Universiteit Leiden

Jewish Responses to Shylock

A Yiddish translation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

MA Thesis Final Version

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Abstract

This thesis describes the development of Yiddish theatre which evolved in Eastern Europe and later moved to the United States of America as large groups of Eastern European Jews began to move to the United States in the 1880s and 1890s. American-Jewish authors and playwrights used the high status of Western canonical writers – mainly Shakespeare – in order to introduce their immigrant audiences to the new culture of their homeland. One of these playwrights was Joseph Bovshover, who published a translation of *The Merchant of Venice* in 1899. In it, he replaced many of the references to the classical mythology or to the Christian religion with Jewish concepts, in order to familiarise the readers with the play. He also applied a translation strategy of transference of references to Venetian culture in to create a sense of authenticity. In his translation he wrote a preface in which he described his appreciation of Shakespeare's work and especially of Shylock as a tragic hero. This change of depiction was typical of Jewish adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Shylock was consistently depicted as a tragic hero rather than a villain. Bovshover attempted to find a balance between presenting the audience with an authentic Shakespeare translation while at the same time allowing the audience to relate itself to the characters in the play. He did this by transferring the references to Venetian culture literally into Yiddish, while adapting most of the references to Christianity to the Jewish context from which the audience came.

Keywords: Shakespeare in translation, Yiddish theatre, Translation Studies, Jews in America, immigrant theatre

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עמעלע קונדערס: אייַן אַלטער פרייַנד איז בעסער ווי אַ טויזענט נייַע טאַמאַרות

List of Transcription symbols

The table below provides the Yiddish alphabet with the corresponding transcription into the Latin alphabet. I have chosen to adopt the same transcription list as adopted by Marion Aptroot and Holger Nath in their authoritative work *Araynfir in der Yidisher Sprach un Kultur* (2016) [Introduction to the Yiddish language and culture], in which they refer to the list provided by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO). Aptroot and Nath's work in its reprinted version is the most recent and authoritative publication on the field of Yiddish grammar. Examples of the pronunciation were taken from a list provided by the YIVO, which to this date is the most prominent institute for research on the field of Yiddish philology and literature. The publisher of the translation by Bovshover, the Hebrew Publishing Company in New York, has not always been consistent in printing the right vocal signs, such as the אָ [o] which is often printed as א [silent alef]; in these instances I have transcribed the word according to its dictionary spelling, although I also mention the spelling as it was printed by the publisher.

Yiddish symbol	Name of the letter	Sound	Transcription
א	Shtumer alef (silent alef)	silent	n.a.
אַ	Pasekh alef	a as in w*a*nd	a
אָ	Komets alef	o as in *o*re	o
ב	Beys	b as in *b*oy	b
בֿ	Veys	v as in *v*iolet	v
ג	Giml	g as in *g*old	g
ד	Dalet	d as in *d*og	d
ה	Hey	h as in *h*ome	h
ו	Vov	oo as in r*oo*m	u
וּ	Melupm vov	oo as in r*oo*m	u
ז	Zayen	z as in *z*oo	z
ח	Khes	ch as in lo*ch*	kh

ט	Tes	t as in *t*oy	t
י	Yud	y as in *y*es; i as in b*i*t; ee as in b*ee*t	y; i
כּ	Kof	k as in *k*itchen	k
כ	Khof	ch as in lo*ch*	kh
ך	Langer khof (used at end of word)	ch as in lo*ch*	kh
ל	Lamed	l as in *l*ong	l
מ	Mem	m as in *m*ouse	m
ם	Shlos mem (used at end of word)	m as in *m*ouse	m
נ	Nun	n as in *n*ow	n
ן	Langer nun (used at end of word)	n as in *n*ow	n
ס	Samekh	s as in *s*ink	s
ע	Ayen	e as in *e*lm	e
פּ	Pey	p as in *p*ink	p
פ	Fey	f as in *f*arm	f
ף	Langer fey (used at end of word)	f as in *f*arm	f
צ	Tsadek	ts as in pa*ts*y	ts
ץ	Langer tsadek (used at end of word)	ts as in pa*ts*y	ts
ק	Kuf	k as in *k*itchen	k
ר	Reysh	r as in *r*ed	r
שׁ	Shin	sh as in *sh*op	sh
שׂ	Sin	s as in *s*ink	s
תּ	Tov	t as in *t*oy	t
ת	Sof	s as in *s*ink	s

Letter combinations

וו	Tsvey vovn	v as in *v*iolet	v

זש	Zayen shin	s as in mea*s*ure	zh
דזש	Dalet zayen shin	j as in *j*udge	dzh
טש	Tes shin	ch as in *ch*eese	tsh
וי	Vov yud	oy as in t*oy*	oy
יי	Tsvey yudn	a as in d*a*te	ey
יֵי	Pasekh tsvey yudn	i as in r*i*de	ay

Chapter 1: Introduction

For my Master thesis I chose a topic that combines the field of Translation Studies with the field of Hebrew and Jewish studies, in particular Yiddish Studies. The study of Shakespeare's plays and their Yiddish translations is a field on its own, one to which I hope to contribute with my research. Yiddish theatre started in the late nineteenth century in Eastern Europe and spread to Western Europe and the United States in the aftermath of mass-scale Jewish migration. In the United States, Yiddish playwrights translated canonical English plays into Yiddish in order to make their audience familiar with the culture of their new home country. In the context of Jewish immigration, Shakespeare's plays were regarded as inherently modern and European, something essential to the culture of their new home country which therefore had to be imitated and appropriated.

