Representations of Italy in the First Hebrew Shakespeare Translations

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Introduction

The first Hebrew translations of complete Shakespeare plays appeared in Central and Eastern Europe in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, although Jewish authors had expressed admiration for the renowned English playwright as far back as the first few decades of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) in the late 1700s and early 1800s (see Almagor 1975 and Toury 2012: 145-7, 171-2 for details). This small group of late nineteenth-century translations was produced by adherents of the Haskalah and comprised part of a singular drive to establish a modern European-style literature in Hebrew and imbued with Jewish national consciousness (see Patterson 1964, 1988; Abramson and Parfitt 1985; and Pelli 2006 for discussion of the development of this literature). The authors' selection of Hebrew as the vehicle of this new literary enterprise was a highly conscious and ideologically motivated decision, given that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the language was almost solely a written rather than a spoken medium, just on the cusp of its large-scale revernacularization in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Harshav 1993: 81-180 and Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 267-72 for details of the revernacularization project). As such, the translated plays were intended primarily for private reading rather than performance; indeed, there was no established Hebrew-language theatre at the time, with the first organized attempts at such an initiative emerging only in 1909 (Zer-Zion 2010).

As part of this intensely ideological endeavour, Maskilic (Jewish Enlightenment) writers typically employed a highly domesticating translation strategy with the aim of producing target texts reflecting Jewish culture. This translatorial philosophy was not a new development, but was itself rooted in a long tradition of dechristianizing and Judaizing Hebrew adaptations of European literary works dating back to the medieval and early modern periods, including e.g. the thirteenth-century Hebrew version of the legend of King Arthur (see Leviant 2003; Rovang 2009; Valles 2013: 38-76), the *Bovo-bukh*, a sixteenth-century Yiddish adaptation of the English romance *Bevis of Hampton* via its Italian version *Buovo d'Antona* (see Shmeruk 1988: 150-2; Baumgarten 2005: 176-7, 183-4; Valles 2013: 152-209), and Sephardic Jewish versions of Spanish ballads (see Armistead and Silverman 1965). This domesticating approach manifests itself in many areas of the Hebrew Shakespeare translations, with common techniques including the deletion or Judaization of references to Christianity and Classical mythology, the insertion of biblical fragments into the target text,

the addition of Jewish religious and cultural elements, and the Hebraization of Latin and French linguistic features appearing in the source text (see Kahn forthcoming a-c for discussion of these issues).

A particularly fascinating aspect of the Maskilic Shakespeare translators' approach concerns their treatment of Italy. Of the six plays translated into Hebrew in the late nineteenth century, three have a wholly or partially Italian setting: Isaac Eduard Salkinson's איתיאל *iti'el* (*Othello*, 1874) and רם ויעל *ram veya'el* (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1878) and Jacob Elkind's מוסר סוררה *musar sorera* (*The Taming of the Shrew*, 1892). (Note that the translators' selection of these particular plays as opposed to other well-known Shakespearean works set in Italy such as *The Merchant of Venice* or *Much Ado about Nothing* is unclear. While the perceived anti-Jewish subject matter of *The Merchant of Venice* may have played a factor in their avoidance of that play, Maskilic authors did not shy away from it entirely: Hebrew translations of various small fragments of the work, including Shylock's monologue, appeared during the last quarter of the nineteenth century [see Almagor 1975: 739].) In the case of these three plays the translators' familiarity with the rich cultural legacy of Jewish Italy merged with their domesticating tendencies to influence the translations in remarkable ways, which will be explored in detail in this case study.

The Jews' relationship with Italy is a long and vibrant one dating back to the first groups of Judean captives brought to Rome, which are traceable to as early as the first century BCE (Noy 2000: 47). Jewish communities spread throughout the south of the country over the course of the next thousand years, leading to the emergence of a thriving cultural life by the end of the millennium including Talmudic academies as well as significant literary and scholarly activity, which continued to flourish in the medieval period (Milano et. al. 2007: 798-9). These communities produced major works on subjects ranging from Jewish philosophy and biblical commentary to science and medicine, some of which continued to be studied by Jews throughout Europe until the modern period; prominent examples include *Josippon*, a popular tenth-century adaptation of Josephus' *Jewish War*; the *Arukh,* an eleventh-century lexicon of the Talmud and midrashim composed by Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome (1035-c. 1110); and the writings of the physician Shabbetai Donnolo (913-c. 982). Over the subsequent centuries significant Jewish settlements were established in the central and northern parts of the country as well. Italian Jews continued to produce significant literary and scholarly contributions in the late medieval period; noteworthy examples include Obadiah of Bertinoro (c. 1450-before 1516), author of the standard commentary on the Mishnah; Elijah Levitas (1468 or 1469-1549), a grammarian, lexicographer, and author of the

