

# Zionism, Translation and the Politics of Erasure

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This paper examines the translation of classic political philosophy into Hebrew, arguing that a variety of ideological positions can be disclosed simply by examining the erasure process employed during translation. Exploring the connection between translation and nation-building, I claim that segments from John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* were excised in the service of a Zionist identity politics. Insofar as Zionism is a discursive formation, its production and maintenance involves the expulsion of components that may hinder the fabrication of a unified identity. Counter-narratives of the nation that disrupt its totalizing boundaries may disturb, in Homi Bhabha's words, 'those ideological maneuvers through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities'. By way of conclusion, I argue that the altered texts are in effect a sign that one ideology overpowered another and led, as it were, to the corruption of the spirit underlying the original project of translating classics into Hebrew, a project that was initiated by Leon Roth for different ideological reasons.

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And a stranger shalt thou not wrong, neither thou shall oppress him;  
for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus)

The gates of interpretation are never closed. (Maimonides)

The vision of Maimonides, like that of Genesis and Job, of the prophets and the psalms, is 'beyond the border of Israel'... (Leon Roth)

## Erasing the Other

Following my lecture on John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* at Ben-Gurion University (Israel), a student approached me to ask whether he could submit a make-up exercise. 'I missed a whole month due to military reserve duty', he explained. Off the top of my head, I asked him to write a short essay outlining Mill's discussion of Socrates, Jesus, and Marcus Aurelius as it appears in the book's second chapter, and to explain why the first two examples differ from the third.

*On Liberty*, as the reader may recall, underscores the importance of the freedom of expression and its relation to the search for truth. In the book, Mill condemns almost all forms of censorship, arguing that opinions, which may be true or point to some truth, are often suppressed due to their nonconformity to prevailing views; he also reminds us that Socrates and Jesus were killed because their messages were offensive to those in power. By contrast, Marcus Aurelius, whom Mill considers to be among the most enlightened of emperors, persecuted Christians during his

reign. Aurelius's example serves to show that even wise people should be wary of censoring *others* (Mill, 1991a, pp. 29–32).

During office hours the student turned up to tell me that he could not find any reference either to Jesus or Marcus Aurelius in *On Liberty*. Though somewhat dismayed at what appeared to be a case of undergraduate indolence, I nonetheless decided to help him out. I began flipping through my Hebrew edition, but to no avail. Jesus and Aurelius had vanished!

Dashing off to another class, I asked the student to call me in the evening, in the hope that by then I could resolve the mystery. Once home, I easily located the pertinent passages in my English edition with which I had prepared class. In the Hebrew translation, published by Hebrew University's prestigious Magnes Press, I found the section dealing with Socrates, but sure enough the translator had omitted two and a half pages following Mill's discussion of the Greek philosopher.

While perusing the passage on Socrates, I noticed a footnote referring the reader to the bottom of the Hebrew page. Written in Rashi<sup>1</sup> (which some – mostly Arab – university students cannot read) rather than in Hebrew script, was the following note: 'Two passages have been deleted, in which the author provides two additional examples that prove, in Mill's opinion, that decent human beings are liable to persecute those who speak the truth. The two examples are: (A) the killing of Jesus Christ, and (B) the persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who excelled in virtues and good will' (1946, p. 49; translation mine).

The translator's interpretation of the deleted passages is mistaken since Mill uses the examples of Jesus and Aurelius to make different points. In short, the English philosopher does not maintain that the people who crucified Jesus were 'decent', but argues that Aurelius was. This error interested me much less, however, than the translator's decision to elide these passages, a decision that raises serious questions about the task of the translator. At least according to Walter Benjamin, the intentional omission of text is beyond the pale of bad translation, since the hallmark of bad translation is one that is limited to the transmission of information, and in our case even that task was not fully accomplished. The bad translator is characterized as one who 'undertakes to serve the reader', and this, as I will argue, is nonetheless exactly what our translator endeavored to do (Benjamin, 1968, pp. 69, 70).

Contemporary discussions about translation often focus on the difficulty of transferring meaning, suggesting that there can never be a total transference 'between differential systems of meaning, or within them ...' (Bhabha, 1990, p. 314). While critics point out that the inability of total transference engenders the erasure of content, in this paper I intend to sidestep this crucial issue and focus on a much more transparent matter, namely the erasure of text. Moreover, instead of examining the text's erasure from a strictly linguistic or philosophical vantage point I would like to expose some of the political forces informing it. In this sense, I am following translation theorists who have argued that translation is not simply a matter of linguistic transfer, but rather an *act* of communication informed by the cultural, ideological, social, political, and economic context in which the transla-

tor is working (Nida, 1964; Nida and Taber, 1969; Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990; Lefevere, 1992; Snell-Hornby, 1990; Dingwaney and Maier, 1995). If, as Frantz Fanon asserts (1967, p. 38), 'to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture', then to translate is in some sense to insert a world and a culture into the target text. Accordingly, theorists have convincingly shown that a translator's decisions are often based on prevalent norms, reader expectations, and the socio-historical function of the target text.

Thus, in the following pages I employ a post-structuralist understanding of translation rather than a subjectivist one. Exploring the connection between translation and nation building, I will ask whether the erasure of text from *On Liberty* is linked to the Zionist project and to the attempt to create a Jewish national identity. More specifically, in what way was omission of passages from the text connected to the period in which the translator was writing, one year after World War, when the Jewish establishment in Palestine was mounting its struggle for independence?