Joel Berkowitz (2002) has written extensively about Yiddish theatre, focusing on the way in which theatre reflected the political situation of the Jews in America. He mentions, for example, that the language used in some translations of *Othello* is clearly characteristic of that of immigrants who were native-speakers of Yiddish, and who were also actively learning English, so their spoken Yiddish is replete with interruptions such as 'sure' and 'alright' (Berkowitz 123). Berkowitz has also analysed four different Yiddish versions of *The Merchant of Venice* mainly focusing on the individual actors that played Shylock and on the responses their performances invoked. Nachshon and Shapiro (2017) have written a book about Jewish depictions of Shylock in general, also including Yiddish translations. However, they too have solely studied the staging history and audience responses to the play whereas I aim to explore the plays from a linguistic point of view, closely studying the Yiddish translation choices in the play. Upon analysing a Yiddish translation of a play by Shakespeare, I have come across the realization that the translator's role is often neglected, as most present studies have focused on the audience reception of the play or on the performance of individual actors. Therefore, my

thesis will substantiate the idea that the translator's role deserves more visibility, as in hindsight it is clear that the Yiddish translators had considerable freedom to change not only specific scenes but the whole plot (Prager 154).

When it comes to Yiddish translations of Shakespeare's plays, an especially pertinent play to analyse is *The Merchant of Venice*. Because one of the main characters, Shylock, is Jewish, much has been said about how Shakespeare depicted him as a Jew in a non-Jewish surrounding. Andrew Bonnell (2008) has argued that the depiction of Shylock in pre-war Germany clearly shows the society-wide debate about Jews and Jewish immigration that was taking place. As for Jewish playwrights, adaptations of *The Merchant* often contained direct criticism of society and stereotypical descriptions of Jews as being obsessed by money and hostile towards non-Jews. An example of such a depiction is Kaftan, the Jewish protagonist of Walter Mehring's play *Der Kaufmann von Berlin* [The Merchant of Berlin], a German adaptation of Shakespeare's play written in 1929 Berlin. This Jewish character represents a typical 'Ostjude': a poor, Yiddish-speaking immigrant from Eastern Europe (Bonnell 106-8). *Der Kaufmann* is one of many examples of how Shylock's depiction can be related to the political context of the time. Studying Jewish adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice* renders fascinating insights into the way in which Jewish writers saw themselves in society.

With my thesis, I aim to tie it in with a research about the Jewish adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice.* My focus in this thesis is two-fold: firstly, I will focus on Jewish depictions of Shylock, as presented in translation and I will ascertain whether the translation changes render Shylock's role more or less visibility; secondly, I will compare how the Yiddish translator dealt with cultural references of Venetian culture and Christian religion. For this dual purpose, I chose a Yiddish translation of *The Merchant of Venice*: *Shaylok oder der Koyfman fun Venedig* [Shaylok, or the Merchant of Venice] by Joseph Bovshover, published in New

York, 1899. This play presents a representative sample of Yiddish theatre, of around the beginning of the twentieth century, when Yiddish theatre was at its peak (Prager 154).

With this thesis I also aim to answer two questions, which will be substantiated through a two-fold analysis. The first stage of my methodology will involve an analysis of the modifications the translator introduced in the plot and how these influence the perception of Shylock's character. Of particular relevance is the fact that in the original play, Shakespeare combines several storylines, of which Shylock's role is one. With that in mind, I will ascertain whether the Yiddish play will show a shift in focus, giving more visibility to Shylock's role and less to the other characters, or vice-versa. The second stage of my methodology will involve exploring to what extent, when addressing an audience with a Jewish background the translator has significantly altered the cultural references alluding to the Venetian culture and Christian religion, by modifying the plot and the language style.

In the second chapter of this thesis I will describe the theoretical background, that is the way in which the discipline of Translation Studies has dealt with the translation of canonical works. For this purpose, I will consider Linda Hutcheon's most useful theory of intercultural translation, as described in her work *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), in which she pays special attention to the translation of canonical works like Shakespeare's. She describes how plays that addressed social and political issues, as Shakespeare's play unquestionably does, were often adapted to a modern context by playwrights who wished to engage with a larger contemporary social critique (Hutcheon 93). I will account the history of Yiddish theatre in Europe and in the US, which is relevant to bear in mind when studying a Yiddish play. I will also elaborate on this topic from the point of view of Translation Studies, giving a brief overview of the research done in this field by mainly Berkowitz. The third chapter will introduce the methodology, in which I will describe how Yiddish scholars have analysed the Yiddish translations of Shakespeare so far, and why my own approach differs from the approach taken by Berkowitz,

Nachshon and Kinsley, as I will focus on the linguistic features of the play. Regarding the translation choices of culture-specific references in the play, I will confront the lexical changes to the translation procedures suggested by Newmark (1988), as I found his model most fitting and most accurate for Yiddish translations. The fourth chapter of this thesis will offer an analysis of the modifications the translator, Joseph Bovshover, introduced in the plot and how these influence the perception of Shylock's character. Of particular relevance is the fact that in the original play, Shakespeare combines several storylines, of which Shylock's role is one. With that in mind, I will ascertain whether the Yiddish play will show a shift in focus, giving more visibility to Shylock's role and less to the other characters, or vice-versa. As the methodology of this thesis has a double focus, this chapter will also be composed of a double analysis. Therefore, the fourth chapter will also focus on the translations of the cultural references in the play. The translation choices of the translator will be analysed according to the translation procedures as described by Newmark (1988). In the final chapter, I will draw a conclusion about the way in which the Yiddish Shylock is different from the original character as presented by Shakespeare, by using the models of Hutcheon and Newmark. It is worth noting that all translations of Yiddish excerpts are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