above-mentioned Yiddish adaptation *Bovo-bukh*; and the extremely prominent biblical exegetes Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508) and Obadiah Sforno (c. 1470-c. 1550). By this period there were important Jewish centres in the major locations mentioned in *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, i.e. Venice, Padua, Mantua, and Verona (Milano et. al. 2007: 801).

Moreover, following the arrival of the printing press in Italy in the mid-fifteenth century the country became the centre of Hebrew publishing in Europe, a position which it retained until the eighteenth century (Zilberberg and Breger 2007: 531; Hacker and Shear 2011: 7-10). David Bomberg's printing house in Venice was a particularly prominent early hub of such activity, producing editions of the Hebrew Bible with commentaries, the Talmud, and numerous other essential Jewish texts (see Nielsen 2011 for details). As such, Italy played a key role in literary production and dissemination not only for local Jews, but also for their Central and Eastern European counterparts, as trade links between the Jewish communities in Italy and those in Germany and Poland-Lithuania ensured the widespread circulation of Hebrew books published in the Italian centres (Hacker and Shear 2011: 10).

This type of knowledge transfer continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the writings of Italian Jewish authors being widely circulated among their contemporaries in Central and Eastern Europe. Noteworthy examples of this trend include Moses Chaim Luzzatto (1707-46), a kabbalist from Padua whose ethical writings came to be held in extremely high esteem among Eastern European Jews (Dan and Hansel 2007: 284); Samuel Aaron Romanelli (1757-1817), a Maskilic author from Mantua who wrote poetry, drama, and a well-known travelogue and who lived in Vienna for several years (see Klausner 1952-3, 1: 307-19 for details); Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784-1855), a rabbi from Gorizia who wrote widely on various aspects of Jewish religion (see Klausner 1952-3, 4: 10-37 and Malkiel 2000: 276-303); and Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-65), a prominent biblical commentator, philosopher, translator, and philologist from Trieste (see Tobias 2007).

Salkinson and Elkind were almost certainly familiar with this long-established Jewish presence and cultural productivity in Italy, given the prominence of medieval Italian-based exegetes and commentators such as Obadiah of Bertinoro, Isaac Abarbanel, and Obadiah Sforno, whom they would undoubtedly have studied in the course of a traditional Jewish education. Moreover, they are likely to have regarded Italy as a thriving centre of Hebrew literary production thanks to the activity of Maskilic and other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors and thinkers such as Romanelli, Reggio, and Samuel David Luzzatto. This perception is evident in their unusual translatorial approach to the Shakespearean source texts

set in Venice, Verona, and Mantua: Salkinson and Elkind's awareness of Italy as a Jewish space is reflected in their decision to preserve the Italian geographical labels appearing in the English originals while infusing their translations with domesticating cultural and linguistic elements, including the Hebraization of personal names, the removal of Christian references, and numerous references to Jewish religious and folk-cultural concepts. These techniques serve to transform Italy from the somewhat exotic foreign location of Shakespeare's source texts into an unmistakably Jewish realm that serves as a plausible setting for the thoroughly domesticated Hebrew target texts. These points will be examined below in turn.