### Expelling the Stranger

In order to find out more, I turned to the book's 'Introduction', written by the translator, Leon Simon. Towards the end, just before the translator's acknowledgment, Simon writes:

There are a few places in this book where Mill talks as a Christian to Christians, and therefore they seem a bit *strange* in Hebrew. These passages were deleted in this translation, and all of them are mentioned in the translator's footnotes (except for two instances, one where only a single sentence had been deleted, and in the other only a few words). (1946: ix, translation and emphasis mine).

Aside from the fact that deleting passages when translating a text would seem to constitute an anti-intellectual gesture, the translator's reasoning itself is perplexing.<sup>2</sup> What kind of criterion is 'strange'? In Hebrew, strange is *muzar* (מוזר), a direct derivative of its root (זר) *zor* or *zar*, which means, according to *Iben Shoshan* dictionary, stranger, foreigner, other, different, weird, unusual, not close to, does not pertain to the issue, as well as opposing the laws of sacrifice and unlawful. Thus, the employment of a criterion like 'strange' allows a translator to operate in the service of a politics that attempts to construct neat definitions and borders, since it facilitates the removal of any reference to that which is perceived as unusual and different.

Indeed, the 'stranger' in its multifarious variations as *other*, foreigner, one who is distant and unlawful has the potential of creating ambivalence and instability, which may, in turn, hamper the creation and sustenance of the clear frontiers necessary for a homogeneous identity politics with fixed boundaries. For as Nira Yuval-Davis convincingly argues, the integrity and viability of a 'community of citizens' is often dependent on 'clear-cut definitions of who belongs and who does not belong to it ...' (1993, p. 621), and since 'strange' variables tend to hinder the production of a unified identity, they must be excluded, circumscribed, restricted and repressed.

But what makes Mill's writing 'as a Christian to Christians' *strange* to the Jewish ear? Considering that at the time (1946) most Jews in Israel were immigrants from European countries, they must have been at least moderately familiar with situations in which the interlocutors were exclusively Christian. Accordingly, the word 'strange' was probably not used to signify something utterly incomprehensible or unintelligible and as such 'unworthy' of translation. Rather, Simon appears to have employed the criterion 'strange' in order to erase that which he considered counter to the hegemonic narrative so as to substantiate and validate, as it were, the latter's authenticity. His decision to delete references to Christianity is, to be sure, indicative of a long tradition of Hebrew translations (more of this momentarily), but is also firmly linked to and even seems to corroborate Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin's claim that the Zionist project was implicated in the 'negation of exile', if only because Ashkenazi Jews must have associated Christianity with life in exile (1993, 1994).<sup>3</sup>

But before analyzing the forces that led to the censoring of *On Liberty*, it is important to stress that while 'strangeness' does not justify the erasure of text from any translation, here we are dealing with a political book whose essential message is the importance of free speech. In it, Mill, who is concerned about the rights of the minority, convincingly argues against any kind of censorship – particularly of people located on the margins of society, the other, the one who is different, all those who, metaphorically speaking, oppose the laws of sacrifice and do not share in the national refrain. The only exception to the rule, for Mill, is when the words expressed present a clear danger, when they actually harm – not when they are offensive. For opinions like 'corn-dealers are starvers of the poor, or private property is robbery', ought, according to Mill, to be left 'unmolested when simply circulated through the press, but may justly incur punishment when delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn-dealer ...' (1991a, p. 62). Thus, the translator's decision to delete passages gains new meaning when considering the book's content, since it is very clearly at odds with Mill's argument. In this sense, Simon discarded the foremost task of the translator, which consists, according to Benjamin, 'in finding that intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original'. For a 'real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully' (Benjamin, 1968, pp. 76, 79). While one can never attain, reach, or manage the full intention of the original, Simon does not even try.

The idea that the text had been censored was disconcerting, and I decided to conduct a systematic comparison of the two versions of *On Liberty*. I soon realized that the translator had deleted about ten of the original 125 pages, or eight percent of the classic, simply because they were 'strange'. On one page the Hebrew reader is notified that three explanatory footnotes, which appear in the English edition, were removed; no explanation is offered (1946, p. 55, Hebrew; 1991a, pp. 34–5, English). Later, two paragraphs are erased because Mill, according to Simon, 'assaults' the Calvinist worldview (1946, p. 108, Hebrew, 1991a, pp. 68–70, English). In another place where Mill discusses Calvin, the translator begins excising the classic text in the middle of a sentence, totally chang-

ing its meaning in order to make the fragmented passage intelligible (1946, p. 77, Hebrew, 1991a, p. 46, English). A few pages further Simon lets slip his rationale for erasing all references to 'intra-Christian dialogue'. He explains in a footnote that he had edited out a 'section' (four pages!) because in it Mill argues, 'moral truth exists in full within Christian morality' (1946, p. 88, Hebrew, 1991a pp. 54–8, English).<sup>4</sup>

These references and the ideas they convey seem threatening to the translator's worldview and he, in André Lefevere's words, *rewrote* the book (1992). Rather than omitting them, he could have drawn a connection between the persecution of Jews and the persecution of Christians, and, in this way, underscored the relevancy of the 'Christian dialogue' to the Jewish context. Moreover, Christian morality is frequently considered part of the great Judaic-Christian tradition, and as such linked to the Jewish experience. But the translator thought differently, as if an ideological commitment led him to expurgate those parts in the narrative that appeared to belong to another land, culture, and nation.