In this chapter, I will first provide an overview of the history of Yiddish theatre, in particular in Warsaw and in New York. It is relevant to make a distinction between these two cities, for the place of Shakespeare in each country's literary canon was considerably different. Secondly, I will provide a brief contextualisation of the Yiddish translations of Shakespeare's plays, which in my view form an entire genre on their own. I will also pay careful attention to the depiction of Shylock in Yiddish plays written during the same era as the translation studied in this thesis. I will conclude the chapter with a summary of how American and Russian Yiddish theatre influenced each other. Due to the fact that Warsaw was part of the Russian empire before 1918, I will treat the Warsaw Yiddish stage as part of the broader picture of Russian Yiddish theatre.

2.1 The Translation and Adaptation of Canonical Works

Hutcheon defines an adaptation of a literary work as a 'creative and interpretive transposition of a recognizable other work, (…) a kind of extended palimpsest and, at the same time, often a transcoding into a different set of conventions' (33). Her definition is broad, as she takes all mediums in consideration, not limiting herself to adaptations in literature or film (Hutcheon 2-3). She laments the fact that adaptations and translations are still often judged according to the framework of the original work or even seen as an 'inferior derivative'. The fact that an adaptation is usually considerably different from the original work, should be regarded as a strength rather than a weakness, in Hutcheon's view, as the reworking of the original play allows for a more updated version of that work, by placing it in a new context and augmenting it with new ideas (Hutcheon 3-5).

The success of an adaptation, Hutcheon argues, depends on the balance between two essential elements: repetition and variation. The combination of these elements is decisive as to whether the audience approves of the adaptation. In turn, the success of the adaptation depends

on the way in which familiarity is reinvented and made relevant again as a theme with variations (Hutcheon 115). In this context, Hutcheon specifically mentions the adaptation and reworking of works belonging to a literary canon, of which Shakespeare is a prime example. She argues that canonical names are 'mountains to be toppled', and that the adaptation of these canonical works of art is intended as a way to 'supplant canonical cultural authority' (93). This is particularly relevant for Shakespeare's plays, considering they address many political and social issues. Adaptations of these works can therefore be used to engage in a larger critique.

Hutcheon draws a parallel between translations and adaptations: not only do most adaptations involve a process of translations, but most translations can also be seen to some extent as an adaptation. Just as there is no universal consensus as to what constitutes a literal translation, a literal adaptation is also inherently subjective. In her view, the study of the field of translation and adaptation has been long studied by what she calls 'normative and source-oriented approaches', in which the final product is defined according to the original work and to a rhetoric of comparison of faithfulness and equivalence (16). She describes the changes brought about in the field starting with Walter Benjamin in the 1940s, who argued that a translation is not a rendering of a fixed, non-textual meaning that should be copied, but rather an engagement with the original text that makes the reader see it in a different way (Benjamin, 77).

Another important event that took place in the field of Translation Studies was the 'Cultural Turn', which was first described by Bassnett (1998) who suggest that the field of Translation Studies should render more attention to broader issues of context, history and convention (Bassnett 123). In similar fashion to Hutcheon, Bassnett describes how for many years, the field of Translation Studies drew a clear line between translation and other types of literary or linguistic research. Bassnett compares the field of Translation Studies to the field of Culture Studies, as both were rapidly evolving as interdisciplinary fields which relate to Literary

Studies and Sociology. In the late 1970s, translation scholars began to regard Translation Studies as an interdisciplinary field, visible in Itamar Even-Zohar's paper 'The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem' (1978). In it the author suggests a whole new view the role of translation in literature, arguing that translation might be a major shaping force for change (124-6). Contrastively Bassnett suggests viewing Translation Studies from a Culture Studies perspective, opposite to that developed by 'early' culturalists in Translation Studies, such as Eugene Nida (1964).

Since the 1980s, Translation Studies have moved away from an anthropological notion of culture towards a notion of 'variety of cultures'. This new definition of Translation Studies also appears to be relevant for the field of Shakespeare Studies, as Shakespeare has often been presented as a monolithic, universal writer, just as Homer and other Greek authors. Studying these classical authors from the perspective of Translation Studies or Culture Studies, allows for new questions to be posed, such as how the ancient text has been conveyed to the modern reader, how representative they might be for what was generally thought and discussed in the time in which the source text was written, and how they might have been read by the original reader (Hutcheon 133). Furthermore, if a 'cultural twist' could be applied, the field of Shakespeare – or Homer, or any other classical author – in translation would probably get more attention, as most readers have been accessing these writings over time through translation (Hutcheon 134). In other words, through the years, research on the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays and the way in which he became the epitome of Western literature and how non-Western cultures viewed him, has received an increasing interest from Translation Studies scholars.

The 'Cultural Turn' in Translation Studies happened several decades ago, and the parallels between the fields of Culture Studies and Translation Studies and the overlap between them are generally acknowledged. Both fields recognise that a writer or a translator does not

operate in a vacuum, but rather produce a text deriving from a particular culture. A translator has an essential role in either reflecting or concealing the material and individual features of the text (Bassnett 138). In the case of Shakespeare in translation, this means that the translator could either disguise or emphasize the social critique present in the original play and adapt its message to the modern time.