Italian place names and references to Italy

As mentioned above, the Maskilic translators systematically retain the Italian geographical labels appearing in the original plays, rather than replacing them with e.g. biblical or Eastern European locations. This practice contrasts starkly with the otherwise overwhelming tendency towards domestication seen throughout the translations (and to be discussed in further detail below). This seeming anomaly is likely rooted in the authors' abovementioned perception of Italy as the home of a long-established and distinguished Jewish population, with important communities in the locations mentioned in the plays, and as a centre of Jewish literary production. As such, this choice is likely not an exception to the translators' general domesticating principles but rather an intentional decision to retain the original settings by transforming them into components of an obviously Jewish Italy. This practice of preserving Italian geographical designations (while Judaizing the names of the characters that inhabit them, as will be examined below) can be seen by comparing the full title of the English *Othello* with the one that Salkinson gave to his translation:

Othello, the Moor of **Venice**

איתיאל, הכושי מו**ינעציה**

*iti'el, hakkuši miv**vineṣia***

Ithiel, the Moor of **Venice**

Similarly, both Salkinson and Elkind retain the other place names appearing in the source texts. Thus, Verona is the setting of *Romeo and Juliet* in both the English and Hebrew versions, e.g.:

With all the admired beauties of **Verona** (1.2.85)

בֵּין בְּנוֹת **וֵירוֹנָה** הַיְּקָרוֹת

*ben benot **verona** hayyeqarot*

Among the precious girls of **Verona** (Salkinson 1878: 20)

Likewise, Padua remains the setting of the play-within-a-play in Elkind's version of *The Taming of the Shrew* (though, interestingly, not of the framing story, which is set in 'Sharon', the northern coastal plain of Israel; the latter decision is part of a tendency to employ romantic motifs from the Book of Ruth and Song of Songs throughout the translation [see Kahn forthcoming a for discussion of this issue]):

I come to wife it wealthily in **Padua** (1.2.74)

אֶרְאֶה אִתָּה בְּ**פַדֻּבָּה** חַיֵּי עֹשֶׁר

*ere ittah be**faddubba** ḥayye ošer*

I shall see a life of wealth with her in **Padua** (Elkind 1892: 41)

Salkinson preserves the other Italian geographical epithets appearing in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, as in the following references to Florence and Mantua respectively:

One Michael Cassio, a **Florentine** (1.1.19)

אִישׁ כֶּשֶׂד שְׁמוֹ, יְלִיד עִיר **פְלָארעֶנְץ**

*iš kesed šemo, yelid ir **florenṣ***

A man called Chesed, a native of the city of **Florence** (Salkinson 1874: 2)

My lord and you were then at **Mantua** (1.3.29)

וְאַתְּ גְּבִרְתִּי, הָיִית עִם אֲדֹנִי אָז בְּ**מַנְטוּבָה**

*ve'at, gevirti, hayit im adoni az be**manṭuva***

And you, my mistress, were then with my lord in **Mantua** (Salkinson 1878: 22)

Similarly, Elkind preserves Italian place names such as Lombardy and Pisa in his translation, as shown below in turn:

I am arrived for fruitful **Lombardy** (1.1.3)

וּבָאתִי הֲלוֹם, לְלָ**מְבַּרְדְיָה** הַפּוֹרִיָה

*uvati halom, le**lombardya** happoriyya*

And I came here, to fruitful **Lombardy** (Elkind 1892: 23)

or meaner man of **Pisa** (1.1.204)

אוֹ בֶּן־בְּלִי־שֵׁם מִ**פִּיזָה**

*o ven-beli-šem mip**pizza***

Or a nameless man from **Pisa** (Elkind 1892: 34)

Elkind also retains an explicit mention of Italy near the beginning of Act 1, Scene 1:

The pleasant garden of **great Italy** (1.1.4)

הֲלֹא הִיא גַנָּהּ שֶׁל **אִיטַלְיָה הַבְּרוּכָה**

halo hi gannah šel iṭalya habberuḵa

Of course it is the garden of **blessed Italy** (Elkind 1892: 23)

It is noteworthy that Elkind chose to translate 'great' with בְּרוּכָה *beruḵa* 'blessed', as this alteration is rather undermotivated. The adjective בְּרוּכָה *beruḵa* 'blessed' has strong Jewish religious connotations, featuring regularly in the liturgy, including numerous appearances in the daily prayers, and Hebrew-reading audiences would likely have made this association. This translation decision thus has the effect of very subtly presenting Italy as a location of Jewish religious culture, a perception which may be attributable to the tradition of mystical, philosophical, and ethical writings composed by Italian Jews as discussed above.