Born in Southampton, England (1881), Sir Leon Simon began his Zionist activities in the early twentieth century. He was among the members of the Zionist Commission to Palestine in 1918, and as a disciple of Achad Ha'am was interested in the cultural aspects of Jewish nationalism and the revival of the Hebrew language. In 1920, he even published a book entitled *Studies in Jewish Nationalism* and much later wrote a biography of his mentor. After retiring from his position as the director of the General Post Office in England, he became the Chairman of Hebrew University's Executive Council and served as a member of the University's Board of Governors. Although his commitment to the Zionist project is unquestionable, Simon was a complex person and by no means uncritical of the social events unfolding around him (see Simon 1920, 1960).

Simon, one should keep in mind, translated *On Liberty* (1946) immediately after the Holocaust and two years before the establishment of Israel, a time in which great efforts were being made to infuse a particular notion of Jewishness into the national project of state-building. Insofar as Zionism is a discursive formation, its production and maintenance involves the expulsion of components that may hinder the fabrication of a unified identity (Foucault, 1993). This suggests that by excising the parts in Mill's text that represent some kind of counter-narrative, Simon was operating in the service of a Zionist identity politics. Bhabha alludes to this process when he writes, 'counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological maneuvers through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities' (1990, p. 300).

This is not to say that Simon's intentions were malicious. Most 'rewriters', as Lefevere observes, are 'usually meticulous, hard working, well-read, and as honest as is humanly possible. They just see what they are doing as obvious ...' and are unaware of the influence of prevailing norms and ideologies on their thought and work (1992, p. 13). Thus, Simon's decision to employ a politics of erasure rather than a politics of inclusion tells us less about his personal motives, than about the power relations circulating in society, which makes it, in my mind, all the more insidious.

It is important to note in this context that Simon's decision to omit passages from the source text was part of a common practice. Already in 1877, Nahum Sokolov, who later became a prominent Zionist leader, wrote an article in the Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Zefirah* defending the deletion of passages – for the 'benefit' of Jewish readers – in Hebrew translations. The impetus for his article was the Hebrew translation of Zvi Gretz's famous book on Jewish history, from which many passages had been excised (Soffer, 2001, pp. 160–2). The practice of deleting sections from history books persisted well into the 1950s so that even the Hebrew translation of Werner Keller's *Und die Bible hat doch Recht*, which attempts to corroborate the Bible's historical factuality, omits the parts dealing with the New Testament (Keller, 1956 (German), 1958 (Hebrew)).

Whole passages have also been cut from novels that were translated into Hebrew. Nitsa Ben-Ari discusses the translation of scores of German Jewish historical novels and stories, which were originally written for a German audience in the nineteenth century. She shows that while the German novels tried to break away from the traditional notion of the Diaspora as a temporal stage in order to prove their allegiance to their country of birth, the translators, through omissions and additions, accentuated the importance of the return to Zion and referred to the Diaspora as a temporary period of exile (Ben-Ari, 2000, pp. 47–8). Along the same lines, the 1893 translation of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* omits the whole story of Deronda's Christian friend, Gwendolen, while the translation of the well-known historical novel *Ben-Hur*, which describes a Jewish hero who rebels against the Roman Empire, excises all references connected to the birth of Christianity as well as to Ben-Hur's own conversion; the text was rearranged so that it conformed to a model 'of Jewish historical fiction favored by "Jewish-Bravura-against-the-Romans"' (Ben-Ari, 1992, p. 224). In a similar manner ideological motives had an effect on the translation of children's books.<sup>5</sup> Only recently have Israeli scholars begun exploring these kinds of ideological influences in a systematic fashion, primarily in novels and children's books, but no one as of yet has examined the translation of political philosophy. It is precisely this gap, which this essay hopes to begin filling.

## The Elimination of Harriet Taylor

The 'dialogue among Christians' was not, however, the only text to be excised by Simon. Turning to the book's first page, one notices that the Hebrew edition, like the English original, begins with a short epigraph: 'The grand, leading principle, towards which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity' (1991a, p. 2, English). In this first sentence, taken from *Spheres and Duties of Government*, a book written by the Prussian philologist and reformer Baron Karl Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Mill emphasizes the importance of being open to the richest diversity. Between the epigraph and Mill's 'Introduction', there appears an acknowledgment in the original English text (1991a, p. 3). I will quote the acknowledgment in full, because in addition to being the most beautiful dedication I have ever come across, it constitutes a political statement. Moreover, the acknowledgment can be read as a manifestation of the diversity to which Mill alludes.

To the beloved and deplored memory of her who was the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings – the friend and wife whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation was my chief reward – I dedicate this volume. Like all that I have written for many years, it belongs as much to her as to me; but the work as it stands has had, in a very insufficient degree, the inestimable advantage of her revision; some of the most important portions having been reserved for a more careful re-examination, which they are now never destined to receive. Were I but capable of interpreting to the world one half the great thoughts and noble feelings which are buried in her grave, I should be the medium of a greater benefit to it, than is ever likely to arise from anything that I can write, unprompted and unassisted by her all but unrivalled wisdom (1991a, p. 3).