For this thesis, I will use Hutcheon's notion of the appropriation of canonical works in studying the Yiddish translation of *The Merchant of Venice*. This play clearly engages in political and social critique. As I will argue, the framework of this play – and other plays by Shakespeare – was used by Yiddish playwrights to utter critique on the contemporary political and social situation of the immigrant community. Like Hutcheon, I will treat the translation as an independent text that engages with the source text, reworking it for a different time and context.

2.2 General history of Yiddish theatre

2.2.1 The foundation of Yiddish theatre

It is commonly agreed that Yiddish theatre started with the Romanian playwright Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908), who was inspired by the performance of a Yiddish singer in the year of 1875. He considered that if Yiddish music was indeed that popular, the audience would be as enthusiastic about a theatrical performance in Yiddish too. His first Yiddish play, published in 1876, gained immediate popularity among Yiddish-speaking Jews in Eastern Europe. It was under the author's guidance that Yiddish theatre troupes began to take shape (Sandrow 40). Several founding legends illustrate how Goldfaden came to the realization that Romania needed a specific Yiddish theatre. Furthermore, Berkowitz and Sandrow agree on the fact that it was Goldfaden who shaped the repertory, acting style and language that characterized Yiddish theatre from then on (Berkowitz 10; Sandrow 43).

It was only a few years later that Goldfaden founded his theatre troupe. However, czarist authorities banned performances in the Yiddish language from the territory in 1883, causing hardship for Yiddish theatrical enterprises until the ban was finally dissolved in 1905 (Kuligowska 81; Berkowitz 11). Due to the ban, many Yiddish theatre groups moved away, which led to an increase in Yiddish theatre productions both in Western Europe and in the United States. In the Russian empire, many popular Yiddish plays were translated into Polish or Russian, or were disguised as 'German plays' in order to escape the ban. Yiddish theatre was eventually legalised and it became a popular form of entertainment in large cities (Kuligowska 81; Sandrow 69).

2.2.2 Yiddish theatre: definitions and boundaries

Edna Nahshon, who wrote about the history of Jewish theatre in her book *Jewish Theatre: A Global View* (2009) notes that it is difficult to provide a clear definition of what Jewish theatre exactly is, as it lacks both geographical and linguistic underpinnings (Nahshon 2). She concludes, however, that Jewish theatre could be referred to as 'theatre of Jewish interest', which would mean that it is written by a playwright who can somehow be referred to as Jewish, intended for a mainly Jewish audience and including topics related to Judaism or Jewishness (Nahshon 8-10). It is clear that Yiddish theatre can be seen as a subdivision of Jewish theatre; nonetheless, the first has a well-defined linguistic feature, which the latter generally lacks. Yet, it is a very broad genre with very diverse manifestations in different cities. Yiddish plays produced by immigrant playwrights in New York were remarkably different from the plays produced in czarist Russia, both in language use and in topics described.

Berkowitz (2002 xi) argues that it was often the audience's reception of the play that defined Yiddish theatre, because the boundaries were hard to delimitate. He provides several examples of Yiddish actors who performed with an English-speaking cast, or Yiddish

newspapers that reviewed English plays (Berkowitz xii). He quotes the well-known Yiddish actor Boris Thomashefsky, who stated that 'Yiddish theatre must be Jewish. It must present plays of Jewish life. The music must be authentically Jewish; the melodies must penetrate the hearts of the Jewish audience' (quoted in Berkowitz 2). The features that placed a play within the realm of Yiddish theatre were therefore, according to Berkowitz, mostly cultural and to a large extent nostalgic.

As Sandrow added to this observation, an important feature of Yiddish theatre was its essential secularism. Orthodox Jews did not approve of theatrical performances. Therefore, Yiddish theatre reflects the developments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the Yiddish-speaking community was starting to break away from tradition but was still familiar with it. Yiddish theatre was marked by a period of transition between folk culture and the modern world (Sandrow 43). An essential feature of Yiddish theatre was that it mirrored the development of the Yiddish-speaking community, whether it was an immigrant community in New York or Berlin, or a native community in cities like Warsaw and Budapest. Sandrow illustrates this claim by mentioning that early Yiddish plays by Goldfaden tended to mock students at *yeshives* [Jewish religious schools], whereas his later plays made fun of 'enlightened' Jews who scorned the traditions of their ancestors. This development was mirrored in the Jewish community of the time, who by a large part had moved away from the traditions of their ancestors (Sandrow 59).

2.2.3 Yiddish theatre: regional boundaries

Most scholars of Yiddish theatre have focused on Yiddish theatre in the United States. This is an understandable position, as New York was one of the biggest centres of Yiddish theatre. Furthermore, after the Second World War, the United States was the only country where Yiddish was spoken and where Yiddish theatre was still somewhat existent. However, Yiddish

theatre external to the US is a field that also deserves attention. The developments that took place in European Yiddish stages were distinct from the developments that accompanied American Yiddish theatre, due to both historical and political circumstances, and linguistic context. An example of this is that Yiddish playwrights in the United States mixed English in their Yiddish, whereas in Berlin a hybrid form of German-Yiddish plays began to take shape (Berkowitz 123).