Salkinson makes a similarly interesting change to a reference to Italy appearing in *Romeo and Juliet*. In Act 3, Scene 1, the English original reads as follows:

Come, come, thou art as hot a jack in thy mood **as any in Italy** (3.1.11-12)

Salkinson's version reads slightly differently:

אַתָּה הוּא מְהִיר־חֵמָה, **כְּאַחַד מִבְּנֵי אִטַלְיָאה**

atta hu mehir-ḥema, ke'aḥad mibbene iṭṭalliya

You are as quick to anger **as one of the Italians** (Salkinson 1878: 77)

This change has the striking effect of unequivocally designating the characters in question (Mercutio and Benvolio) as Jewish residents of Italy, who draw a clear comparison between themselves and non-Jewish Italians. This change fits in with the translators' overall conception of the plays' characters as Italian Jews, to which I shall now turn.

Replacement of Italian names

In contrast to their treatment of the Italian geographical labels appearing in Shakespeare's works, Salkinson and Elkind routinely replace the Italian names of the source texts with

biblical substitutes that would have been familiar to Maskilic readers. The names of the three plays' title characters illustrate this convention. Thus, Othello becomes אִיתִאֵל *iti'el* 'Ithiel', meaning 'God is with me', a name derived from Proverbs 30:1 and Nehemiah 11:7; similarly, Romeo is reinvented as רָם *ram* 'Ram', which appears in Ruth 4:19, while Juliet becomes יָעֵל *ya'el* Jael, based on Judges 4:18-22. Italian or Italianate names of other major and minor characters appearing in the original plays are altered in similar ways; for example, Petruccio is renamed פֶּרֶץ *pereṣ* 'Peretz', a common Jewish name based on the biblical character mentioned in Genesis 38 and Ruth 4:18, while Katherina is called חָגְלָה *ḥogla* Hoglah, a name deriving from Numbers 26:33. Similarly, Mercutio and Benvolio are named מְרָיוֹת *merayot* 'Meraioth' and בְּנָיָה *benayya* 'Benaia', both of which are mentioned on various occasions in Ezra and Chronicles. Iago becomes דּוֹאֵג *do'eg* 'Doeg', based on a character first mentioned in 1 Samuel 21:7, while Desdemona is transformed into אָסְנַת *osnat* 'Asenath', the namesake of Joseph's wife (first appearing in Genesis 41:45).

As these examples illustrate, Salkinson and Elkind often selected their Hebrew names on the basis of phonological correspondences with the English originals. In addition, there were sometimes symbolic factors motivating their choices, as the biblical names in question had unmistakable associations with certain qualities relevant to the characters bearing them. For example, Hoglah is one of the daughters of Zelophehad whose story is related in Numbers 27:1-11; in Jewish tradition she and her sisters are highly regarded as strong, independent women who dared to argue for equal inheritance rights alongside their male counterparts (see e.g. Babylonian Talmud *Bava Batra* 119b), and as such this name can be considered an appropriate equivalent for Katherina (see Kahn forthcoming a for further details). Similarly, Doeg is a particularly negative biblical character with uncanny resemblances to Iago, known as a liar, traitor, and killer (see Scolnicov 2001: 186-7 for further discussion of this name and for the symbolism of other biblicizing names in Salkinson's *Othello* translation).

However, when considered in the context of the plays' Italian settings, the selection of these biblical names has an important additional effect on the target text: in contrast to the English originals, in which the personal names serve to add an element of authenticity to the drama by highlighting its foreign setting, the translators' changes serve to transform the characters into inhabitants of an imagined Jewish Italy steeped in biblical associations, subtly evoking the centuries of Italian Jewish literary and scholarly productivity discussed above.