Like Jesus, Calvin, and Aurelius, these incredibly touching words have been erased from the Hebrew edition. The fact that Simon translated the epigraph and turned directly to the 'Introduction', thus skipping over the acknowledgment, suggests that he considered the latter insignificant, perhaps 'strange'. But in contradistinction to the different sections that were omitted because they include a dialogue between Christians, the deletion of the acknowledgment does not even warrant mention in Simon's introductory remarks. Moreover, the translator's own acknowledgment to Ari Iben-Zahav, who was 'extremely helpful in improving the language', was not edited out of the preamble (1946, p. x). Why was Mill's tribute axed? Was it indeed 'strange' and as such offensive, even threatening? Or perhaps the translator did not consider the dedication valuable enough to appear in Hebrew print. But if so, why wasn't it deemed important?

The acknowledgement refers to Harriet Taylor (1807–58), Mill's companion, and after her first husband's death (1849), Mill's wife, who died while he was making the final revisions of *On Liberty* (first published in 1859). While this dedication is striking because it reveals his deep appreciation and love for Taylor, one should consider it also in relation to the time it was written – a time when all women were disenfranchised and could not own property, and middle-class women were, for the most part, restricted to the household. Women were considered by most to be dependent and emotionally rather than rationally disposed. And their exclusion from the public sphere and positions of power was part and parcel of the 'construction of the entitlement of men to democratic participation which conferred citizen status not upon individuals as such, but upon men in their capacity as members and representatives of a family (i.e., a group of non citizens)' (Yuval Davis, 1993, p. 622). Seventy years later, the protagonist of Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* is barred from entering the 'Oxbridge' library, the sanctuary of 'truth', and when she goes to the British Museum to look for books on women, she finds only books written by men, among them Professor Von X's volume on *The Mental, Moral and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex* (1981, p. 31).

Aware of the pervading views, Mill, one of the major thinkers of his time, nonetheless insists on disclosing that Taylor is the 'inspirer' and 'in part the author' of his work; her wisdom, he maintains, is 'unrivalled'. In his autobiography Mill adds: 'The [sic] *Liberty* was more directly and literally our joint production than anything

else which bears my name, for there was no sentence of it that was not several times gone through by us together, turned over in many ways, and carefully weeded of any faults, either in thought or expression, that we detected in it ... The whole mode of thinking of which the book was the expression, was emphatically hers' (1960, pp. 176–7). A few pages earlier he reveals that Taylor was the joint author of other books and articles that were published under his name (1960, p. 171).<sup>6</sup>

Taking into account the social status of women both in the mid-nineteenth century, when the acknowledgment was written, and in the mid-twentieth century, when the book was translated into Hebrew, Mill's acknowledgment becomes a site of potential political subversion. By deleting it, the translator silences questions and forecloses suggestive tensions that could engender subversive interpretations. The dedication's emphasis on the capability and role of the other, one of the nineteenth century 'strangers', has the potential of producing a dissonance and creating ambivalence, thus disrupting traditional gender roles. The dedication reveals the possibility of a meaningful and even symmetrical heterosexual partnership in the domestic domain, which, in turn, debunks the notion that male rule within this domain is in some sense natural. In this way it also exposes the exclusion of women from the public sphere to be a result of violence and suppression (i.e., political) and not due to some natural inferiority, since the successful naturalization of women's subordination within the public sphere is tied to and contingent upon the naturalization of gendered hierarchies in the domestic domain (McClintock, 1997, p. 91). Conversely, once the subjugation of women is revealed to be political – rather than natural – in one realm, it becomes noticeable that the same is true regarding the other realm.

That Mill was aware of and concerned about these issues is obvious in view of 'his' groundbreaking book *The Subjection of Women*, which was published in 1869 but already completed in 1861, just two years after he wrote the accolade in *On Liberty* (Gray, 1991, p. viii). Mill and Taylor had been working on the book for some years when Taylor died of tuberculosis. Helen, Harriet Taylor's daughter, helped him complete the project. In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill and the two Taylors emphatically argue that although it may appear 'natural', 'the inequality of rights between men and women has no other source than the law of the strongest' (1991b, pp. 482, 476). They also point out that 'the generality of the male sex cannot yet tolerate the idea of living with an equal. Were it not for that, I think that almost everyone, in the existing state of opinion in politics and political economy, would admit the injustice of excluding half the human race from the greater number of lucrative occupations, and from almost all high social functions; ordaining from their birth either that they are not, and cannot by any possibility become, fit for employments which are legally open to the stupidest and basest of the other sex ...' (1991b, p. 524). Bearing in mind that women's inequality is often sustained in the interests of demarcating and preserving the identities of national/ethnic collectives (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 435), I will argue later that Taylor's elimination serves the Zionist project.

It is likely, of course, that the translator did not actually reflect on the political significance of the acknowledgment, but simply decided to erase it without devoting



much thought to the matter. After all, the omission of text relating to the emancipation of women was not an isolated occurrence in the history of translation, which gives credence to the claim that translators do not work in a vacuum, and that their decisions often reflect the imperatives of their time and culture (Lefevere, 1992; Snell-Hornby, 1990).<sup>7</sup> Mill and Taylor may have agreed, for they claim that in 'history, as in traveling, men usually see only what they already had in their own minds; and few learn much from history, who do not bring much with them to its study' (1991b, p. 494). Regardless of whether Simon's decision resulted from his inability to see what he did not already bring to the translation or from the prevalent chauvinistic political atmosphere in which he was working, the outcome of his decision has political ramifications.