In general, three regional distinctions can be made: a) Yiddish theatre in the United States; b) Yiddish theatre in czarist Russia (which would later become the Soviet Union); and c) Yiddish theatre in Western European cities such as Vienna and Berlin. This distinction is largely based on the linguistic context that divided Yiddish according to the language with which it was surrounded: English, German and Russian.

As mentioned above, most research on American Yiddish theatre has been developed by Berkowitz, who can be seen as one of the leading scholars in this field (2002; 2003). Sandrow (1977) has written an elaborate overview of Yiddish theatre in Europe, mainly focusing on Eastern Europe. Doris Karner (2005), on the other hand, has written about Yiddish theatre in Russian territory. Nina Warnke (2004) has researched extensively on the influence of American Yiddish theatre on Russian Yiddish playwrights, demonstrating that Yiddish theatre was essentially quite a significant international institution. For the purpose of this thesis, I have limited the descriptions of regional varieties to an overview of Yiddish theatre in the United States and in Eastern Europe in general. Although describing the history of Yiddish theatre in all European countries would be interesting, it would also be harder to make a general statement. After all, the Yiddish stage in Western European cities was considerably different internally, and also differed strongly from the Yiddish stage in Eastern European cities. I have therefore decided to limit myself to describing the two general regional differences, also zooming in on the city that is particularly relevant for this thesis: New York.

2.3 Yiddish theatre in the United States

Yiddish theatre in the United States is per definition a form of immigrant theatre. Following the massive waves of immigration from Eastern Europe to the United States in the 1880s and 1890s, New York developed its own immigrant theatre scene. It is estimated that in less than three decades, one third of the Eastern European Jews moved away, the large majority of which settled around New York. Most immigrants moved for economic motives, but the hope for religious freedom was also a driving incentive. Originally from a background of poverty and religious oppression, most did not have the intention to ever return to Europe. The United States was often referred to as 'the Goldene Medine' ['the golden land'] where Jews came with the intention to integrate and progress. They also professed great interest in everything that was characteristic of American culture, which was based mostly on Western-European authors (Berkowitz 4-7). And this is where Shakespeare comes in.

2.3.1 Shakespeare on the American Yiddish stage

As the North-American historian Lawrence Levine (1988) has pointed out, Shakespeare's plays were an integral part of popular entertainment in nineteenth-century America. His plays were frequently performed on stage and taught at all schools. Nineteenth-century literary works, such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), included quotations from Shakespeare's plays, which were considered common knowledge (Levine 13-16). Elisabeth Kinsley (2016) adds that the immigrant theatre scene imitated the way in which contemporary authors quoted Shakespeare. This was true for most immigrant communities. Late nineteenth-century theatre witnessed a proliferous production of German, Italian and Yiddish adaptations of Shakespeare. Immigrant playwrights adapted the literary canon of their new country in order to facilitate processes of assimilation (Kinsley 111). Considering the status of Shakespeare's work within

the American literary culture, it is not surprising that Yiddish playwrights started to translate and adapt his plays when they arrived, between 1880 and 1890.

As Berkowitz argues, Yiddish playwrights did not consider their audience fit for 'pure' Shakespeare. Firstly, plays had to be translated into Yiddish, because Shakespeare's premodern English was not understandable to an audience that was new to the English language. Secondly, the plays had to take the Jewish context into account. Although Yiddish theatre was, as argued above, not related to the Jewish religion, the plays had to be relatable for the audience in some way. Even though Shakespeare had written his plays for an audience with a Christian background, the same did not apply to Yiddish theatre, which was written for people adhering to the Jewish religion. As Berkowitz claims, Jewish-American actors, playwrights and audiences were somewhat familiar with Jewish religion, history, customs and traditions and this common source of knowledge were clearly visible in Yiddish adaptations (Berkowitz 12).

Once playwrights started to translate Shakespeare's English into Yiddish, it did not take long for his plays to gain prominence on the American Yiddish stage, especially tragedies, which were particularly popular. Berkowitz mentions *King Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Romeo and Juliet,* and *The Merchant of Venice* as the most frequently translated plays (27). Usually, the adaptations showed that playwrights treated Shakespeare not as a classical source that had to be transferred faithfully into the target language, but rather as a source of inspiration that could freely be used and changed in many ways. Especially in the 1880s and 1890s, playwrights judaized the plays by giving the plot an entirely Jewish setting in which personal names, places and even the entire story line would have been changed. Although the original titles were still recognisable, such as *Der Yidisher Kenig Lir* (1892) [The Jewish King Lear] or *Der Blinder Muzikant oder Yidisher Othello* (1903) [the Blind Musician or the Jewish Othello], the Yiddish adaptations produced between 1880 and 1910 converged so significantly from the original play

that the result was a Yiddish play containing references to Shakespeare's work, rather than an identifiable translation of his play (Berkowitz 124).