Removal of Christian references

Othello, Romeo and Juliet, and *The Taming of the Shrew* are all replete with Christian, often explicitly Catholic, references. Unsurprisingly, Salkinson and Elkind systematically remove these references or replace them with Jewish equivalents. This serves to underscore the Jewishness of the characters populating the Italy of the target texts, in contrast to the ostensibly non-Jewish Italians featuring in the English originals. This tendency is highly visible in *Romeo and Juliet*, which is laden with unambiguously Catholic elements in keeping with its Italian setting (Weis 2012: 205). One striking example is the following explicit reference to Mary appearing in the source text:

Jesu Maria, what a deal of brine (2.3.65)

Salkinson removes this overtly Christian allusion, which would have been regarded as unsuitable for inclusion in a Hebrew work intended for a Jewish audience:

כַּמָּה מֵי דְמְעָה שָׁפַכְתָּ כַּמָּטָר עַל גַּנָּה

kamma me dima šafaḵta kammaṭar al ganna

How much water of tears you have spilled like rain on a garden (Salkinson 1878: 60)

A similar case involves the Nurse's reference to Christian souls in Act 1, Scene 3:

Susan and she, God rest **all Christian souls,**
Were of an age (1.3.19-20)

Salkinson deletes this incongruous comment from his translation, as a Jewish character would not make such a reference:

וְשׁוֹשַׁנָּה בַּת גִּילָהּ נוֹלְדָה עִמָּהּ בְּשָׁנָה אֶחָת

vešošanna bat gilah noleda immah beshana eḥat
And Shoshana was her age; she was born with her in the same year (Salkinson 1878: 22)

A similar example concerns Othello's reference to 'Christian shame' in Act 2, Scene 3 of the source text:

For **Christian** shame, put by this barbarous brawl (2.3.168)

Salkinson neutralizes the Christian component of this line as follows:

בּוֹשׁוּ הִכָּלְמוּ מִמְּשׁוּבוֹתֵיכֶם

bušu hikkalemu mimmešuvoteḵem

Be ashamed, be humiliated by your wicked behaviour (Salkinson 1874: 67)

Elkind adopts a similar approach to Christian allusions appearing in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The following example from the source text is a case in point:

the prettiest Kate **in Christendom** (2.1.186)

As this reference to Christendom jars with the Judaized version of Italy presented in Elkind's translation, he replaces it with one suitable for utterance in a Jewish context, a phrase derived from Song of Songs 2:14:

חָגָא חֲמוּדָה, חָגָא **מֵחַגְוֵי סֶלַע**

*ḥaga ḥamuda, ḥaga **meḥaggeve sela***

Charming Haga, Haga **from the clefts of the rock** (Elkind 1892: 64)

Similarly, Christian festivals are replaced with their Jewish counterparts. An example is the holiday of Pentecost, which is celebrated in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions, and is mentioned in Act 1, Scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet:*

Come **Pentecost** as quickly as it will (1.5.36)

Salkinson domesticates this reference as follows:

בְּחַג **הַשָּׁבֻעוֹת** הַבָּא

beḥag hašavu'ot habba

On the next **festival of Shavuot** (Salkinson 1878: 35)

On one level, this is a necessary and straightforward translation decision considering that the Jewish festival of Shavuot, which commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, is the historical antecedent of the Christian Pentecost and falls at a similar time of the year, in late spring/early summer. Moreover, Salkinson would have struggled to find another way of translating the term given the lack of a recognized Hebrew word for Pentecost. However, on another level this substitution has the obvious effect of erasing the Christian connotations of the original and replacing them with explicitly Jewish ones, given that Salkinson's Hebrew-reading audience would automatically have understood the reference as being to the Jewish holiday rather than the Christian one (particularly as the rest of the translated text is so highly Judaizing).

Insertion of Jewish cultural elements

Similarly, Salkinson and Elkind insert Jewish content into lines lacking any particular cultural significance, Italian or otherwise, in the original. This tactic is evident in the description of Katherina and Petruccio's wedding in Act 3, Scene 2 of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the original, Baptista asks the following question:

What mockery will it be
To want the bridegroom when the priest attends
To speak the ceremonial rites of marriage? (3.2.4-6)

In Elkind's version these lines read somewhat differently:

אֵיךְ נִהְיֶה לִשְׂחוֹק!

כִּי נִפְקַד הֶחָתָן, והוּכַן הכֹּהֵן

לְסַדֵּר **הַחֻפָּה וּבִרְכוֹת הַנִּשׂוּאִין**

eḵ nihye liseḥoq!
ki nifqad heḥatan, vehuḵan hakkohen
lesadder **haḥuppa uvirḵot hannissu'in**

How we will be made a mockery!