From Mill and Taylor's perspective, Simon's reasons for deleting text are, in a sense, irrelevant. The fact that one does not understand, agree with, comprehend the significance or even tolerate what others have to say, does not, according to *On Liberty*, provide sufficient ground to censor them. Moreover, the erasure of passages was antithetical to the text he was translating, and although his decision was not nearly as grave as the one made by those ancient Athenians whose infamous verdict against Socrates continues to haunt us until this day, the omission constitutes a sin against philosophy. Maybe because the elision of text was not fore-grounded by the translator until this day philosophy professors who teach *On Liberty* at Israeli universities rarely alert their students to the fact that large parts of the text have been erased, thus perpetuating the defect.

Before turning to examine the precise connection between Taylor's elimination, the omission of Christian references, and the Zionist project, it is important to point out that this case already reveals a variety of levels on which translation, through rewriting and censorship, can hinder the search for truth. On one level, which Benjamin calls the transmission of information, the Hebrew reader remains ignorant of a multiplicity of issues, ranging from the co-authorship of the book to information about Calvin and Marcus Aurelius or even people like Thomas Pooley, George Jacob Holyoake and Baron de Gleichen. On another level, which gestures towards Benjamin's notion of *intentio*, the reader is left unaware of Mill and Taylor's intellectual partnership or the implications arising from the interesting link the authors draw between Socrates and Jesus. Finally, and on what seems to be the level of the authors' *intentio*, the worldview advanced in parts of the excised text has the potential to disrupt those modes of thinking and concentrations of power that constitute certain social hierarchies which exclude and oppress the other, the 'unlawful stranger'. One message *On Liberty* undoubtedly conveys is that in politics there is an incessant need to protect the 'stranger'.

### Religion, Patriarchy, and the Nationalist Project

Perusing other philosophical texts that were translated during this period one notices that there was a climate of excision. Other classics used in Introduction to Political Theory classes were also 'shortened' by Magnes Press. It initially seems, however, that the decisions to cut these texts were benign. Professional considerations and financial restrictions rather than political motives appear to be the

reasons hindering the translation of the full texts. But then again, are professional and financial considerations ever totally disconnected from a political agenda?

The second half of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) was, for example, never translated into Hebrew. This half is made-up of two parts (three and four), which deal with the relationship between church and state: part three discusses a 'Christian Common Wealth' and part four 'The Kingdom of Darkness'. At the outset it seems that one cannot extend the discussion of *On Liberty* to the *Leviathan*. Although the parts dealing specifically with Christianity were precisely those passed over, there are two major differences between the texts. First, Hobbes discusses the Christian church, Christianity, and religion in general in the first two parts, and the sections dealing with these issues were translated in full. Second, parts three and four are considered less important by many political theorists and philosophers, and it is not uncommon that only the first two parts are taught in introductory classes.

Similarly, Locke's *Two Treatise of Government* (1690) was never translated in full, and the Hebrew reader has access only to the *Second Treatise of Government* (translated in 1948). This part of the classic text constitutes Locke's positive thoughts on civil government, as opposed to the *First Treatise*, which is a critique dedicated to Robert Filmer's notion of patriarchic government. Again the omitted text is, generally speaking, not considered as important as the *Second Treatise*, not to mention that each treaty can be intelligibly studied as a separate text.

But when taking into account the *Weltanschauung* in Israel at the time the books were translated, it becomes unclear whether the decisions to omit the parts in which Hobbes criticizes the Church and Locke attacks patriarchy were simply 'professional'. Examining the two texts closely actually allows us to tease out the link between Taylor's removal, the aversion to Christianity, and the creation of Israel's national identity.

Hobbes condemns Catholics for having a sovereign head of church which is independent of state authority and Protestant sects for claiming that the Bible can be interpreted by individual believers, and thus independently of state authority. His criticism is aimed at potential challenges to state authority posed by different forms of Christianity. The un-translated third and fourth parts of Hobbes's *Leviathan* discuss the dangers of granting religious groups powers that are independent of state control. Hobbes, as the reader may recall, published his book three years after the Westphalia Agreement, which is considered to be the period in which the nation-state was constituted as a political entity and the Church's power contained. Nowadays, the authority of the religious establishment is repeatedly discussed by Israeli political commentators who stress that when push comes to shove the powerful religious groups within Israel do not respect the state's democratic institutions. These commentators often fail to point out, however, that the fusion between religion and state served Israel's nationalistic aspirations and consequently remained uncontested by the secular elite for many years.

Zionism correlates with what scholars like Deniz Kandiyoti, following Tom Nairn (1977), have called the Janus-faced quality of nationalist discourse, which 'presents itself both as a modern project that melts and transforms traditional attach-

ments in favor of new identities and as a reaffirmation of authentic cultural values culled from the depth of a presumed communal past' (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 431). From the heyday of the Zionist movement a link was drawn between national and Jewish identities, and over the years the relationship between the two has been constantly renegotiated (Kimmerling, 1985, 1999; Evron, 1988; Silberstein, 1999). For instance, on June 19, 1947, David Ben-Gurion, who was to be Israel's first prime minister, wrote a letter to the ultra-Orthodox non-Zionist organization Agudat Israel, requesting their support in the process of establishing a state. In the letter he makes three commitments: (1) *Shabbat* will be the legal day of rest; (2) *kashrut* will be observed in all state kitchens; and (3) on civil issues 'everything possible will be done to meet the deep needs of the religious public' (Kimmerling, 1999, p. 350). In the Israeli Declaration of Independence we read that the 'Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed'.