Later on, Yiddish plays showed a remarkable difference to the plays produced during the late nineteenth century. Instead of fully judaized plays with Shakespearean references, later plays tended to remain closer to the original. Playwrights would keep the names, places and events intact and would not delete nor add scenes. And there were several reasons for this: Firstly, the developments within Yiddish theatre mirrored the changes that took place within American theatre. As Levine shows, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the status of Shakespeare's works changed due to the professionalisation of theatre workers. Shakespeare's plays were increasingly becoming a means of entertainment to be enjoyed only by the elite. The author's status became that of a classical, British author whose works were pieces of art rather than just forms of popular entertainment (167-8). According to Berkowitz, theatre itself became a form of luxury, while the masses turned to other forms of entertainment such as film and popular music. This applied to both American and immigrant audiences (29-30). Another reason why Yiddish Shakespeare lost popularity was due to the rapid advance of assimilation that took place, which led people to lose their interest in Yiddish literature and theatre. In 1924, the American Congress implemented a severe restriction on European immigration, and consequently the number of immigrants from Eastern Europe dropped radically (Diner 154). Thus, Yiddish theatre lost its audience of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, while more and more Jews turned to English theatre or to other forms of amusement and English overtook Yiddish as the predominant language for American Jews (Encyclopaedia Judaica 684). These changes resulted in Yiddish Shakespeare theatre changing its status from popular entertainment to high culture.

2.4 Yiddish theatre in Eastern Europe

Shakespeare was a popular author for Yiddish playwrights to translate merely in the United States. In nineteenth-century Europe his plays were frequently performed. In Germany, for instance, Shakespeare was one of the most often performed playwrights. As Andrew Bonnell (2007) argues, even in the early twentieth century, when political tensions between Great Britain and Germany increased, translations of Shakespeare's plays were quite appreciated (5-8). Eastern Europe was the place of origin of Yiddish theatre, but it soon moved across the ocean.

2.4.1 Yiddish theatre and the Russian Empire

In 1876 Abraham Goldfaden wrote his first Yiddish play, which became very popular. Many Yiddish productions followed, and Goldfaden and his crew were the prominent theatre crew in the Yiddish-speaking world. It is needless to say that the czarist ban on everything Yiddish in 1883 severely affected Yiddish theatre. However, that did not dictate the end of Yiddish activity in Russia. The ban certainly made life difficult for Yiddish theatre troupes, but the traditions survived (Warnke 2004 5). Moreover, in Saint Petersburg more than 160 productions of plays in Yiddish were staged during the period of the ban's enforcement. Sandrow adds that plays in Yiddish were often referred to as 'German plays' so as to avoid the prohibition (57). In fact, there are well-known examples of authors who tried to speak Yiddish with a strong German accent in order to mislead the government officials who would possibly be present in the audience (Sandrow 58).

Russian Yiddish stage offered a variety of Yiddish plays. Both original Yiddish plays and translations of classical Russian or German plays were performed, and even American Yiddish plays were imported (Henry 66). Contrary to American Yiddish theatre in New York, however, Russian Yiddish theatre in Saint Petersburg never represented entertainment for the

masses, but rather a 'bourgeois' phenomenon (Henry 74). After the October Revolution in 1916, the ban was lifted, and Yiddish theatre became an official institution. Contrary to general believe, under the Soviet regime Yiddish theatre was not a new institution, but rather a continuation of 'illegal' Yiddish theatre (Henry 75).

Yiddish theatre in Eastern Europe was also part of a movement that Sandrow calls 'Yiddishism', as opposed to the Slavophilism that took place within late nineteenth-century Russia. It was a patriotic movement of Yiddish speakers who felt that they did not share the same origin as the non-Jews around them, but who had yet no other territory to turn to (Sandrow 59-60). Thus, while in New York Yiddish theatre represented a means to adapt to new surroundings, in the Russian empire it was an alternative way to express Yiddish nationalism.

In the turn of the century, conditions eased for Yiddish theatre troupes, and in 1913 there were several relatively stable Russian-Yiddish theatres in various cities (Sandrow 222). The Russian revolution severely disrupted the relative peaceful circumstances for theatre troupes, as most people were too poor to buy tickets for the plays and transportation, and communication got less accessible from the villages to the cities. It took several years before there was significant stability and relative security for theatres to continue to host their performances. The first years of Soviet rule appeared to be wonderfully advantageous for Yiddish theatre, as not only performances in Yiddish were legalised, but theatres were also nationalised and therefore subsidised. This meant that theatre was no longer a form of entertainment for higher classes only: it became accessible to huge groups of peasants and to ethnic minorities who could now enjoy performances in their own languages (Sandrow 223-5).

This new bloom of Yiddish theatre came to an end when Stalin introduced the new Five-Year Plan in 1928, which imposed a more severe kind of censorship for all artists and performances. Most Yiddish state theatres appeared to fail to meet up to the new expectations of art to be 'suitable to the masses, the only art befitting the great epoch and socialism'

(Sandrow 239). Finding a suitable repertoire proved to be difficult for both Russian and Yiddish theatres. In 1939, there were thousands of arrests and executions of artists, actors and directors because of ever increasing severity of rules. During the Second World War, Russian theatre profited from a wave of refugees who fled Nazi occupation and offered their talents to Russian theatres. This, however, did not turn the tide for Yiddish theatre, as in 1948 Stalin ordered that the subsidy to Yiddish theatres should be stopped and several of its organizers were sent to Siberia. This culminated in the end of Yiddish theatre in the Soviet Republic (Sandrow 248-9).

2.4.2 Yiddish Shakespeare in Eastern Europe: mutual influence

While Russian Yiddish theatre suffered from stagnation in the 1890s, New York was turning into the world centre of Yiddish theatre. As described above, Yiddish theatre fulfilled a need for hundreds of thousand immigrants. Most of these did not wish to return to Europe, but some eventually did: especially playwrights who failed to gain popularity in New York and attempted their luck in their homelands. In general, actors moved from town to town to perform the same play, and some troupes even travelled across the Atlantic (Warnke 2004 6-9).

