized, but the circumcized retaliates by persuading the rapist and his relatives to undergo circumcision, then, taking advantage of their being incapacitated, slays them.

Brabanzio mourns the loss of his daughter: 'Gone she is' (1.1.162). This is translated into the excruciatingly simple language of Reuben's sorrow, when he returns to the pit where Joseph was cast, and, not finding him, says to his brothers: 'The child is not' (Genesis 37.30), or, as in the original Hebrew (for lack of a neuter), 'the boy is not'. Except for the change of gender, 'the girl is not' (p. 9), Salkinson makes Brabanzio's sorrow echo that minimalistically expressed, archetypal mourning.

After she has eloped, Desdemona is a girl no longer, and first her father, then her husband, try to contain her sexuality. Through his use of biblical terminology, Salkinson charged their definitions of her with different religious overtones.

Trying to ascertain what has happened, Brabanzio asks Roderigo: 'Are they married, think you?' (1.1.169). There is no biblical word to express the reciprocity of marriage: the husband weds a wife, but she remains a passive figure, wedded to her husband. Therefore, Brabanzio's question is turned into the sexually explicit: 'Do you think, Roderigo, that she has lost her virginity?' (p. 10). The word Salkinson uses here is '*be'ulah*', i.e. she who has been tilled or deflowered, cognate with the word for 'husband' or 'master', '*ba'al*'.

In the Hebrew, there is both consonance and assonance between '*be'ulah*' and '*bethulah*', the word for virgin. Brabanzio's question thus highlights the critical debate over whether the marriage of Othello and Desdemona is ever consummated.

That Salkinson was using this word advisedly can be learned from his translation of the story of the immaculate conception in Matthew. Delitzsch had translated 'Joseph her husband' (Matthew 1.19), using the word '*ba'al*' for 'husband'. If '*be'ulah*', a passive, feminine form, is she who has lost her virginity, '*ba'al*' is the masculine, active form, husband in the sense of he who has deflowered the woman. With his greater sensitivity to etymology, Salkinson felt the absurdity of using that word in defining the relationship between Joseph and Mary, and used the Hebrew for 'her man', to avoid the sexual connotation.[24]

Like her father, Othello too tries to ascertain Desdemona's chastity. His accusation that she is a whore (4.2.74, 89) is translated as '*kedesha*' (p. 147), playing on the implicit ambiguity of '*kedesha*' as holy prostitute. Othello speaks in the language of an Old Testament prophet, chastising the Children of Israel for leaving their God and prostituting their faith. When Othello asks Desdemona, 'Are not you a strumpet?' (84), she responds: 'No, as I am a Christian' (85). Salkinson makes her swear instead by her faith in God her saviour: '*be-emunati be-elohei yish'i*' (p. 148). She uses a common biblical expression, but Salkinson was surely punning on '*yesha*', the word for 'salvation' or 'delivery', and '*Yeshua*', the Hebrew name of Jesus. In this case too, Salkinson has pushed the Christian meaning into the subtext so as not to disrupt the Old Testament conceptual texture. Another consideration may have been trying to avoid giving offence to his intended Jewish readership.

The Holy Land is actually invoked towards the end of the play by Emilia, who 'know[s] a lady in Venice would have walked barefoot to

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24 See Cohen, *Monographies*, p. 410.

Palestine for a touch of [Lodovico's] nether lip' (4.3.36–7). 'Palestine' is naturally translated as 'the Holy Land'. Picking up that theme, Salkinson evokes the Jewish longing for the Land of Israel in his translation of Barbary's song (4.3.38–55): the willow of the refrain appears in the plural (p. 161), as in the Song of the Exiles:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

(Psalms 137.1–2)

The unhappiness of Desdemona, of Barbary and of all jilted young women is thus tied to the archetypal mourning for the lost homeland and to the nationalist sentiment of the nineteenth-century Jewish Enlightenment. So intent is Salkinson on this analogy, that he changes 'An old thing 'twas' (4.3.28) into *shirath kedem* (p. 160), which means both 'ancient song' and 'song from the East'.

The willows of Babylon bring us back to what is, perhaps, the ultimate source of the association of willows with mourning. The associations with the Holy Land heighten the power of the image, but also, at the same time, distract the reader from the dramatic issue at hand. Salkinson's handling of the Willow Song demonstrates both the strength and the weakness of his art of translating: here as elsewhere, Salkinson's stake in Christian religion and Jewish nationalism overshadows the romantic aspects of the play.