The Zionist secular *avante garde*, which constantly stressed the values of the Enlightenment, invoked the traditional Jewish experience for two major reasons: first, to substantiate a historic right to a specific territory (and thus also to distance themselves from the global colonial context by representing the Zionist movement as a 'return to Zion') (Kimmerling, 1999, p. 341); and second, to homogenize Israel's diverse immigrant population. The specific form of Judaism summoned in the service of the national project of state building was an exclusionary one both territorially (the attachment to the 'Holy Land') and conceptually (the emphasis of the covenant and chosen people). It had far-reaching political ramifications, not least of which was the abandonment of a pluralist and universal imagination for the sake of an exclusionary identity politics (Raz-Karkotzkin, 1993; Piterberg, 1995; Kimmerling, 1999).<sup>8</sup> One of the most tragic consequences of incorporating this particular form of atavistic Judaism is that it provides concreteness to the 'us versus them' mentality linked to all nationalisms by inscribing an *ethnic* divide between Jews and Palestinians that is saturated with Manichean overtones.

This Judaism is inextricably bound-up with patriarchy, and its integration into the Zionist identity has inevitably introduced a deep-seated gender bias into the national project. In 1962, when Hobbes's book was translated, the state was only fourteen years old, and questions regarding the religion/state nexus and its implications for women's rights, equality, citizenship and democracy in general, were kept, to a large extent, on the back burner. The decision not to translate the third and fourth parts in which Hobbes discusses the power of religion and the dangers it poses to the nation-state could be construed as helping to ensure the continual repression of these issues.

The same appears to be true regarding Locke's omitted text. *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings*, was widely acclaimed at the time of its publication (1680), because Filmer ties English nationalism with patriarchy, thus repeating what was considered evident by many of his contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> Filmer attempts to extend the traditional family hierarchy to the public realm, and in this was to validate the hierarchical rule of one man over society. He uses Biblical text to justify patriarchy, linking it to the natural order, i.e., to the hand of God, and then argues that human

beings are not free. This latter claim leads him, in turn, to advocate monarchy. Locke examines the Biblical texts that Filmer employs to support his arguments, showing that the latter's interpretation of the Bible is unintelligible. By uncovering the fallacies in Filmer's interpretation, Locke reveals that the existing social hierarchies are not part of a natural order, but are upheld by power. The critique of Filmer's book enables Locke to establish the notion that all human beings are born equal and free, a notion that serves as the basis for his claims in the *Second Treatise*.<sup>10</sup>

Locke's *First Treatise* exposes the by now well-known tactic of using religion in order to uphold patriarchy within a national context; in this way it also helps us draw the link between the deletion of Harriet Taylor and the creation of Israeli national identity.<sup>11</sup> Judaism implicates patriarchy, as evident in numerous religious texts not least of which is the prayer which Orthodox men repeat every morning: 'I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast not created me a woman'. When it appropriated and incorporated Orthodox Judaism into the national project, the secular establishment did not contest the gender inequality and subjugation of women underlying Orthodoxy. Moreover, it made quite a few concessions in order to appease the religious establishment. One such concession, which has had a devastating impact on women, is the division of Israel's legal system into civil and rabbinical courts. The latter are responsible, in large part, over 'matters of personal status', namely, issues relating to marriage, divorce, custody, alimony, guardianship, adoption, wills and legacies; their judgment consistently undermine women's basic rights, equality and freedom.

The grid of power relations informing the constitution of Israeli nationalism corroborates McClintock's claim that nationalisms are gendered, invented and dangerous (1997, p. 89). The gendered aspects of Israel's nationalism are apparent in all those places (but surely not limited to them) where nationalism is implicated in Orthodox Jewish edicts. As mentioned earlier, the secular leadership in Palestine and in newly established Israel fostered the religious institutions in order to homogenize the immigrant population *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians and to justify territorial claims. We now see that the covenant between nationalism and Judaism also engendered and maintained patriarchal hierarchies that have been sustained over the years through party politics. The religious parties consistently support secular parties on condition that the latter not disrupt the existing patriarchic structures. Locke's criticism of Filmer's patriarchy, while strictly speaking not a feminist text, has the potential of laying bare how the incorporation of a certain form of Judaism into the national project created a gender biased patriarchic society.

This is where Harriet Taylor comes back into the picture, for the regulation of gender is revealed to be central to the articulation of a national identity. Taylor's representation has the potential of producing a counter-narrative that might raise disturbing questions that have, in turn, the potential of disrupting the Zionist discourse by challenging the religious establishment's power base and in this way endangering the religion/state fusion and the national project that was constituted through it. It is within this context that one should understand Harriet Taylor's elimination; within this context Mill's dedication becomes a potential impetus encouraging a feminist consciousness.

## Classic Philosophy and the Other Zionism: the Case of Leon Roth

The preceding discussion suggests that a variety of ideological positions can be disclosed simply by examining the erasure process employed during translation. But it would be a critical mistake to assume that the translation of classic philosophy into Hebrew was motivated solely by the ideologies discussed hitherto. Rather, it appears to me that the altered and revised texts I have discussed are in effect a sign that one ideology overpowered another and led, as it were, to the corruption of the spirit underlying the original project of translating classics into Hebrew, a project that was initiated by Leon Roth for different ideological reasons (1896–1963).

Most scholars of my generation are unfamiliar with Leon (Haim Yehuda) Roth, the founder of the series in which *On Liberty*, *Leviathan* and *Locke's Second Treatise* were published.<sup>12</sup> Born in London to an observant Jewish family, in 1928 Roth left a comfortable position at Manchester University in order to establish the philosophy department at Hebrew University, Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> At the age of forty-four he became Rector (1940–43) and later Dean of Humanities (1949–51) (Ullendorff, 1999, pp. x–xvii). Life in Palestine during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s was often gruelling and, like other Zionists, he and his wife Winifred must have made considerable sacrifices.