In the early days of Yiddish theatre, New York lacked a large-scale Yiddish printing industry, which resulted in a prolific trade of unpublished, uncertified manuscripts of Yiddish plays, which could be freely tailored to the wishes of theatre directors (Warnke 2004 14). Consequently, most of the plays performed in Warsaw and Russia originated from the United States. Among those imported plays were many Shakespeare adaptations, which were popular not only because they came from the US, but also because there was an aura of modernity about them (Warnke 2004 19). Warnke even goes as far as to call the Yiddish theatre in Warsaw a 'cultural colony of the US' (28), not only because of the performance of American plays on Eastern European stages, but also due to the recruitment of Polish and Russian talent for the

American stage (Warnke 2004 28-9). This notion of mutual influence is important to keep in mind while studying the plays.

2.5 Yiddish adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice*

2.5.1. Yiddish adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice* on the New York Yiddish stage

It took several decades before Yiddish-American playwrights realised *The Merchant of Venice* was a suitable play for translation. Joel Berkowitz describes how the first production of this play in Yiddish, which took place in 1894, was a massive failure. He further suggests that an audience who had fled persecution and poverty might not have been ready for such a 'delicate exploration of the Jew's position in a Gentile world' (172). After the turn of the century, however, more productions were started and left a lasting impression on audiences and critics.

The Yiddish translations of *The Merchant of Venice* tended to be much different from the original play by Shakespeare. Playwrights omitted several scenes and most turned a play that was originally seen as a comedy into a tragedy. Many of the themes in the play were relevant to a Jewish audience in the United States and some productions focused on the relation between Shylock and his daughter Jessica, as conversion and Jewish-Christian intermarriage were issues that Jewish-American immigrant audiences were familiar with. Yiddish-American productions of *The Merchant of Venice* also attracted extra attention from the non-Jewish, outside world, because the themes of the play were relatable for a country that was struggling with the question of what to do with all these European immigrants, amongst which were thousands of Jews. Just as productions of *Othello* engendered debates about different races and about the integration of different ethnicities in society, productions of *The Merchant of Venice* stirred heated debates about Shakespeare's depiction of Jews and of the general place of Jews in the modern world (Berkowitz 173).

2.5.2 Yiddish adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice* on the Eastern European Yiddish stage

In Eastern Europe, the choice to translate Shakespeare's plays was mainly influenced by United States. Shakespeare did not form part of the literary canon, just as he was in the United States and Western Europe. In the first decades of Yiddish theatre, no one even thought of translating his plays. Most plays on the Warsaw Yiddish stage were either Yiddish plays or translated Polish plays. Shakespeare only entered the Warsaw Yiddish stage when a well-known playwright, Yitschok Leib Peretz (1852-1915) and his followers started a new type of theatre, which should be 'artistic' and 'refined', and, more importantly, which should reflect the ambitions and values of *dos Yidishe folk* [the Yiddish/Jewish people] (Steinlauf 79-80). Rather than imitating the Yiddish-Polish plays, which they found 'vulgar', 'inartistic' and even *'shund'* [rubbish], they looked to famous American playwrights for inspiration (Steinlauf 80-1). Eventually, Shakespeare's plays, which were always seen as something foreign and American, never became part of the Yiddish-Polish canon.

2.6 The history of Shylock's character

Ever since his first appearance on stage, the role of Shylock has never failed to attract attention, both because of his despicability as a greedy moneylender and his cynical soliloquys as the person who finally loses everything. Herman Sinsheimer (1963) has argued that 'In Shylock, Shakespeare created the only post-Biblical Jewish figure which has impressed itself on the imagination of the world and become a universal symbol of Jewry' (9). Other stereotypical Jewish characters in European literature, such as Dickens' Fagin or Lessing's Nathan have therefore not achieved the nearly iconic status that Shylock has, nor are they mere reflections of him. Sinsheimer observes that Shylock was Shakespeare's reworking of the terrible caricature of the Jew created in the Middle-Ages (12).

As with most of Shakespeare's characters, the way in which the audience views them is largely dependent on the staging and, in the case of a translated play, on the choices of the playwright who translated and adapted the source text. As Sinsheimer describes, the way in which Shylock was depicted had moved considerably from plays with an overt anti-Semitic message to plays in which Shylock was depicted as a tragic hero. An example of a creative rewriting of Shylock's character was Walter Mehring's play *Der Kaufmann von Berlin* [the merchant of Berlin] (1928), in which the main character, Simon Chaim Kaftan, represented a typical Jewish immigrant from Poland, who did not speak German and who was not adjusted to the modern lifestyle of Berlin. The playwright depicted the most mercenary, selfish Jewish merchant possible in order to confront the audience with existing stereotypes of Berlin at the time. His play was a critique of the upcoming Nazi-regime and its ideas about racial purity. Mehring's play is just one example of how playwrights used the format of *The Merchant of Venice* to utter their opinion (Schouten 21-2).

2.6.1 The depiction of Shylock on the Yiddish stage

As Yiddish productions of *The Merchant of Venice* were per definition Jewish productions, the translators were forced to face the confrontation with this stereotypical Jew as described by Shakespeare. Dror Abend-David (2003) describes how in post-war productions, *The Merchant of Venice* has often been staged with references to the Shoah. He mentions attending a multilingual production in 2000, where the events took place in a staged Berlin with the government officials dressed up like Nazi officers (1). In his view, the play is often read as a prophetic text, and in all cases the focus of the play shifts from the merchant – whose name is Antonio – to Shylock. Abend-David argues that, although Shylock is often called, as Alexander Pope is said to have called him, 'The Jew that Shakespeare drew', the Shylock as Shakespeare

intended him is in fact a completely different character than most productions have made of him (2-3).