For the bridegroom is missing, when the priest is ready

To arrange **the wedding canopy and the marriage blessings** (Elkind 1892: 85)

This insertion entirely changes the tone of the speech by transforming the wedding into an explicitly Jewish one, complete with a chuppah, the traditional canopy under which the couple and close family stand during the ceremony. Moreover, the alteration provides the reader with the information that the couple are to hear the בִּרְכוֹת הַנִּשּׂוּאִין *birḵot hannissu'in* 'marriage blessings', the set name for the blessings said during a Jewish wedding. Finally, the Hebrew translation כֹּהֵן *kohen* 'priest' has very different connotations from its English equivalent, evoking both the priests of the biblical Temple in Jerusalem and their descendants, who have retained a special status within the framework of rabbinic Judaism until the present day.

A similar alteration can be seen in Act 2, scene 1 of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the source text Katherina responds to Petruccio's comment that 'women are made to bear' with the statement,

No such **jade** as you, if me you mean (2.1.202)

By contrast, in Elkind's version Hoglah says:

לֹא **גֹלֶם** כָּמוֹךָ, אִם אוֹתִי תְדַמֶּה

lo golem kamoḵa, im oti tedamme

Not a **golem** like you, if you have me in mind (Elkind 1892: 65)

A golem is a popular concept in Jewish folklore, perhaps dating back to the Talmud (Kieval 2010) and mentioned in medieval mystical works that describe ways of animating inorganic

matter in imitation of the Divine. The most famous example of this phenomenon is the Golem of Prague, which was said to have been animated by the Maharal, Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, in an attempt to protect the Jewish community from anti-Semitic attacks. This type of insertion serves to reinforce the Jewish connotations of the characters and setting, and further to distance the target text from any associations with the non-Jewish Italy of the original.

Another intriguing example of such domestication can be seen at the beginning of Salkinson's *Romeo and Juliet* translation. In the original, Act 1, Scene 1 opens with the following lines:

SAMSON   Gregory, on my word, we'll not **carry coals**.
GREGORY   No, for then we should be **colliers**. (1.1.1-2)

By contrast, the Hebrew version opens with the exchange shown below, in which the coals and colliers are replaced by wood and woodcutters:

שמשי   אַחַת דִּבַּרְתִּי גֵרָא, לֹא **נַחְטֹב** עוֹד **עֵצִים**.

גרא   כֵּן דִּבַּרְתָּ, כִּי לָמָּה נִהְיֶה **חֹטְבֵי עֵצִים**.

*šimšay aḥat dibbarti gera, lo **naḥṭov** od eṣim.*
*gera   ken dibbarta, ki lamma nihye **ḥoṭeve eṣim**.*

SHIMSHAY   On my word, Gera, we shall no longer **cut wood**.
GERA   You are right, for why should we be **woodcutters**? (Salkinson 1878: 1)

Salkinson's substitution of 'woodcutters' for 'colliers' is in fact an explicitly Judaizing functional equivalent. Although not associated specifically with Italian Jewry, woodcutting was a common occupation among their Eastern European brethren well into the twentieth century (see Salsitz 2002: 84-7); moreover, it would have been widely recognized among Hebrew readers as a classic form of manual labour due to its appearance in a well-known phrase from Joshua 9:21, 'woodcutters and water carriers'. Thus, Salkinson chooses to populate his play with Hebrew-speaking characters whose conception of physical work is rooted in an unambiguously Jewish perspective.

Adaptation of Italian linguistic elements

The final aspect of the Judaized Italy discussed in the present case study concerns Elkind's treatment of Italian expressions and sentences, which appear on various occasions in the English source text of *The Taming of the Shrew*. For example, Petruccio and Hortensio conduct the following short exchange in Italian in Act 1, Scene 2:

PETRUCCIO *Con tutto il cuore ben trovato*, may I say. 1.2.24

[With all my heart, well met]

HORTENSIO *Alla nostra casa ben venuto, molto honorata signor mio Petruccio*. (1.2.25-6)

[Welcome to our house, most esteemed Petruccio]

Elkind replaces these Italian elements with their equivalent in Aramaic:

פרץ ‏„בִּרְעוּת נַפְשָׁאִי מֵיתָךְ לְטַב" אֲשִׁיבָה.