During his tenure at Hebrew University, Roth helped establish what later became Magnes Press and was an editor for a certain period, as well as chair of its executive committee. The series of philosophical classics, which has published 41 books since its inception, is the product of his initiative and diligence. Roth himself translated four short volumes of Aristotle's writings and edited twelve other books (none of the books mentioned in the first parts of this essay were published under his tutelage).<sup>14</sup>

He began the project in 1934 by translating Book One of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. One should keep in mind that the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language had begun only fifty years before and that the Jewish population in Palestine consisted of a mere 300,000 people at the time. Many Jews were new immigrants who were struggling to make ends meet in an undeveloped country, and a large number could not even read Hebrew. How many Jews living in Palestine in 1934 could have been interested in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and how many of these would have chosen to read it in Hebrew?

Surely the motives underlying the project were Zionist. A basic part of nation building is the translation of classic texts to the local vernacular, and Roth took it upon himself to accomplish this goal. Later, he even claimed that the State of Israel was created by modern Hebrew, and not vice versa (Roth, 1959, p. 180). Indeed the revival of the 'holy language', alongside the attempt to secularize and transform it into a modern language, was part and parcel of the Zionist venture. But to understand the translation project simply in these terms is to misunderstand Roth. Neither an ardent nationalist nor a conventional Zionist, Roth was an independent thinker who believed in the establishment of a bi-national state, rather than a Jewish one.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, three years after Israel's declaration

of independence, following a brilliant career, he suddenly packed his bags and left the country.

In a memoir dedicated to the philosopher, Raphael Loewe explains that Roth's decision was a result of a deep disappointment with the Jewish State: 'He had gone out to Palestine in the hope that it was to constitute a truly Jewish contribution to the polity of man. It being his experience that Jewish ethics and notions of justice were not given any marked enunciation in the national life of Israel ... he saw no reason to remain in the country any longer' (Loewe 1967, pp. 8–9). Thus, Roth came to Israel for moral reasons and left it for moral reasons.

Loewe cogently describes Roth's vision as one of establishing 'Jewish ethics and notions of justice' in Israel's national life. But one must distinguish Roth's understanding of Judaism and the conception of Judaism used to create Israel's national identity. In an essay entitled 'Baruch Spinoza: His Religious Importance for the Jew of Today', Roth criticizes the great philosopher for perceiving Judaism as a 'tribal habit of life, isolationist and misanthropic, a device for group survival' (1999, p. 100). Spinoza was describing a form of Judaism that rejects the 'stranger' and is intolerant towards difference. Roth denounces this form of Judaism, pointing out that 'according to the rabbis the command to be kind to strangers is given in the Pentateuch no less than thirty-six times!' (Roth, 1999, p. 66). He therefore does not abandon Judaism for the sake of the Enlightenment as many secular Jews did, but rather maintains that an isolationist Judaism is based on a misguided reading of the religious texts and a misunderstanding of the message proffered by the great Jewish prophets.

In his writings, Roth attempts to articulate a different conception of Judaism, one that espouses a universalistic ethics – a universalism that does not attempt to appropriate the other, but rather strives to accept the other in his/her otherness. It is no coincidence that Roth left Israel a mere three years after the state was established; his views did not sit well with either the modern or the traditional streams of thought that constituted the Zionist project. Modernity, as mentioned, stressed categorical notions of universalism, and traditionalism emphasized an atavistic conception of Judaism. Both streams of thought, albeit in different ways, rejected the 'stranger'.

His rejection of tribal Judaism manifests itself clearly in his book *The Guide for the Perplexed: Moses Maimonides*. In it, Roth suggests that we do not find in Maimonides 'the conception of an exclusive connection between religion and the Jewish people, or between religion and Palestine, or between such religious phenomena as prophecy and the geographical condition of Palestine. Judaism for him is not a product of "race" or an inheritance of "blood", nor is it bound up exclusively with any one people or any one soil' (1955, p. 123). As Samuel Hugo Bergman notes, in many of his writings Roth distinguishes between two opposing and contradictory strains of Jewish thought. Whereas the first is humanistic, enlarging and universalistic, the second is reductive, narrow, and has a separatist character (Bergman *et al.*, 1963, p. 5).

As indicated, Roth, however, did not simply adopt the modern project and its conception of universalism, for he was constantly interested in the traditional and

particular, in his case Jewish life and thought. In order to understand what kind of universalism he espouses let us return to Mill, but now, as Roth perceived him. In the final passage of *Government of the People by the People: Fundamentals of Democracy*, which was written in Hebrew and published right after Israel's establishment, Roth claims:

We are all currently asking what can we do in order to help the state? The answer is simple: we must give of ourselves, we need to be ourselves and give ourselves, and demand also from others that they be and give themselves. We must purge the monkey ideal, whereby every person trains to be the mirror of the other. Each one must learn to be oneself. Only if we cultivate this diversity will we be able both to create a worthy unity and to constitute a true democratic state, for (in the words of J. S. Mill) the value of a state is nothing but the values of the individuals who comprise it (1949, p. 74, translation mine)