Salkinson's treatment of Othello's final speech (pp. 196–7), with its notorious crux of 'Indian' or 'Judean' (5.2.356), deserves special attention.[25] Ithiel compares himself to 'that Jew' – not 'the base Judean' – who 'threw a pearl away, / Richer than all his tribe' (5.2.356–7).[26] In Hebrew, there is no difference between 'Jew' and 'Judean' – both are 'Yehudi', and 'Yehudi' means from the tribe of Yehuda, i.e. Judah, or Judas. This linguistic feature served, for many centuries, as fuel for antisemitism, making Judas into the archetypal Jew. Reading the passage as Othello's self-comparison to Judas, Salkinson

could not help but infuse the words with echoes of the Gospel story of Judas' betrayal of Christ.

It is a precarious and loaded dramatic moment not only for Othello, but also for Salkinson, reviewing in a poetic flash the whole narrative of the rift between Christianity and Judaism. The 'turbaned Turk [who] beat a Venetian' (5.2.362–3) becomes, in Hebrew, a 'turbaned . . . Ismaelite [who] hit one of our brethren' (p. 197). It is a moment in which both Ithiel and Salkinson take upon themselves the weight of centuries of theological debates. So, whatever Shakespeare wrote and whatever the meaning of this heroic speech, it becomes, in Salkinson's version, a convert's manifesto, an expression of the inherent duality of the convert's consciousness. The integration of both sides of his personality is achieved symbolically, and tragically, in his suicide, when the baptized man finally kills 'the circumcized dog' (364) within himself.

Salkinson's translation brings out forcefully the drama of the Moor's conversion but also introduces his own, Jewish convert's parallel. By translating all this into the religious language of his forefathers, he set in motion a dialectic of circumcision and baptism that, but for Ithiel's suicide, would remain unresolved. Like its author, the translation remains ambiguous, both baptized and circumcized.

[25] See, e.g., Richard Levin, 'The Indian/Iudean Crux in *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), 60–7; Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark, 1999), pp. 600–3.

[26] See *Ithiel*, p. 197. On p. 200, Smolenskin, the publisher, adds a note: 'The translator wrote, "richer than all the tribes of Israel", but I changed his translation and wrote, "richer than all the wealth of Israel". I believe I was right in making this change, for the English "richer" denotes both "wealth" and "honour", and I chose the first meaning. So too did the German translator, for he translated not "besser als sein Stamm" but "reicher als sein Stamm". There is a vast difference between these two translations, as any perceptive reader will note' (my translation).

APPENDIX: A LIST OF THE PARALLEL BIBLICAL CHARACTERS IN SALKINSON'S TRANSLATION

Othello	Ithiel	Nehemia 11.7 (one of the exiles returning from Babel to Jerusalem); Proverbs 30.1 (One of the addressees of Agur's 'confession of faith')
Brabanzio	Phichol	Genesis 21.22, 26.26 (Abimelech's chief captain)
Cassio	Chesed	Genesis 22.22 (son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, and Milcah)
Iago	Doeg	1 Samuel 21.8, 22.9, 18, 22, Psalms 52.2 (King Saul's chief herdsman)
Roderigo	Raddai	1 Chronicles 2.14 (one of David's brothers)
Montano	Kenaz	Genesis 36.11, 15, 42; 1 Chronicles 1.36, 53 (Esau's grandson); Joshua 15.17, Judges 1.13, 3.9, 11, 1 Chronicles 4.13 (father of the judge Othniel); 1 Chronicles 4.15 (son of Elah the son of Caleb)
Lodovico	Lud	Genesis 10.22; 1 Chronicles 1.17 (Shem's son); Isaiah 66.19, Ezekiel 27.10, 30.5 (a gentile people)
Graziano	Gether	Genesis 10.23; 1 Chronicles 1.17 (Aram's son and Shem's grandson)
Desdemona	Asenath	Genesis 42.45, 50, 46.20 (Joseph's wife)
Emilia	Milcah	Genesis 11.29, 22.20,23,24 (Nahor's wife); Numbers 26.33, 27. 1, 36.11, Joshua 17.3 (Zelophehad's daughter)
Bianca	Anah	Genesis 36.2, 14, 18; 1 Chronicles 1.38, 40, 41 (Esau's wife)