גוני ‏„בְּרִיךְ אַתְּ בְּמֵיעֲלָךְ לְגוֹ בֵּיתָאִי, מָרָא פֶּרֶץ מָרִי רְחִימָאִי"

pereṣ "*bireʿut nafša'i metaḵ leṭav*" *ašiva.*
guni "*beriḵ at bemeʾaleḵ lego vetay, mara fereṣ mari reḥimay*"

PERETZ "With the friendship of my heart, welcome" I respond.
GUNI "Blessed are you in your entrance into my house, Mr Peretz, my merciful lord" (Elkind 1892: 39)

Elkind's translation of these lines into Aramaic constitutes a fascinating Judaizing strategy. Aramaic and Hebrew are closely related Northwest Semitic languages with similar morphology, syntax, and lexis. Moreover, they share a long history of linguistic contact dating back to the Babylonian Exile of 586-37 BCE, when Hebrew-speaking Judean exiles are believed to have adopted the Aramaic lingua franca of their Babylonian captors (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 112). Jewish use of Aramaic is thought to have grown more predominant in subsequent centuries until it replaced Hebrew as the main Jewish vernacular in approximately 200 CE (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 171). Although Aramaic was itself replaced by other spoken languages among the Jews over the course of the first millennium CE, its prominent position in Jewish society was preserved in the form of a substantial canon of Aramaic-language

literature including biblical translations, commentaries, and, most significantly, the Babylonian Talmud, which has occupied a central position in the traditional Jewish educational system until the present day. Because it was usually studied only by more advanced students, in contrast to Hebrew which was learned from a very early age, Aramaic took on elite and somewhat esoteric connotations among Jews. As such, it was sometimes employed as a substitute for Latin in Judaizing nineteenth-century Hebrew Shakespeare translations (see Kahn forthcoming c for details). However, it was also sometimes utilized in nineteenth-century Hebrew literature as a way of representing the traditional Central and Eastern European Jewish vernacular Yiddish (Even-Zohar 1986: 52).

Elkind adopts the latter approach in his translation, using Aramaic as a Judaized substitute for the Italian appearing in the original English work. In contrast to the source text, in which the Italian expressions serve to inject an element of authenticity into the English-language dialogue, these adaptations do not pretend to any sort of realism given that Jewish inhabitants of Italy would not have spoken Hebrew any more than Elkind himself did; rather, they would have employed vernacular languages (typically Italian by the period in which the translations were undertaken). Nevertheless, the use of Aramaic serves as a way of preserving the linguistic difference afforded by these Italian extracts in the original English; however, its function is different, as it indicates not a specific language but rather would have signalled to Hebrew readers in an abstract way that these elements were uttered in a theoretical vernacular, perhaps the spoken language of Elkind's imagined community of Italian Jews.

Conclusion

As this case study has shown, the Maskilic Hebrew translators of *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* were faced with the unusual challenge of adapting English dramatic works set in Italy and exhibiting explicitly Italian cultural, religious, and linguistic features into ones suitable for a Hebrew-reading Eastern European Jewish audience with a very particular ideology. Instead of viewing locations such as Venice, Verona, and Padua as mechanisms for lending an exotic flavour to the story and perhaps providing audiences with a vicarious travel experience, as in the original Elizabethan and Jacobean context, the Maskilic authors interpreted these settings through the prism of the long-established and prominent Jewish presence in Italy and as such regarded them as suitable candidates for retention within a domesticated target text. Hence, they replaced the non-Jewish Italian characters and cultural context of the originals with Jewish equivalents while maintaining the Italian geographical locations. This technique resulted in the creation of an identifiably Jewish Italy where

characters speak Hebrew and Aramaic, have biblical names, and engage in explicitly Jewish cultural and religious practices. These three late nineteenth-century translations thus offer a unique perspective on the representation of Italy and the Italian language within the context of global Shakespeare.

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