For Roth, it was clear that a Judaism true to its origins is universalistic, one that made room for the other and enabled him/her to live in his/her otherness. This is why he advocated the establishment of a bi-national political entity with complete equality of rights between Jews and Palestinians. He believed that this worldview correlates with the teachings of philosophy and therefore endeavored to make it accessible to Jewish students in Palestine. Indeed, the translation enterprise was launched as an effort to instill an alternative moral content into the national project and in this way to help cultivate an ethical community in Palestine. In the words of the Greek philosophers whom he admired, Roth was concerned with the good and just life at a historical moment in which most people were concerned with mere life. When he realized that his attempt had failed and that the Jewish leadership was interested only with questions of existence, he returned to England. It is in this light that one should understand his endeavor to make classic philosophy available to future generations. There is nothing more foreign to his way of thinking than an identity politics based on exclusion, and accordingly one may assume that he would have been among the first to disagree with the decision to erase references to Taylor and Christianity from Mill's text.<sup>16</sup>

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### Notes

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- 1 Rashy is an acronym for Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a Talmudic scholar who invented a script different from Hebrew that is used for commentary on sacred Jewish texts.
- 2 There are many other cases where passages have been omitted from books for ideological, poetical, or personal reasons. Consult, for example, Lefevere's (1992) intriguing analysis of reasons leading to censorship of *Anne Frank's Diaries*.
- 3 According to Raz-Krakotzkin, the 'negation of exile' alludes to the constitution of a Zionist identity through the negation of memory, whether the memory of the Diaspora Jew or the Palestinian.

- 4 When I alerted Magnes Press about the quality of the translation, the director of the Press immediately stated that he would be willing to fund and publish a new translation.
- 5 Why, Ben-Ari asks, does the butterfly Gottfried, in Erich Kästner's *Das Fliegende Klassenzimmer* 'undergo a name change to "Abshalom", while the calf Eduard can keep his original (less German-sounding) name'. Similarly, in Kästner's *Das Doppelte Lottchen* religious sentiments dictate that 'bacon' becomes 'veal' and that the 'Christmas tree' transform into a 'channukiah'. Omission of Christian motifs from Oscar Wilde's 'The Happy Prince' is also pervasive. Ben-Ari concludes that the on-going tendency to replace a non-Jewish repertoire with a Jewish one in children's literature 'is an epigonic remnant of a norm once dominant in adult literature as well' (1992, p. 227).
- 6 Mill and Taylor's decision to omit her name from the texts is a sign that they too remained trapped within accepted norms and thus helped perpetuate a gendered hierarchy. During this period, women were beginning to reveal their authorship, while there are also much earlier instances of acknowledged women writing. Simon de Beauvoir states the first 'woman to take up a pen in defense of her sex' was Christine de Pisan, who in the fifteenth century wrote *Épître au Dieu d'Amour*, an essay offering a 'lively attack on the clerics' (1989: 105). In the seventeenth century Marie Le Jars de Gournay composed two outspoken essays *Égalité des hommes et des Femmes* (1622) and *Grief des Dames* (1626). And almost seventy years before the publication of *On Liberty*, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and Judith Sargent Murray published *The Gleaner* (1792).
- 7 In 1947, one year after Simon translated *On Liberty*, Otto Frank, Anne's father, bowed to the Dutch publishing house and excised the passages dealing with the emancipation of women (Lefevre, 1992, p. 64).
- 8 Raz Karkotzkin convincingly argues that the 'other' also includes the Diaspora Jew (1993; 1994). Gabriel Peterberg adds that the Sephardic Jew is also one type of an 'other' (1995).
- 9 Filmer was writing during the Restoration and in its service, while Locke, who was affiliated with the Whigs, published the *Two Treatise* one year after the Glorious Revolution (1689).
- 10 For a discussion of inconsistencies and ambivalences of Locke's notion of equality consult MacPherson (1964).
- 11 Locke and Filmer conceive patriarchal rule in the public realm, the hierarchical rule of one man over society, as an extension of the traditional family hierarchy.
- 12 In 1999, the Littman Library for Jewish Civilization published a posthumous book (with an updated bibliography of all Roth's writings) in order 'to make known to a new generation Roth's writings and teachings of Judaism, ethics and philosophy and their interrelationships' (Roth, 1999).
- 13 During the WWI, Roth was commissioned to the Jewish Battalion of the allied forces, where his sergeant was David Ben-Gurion. Following the war, he returned to Exeter College, Oxford in order to complete his degree, and in 1923 he obtained a position in the department of philosophy at Manchester University (Ullendorff, 1988, pp. 62–3; 1999, pp. x–xi; Loewe, 1966, pp. 1–13).
- 14 Consult his bibliography in Roth (1999).
- 15 He was a member of Brith Shalom, as were Judah L. Magnes and Martin Buber, all of whom were for the creation of a bi-national democratic state and emphasized the equality of rights of Jews and Arabs.
- 16 In 1947, Roth travelled to the USA and gave a few public lectures. Following a lecture in Los Angeles in which he criticized some of the policies of the Jewish establishment in Palestine, the Zionist Organization in Los Angeles sent an angry telegram to Hebrew University, asking its authorities to reprimand Roth for engaging in 'anti-Zionist propaganda'. In the University's archives, one finds a heated exchange between Roth and Leon Simon, who was at the time the chair of the university's executive board. Leon Roth, Hebrew University Archive files (15 June 1947; 15 July 1947; 23 October 1947) also *Los Angeles Times* 6 June 1947, 'Prof. L. Roth Stirs Wrath of Zionists'.

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