Before the 1880s there were hardly any examples of Yiddish translations of *The Merchant of Venice,* but around the turn of the century, many translations were published. Abend-David observes that in the modern Western world of that time, in which Yiddish scholars desired to participate as equals, *The Merchant of Venice* was an uncomfortable confrontation with the memory of the traditional status of European Jews as outcasts (61). This confrontation was also in conflict with the mostly didactic function of Yiddish theatre, which is also described by Berkowitz and Kinsley (Abend-David 64; Kinsley 111). A common solution for playwrights was to either depict Shakespeare as an anti-Semitic author or, which happened more frequently, to highlight Shylock's most unpopular features in order to justify his character. Jewish socialist playwrights, for instance, emphasised his job as a moneylender, which made him a representative of a rich and merciless merchant rather than just any Jew (65). What happened most, however, was that playwrights slightly altered the play in order to depict Shylock as a positive character: Abend-David observes that many of the Yiddish interpretations attribute spiritual, mystical features to Shylock, turning him into a nearly messianic figure (5).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described how the field of Translation Studies has evolved in the past decades, rendering more visibility to the role of the translator. The field of Translation Studies has recently come closer to that of Culture Studies, and more attention has been drawn to the acculturation of Western canonical works in modern contexts. This notion of canonical works as a means to convey a message for a target audience is especially relevant for the study of Shakespeare in translation.

As described above, Yiddish theatre started in Eastern Europe by the playwright Abraham Goldfaden, whose first plays became the first leading Yiddish plays. It soon spread to other countries and became especially prolific amongst immigrant audiences in New York and other American cities. In Eastern Europe, the place of origin, Yiddish theatre suffered from a czarist prohibition, which, however, did not mean the end of it. Plays were performed in secret, or were dubbed 'German plays'. In the United States, Yiddish theatre and especially translations of Shakespeare's plays were seen as something inherently modern and American, belonging to a cultural canon that had to be appropriated. On the Russian Yiddish stage, Shakespeare became popular as a product imported from the United States, a country generally seen as rich and successful. But most importantly, there was a reciprocal influence that kept Yiddish actors and plays moving across the ocean. For these reasons, Yiddish theatre was a very international phenomenon.

Of all of Shakespeare's plays, his tragedies *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet* were most popular. His play *The Merchant of Venice* was seen as a problematic case because of its reported negative depiction of Jews. As it has been shown, the way in which Shylock has been depicted through the years of theatre history depended much on the director's choices. The play has been used both to approve of the anti-Semitic stereotypes that Shylock seems to confirm, and to depict Shylock as a tragic hero. In the case of translated plays, the choices of translators largely determined the depiction of Shylock. For Yiddish playwrights, *The Merchant of Venice* was a problematic case, as it forced them to take a stand in the national debate about the place of Jews or Jewish immigrants in society. At the same time, it offered them a format to frame their standpoint in a recognisable way.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the two-fold methodology of this thesis. As this thesis will both focus on the depiction of Shylock's character and on the translation of cultural references – namely references to Venetian culture and Christian religion – in the Yiddish translation, this methodology describes the approach I will take in addressing these two issues. My focus is to establish the differences between the original character of Shylock and the depiction in the Yiddish translation by Bovshover (1899). For the study of the specific cultural references on a word-level, I will consider the procedures described by Newmark for the translation of cultural language, as described in his well-known and most useful work *A Textbook of Translation* (1988), where he provides several procedures according to which the cultural references can be translated. In this chapter I will refer to the various approaches used by scholars on Yiddish theatre and explain how my approach varies from the above-mentioned ones.

3.1 Yiddish Versions of *The Merchant*: Different Approaches of Analysis

There are different approaches to studying and analysing Yiddish versions of Shakespeare's plays. The approach that Berkowitz takes in his study on Yiddish Shakespeare in the United States, *Shakespeare on the American Yiddish Stage*, is to give a description of the performance of individual Yiddish American actors, whose interpretation of the play strongly influenced the staging. He finally takes into account the audience's response to the performances and the evaluation by the theatre critics, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Berkowitz pays significant attention to the language of the translation, but mostly in relation to what critics say about it. Studying the audience and critics' responses to the performances shows how the playwright interacted with the audience in order to meet their desires and demands in their plays.

Dror Abend-David (2003), among others, has focused on a more political approach, having studied post-war German and Yiddish versions of *The Merchant of Venice*. He also took

notice of several polyglot performances in which Shylock was the only character to speak Yiddish, a staging that intended to sharpen the contrast between the Jewish character and his hostile surroundings. He focuses mainly on the way in which Yiddish, German, and Hebrew Jewish translations turn around the focus on the play from 'the Merchant of Venice' to 'Shylock', and how these changed adaptations reflect on the Second World War and the existence of the State of Israel. Abend-David's analysis is sharp and thorough, as he does not hesitate to query established opinions by Berkowitz and others.

The most recent study on Yiddish Shylocks, by Warnke and Shandler (2017), finally, gives extra attention to the life of the translator and the way in which the Yiddish versions of *The Merchant* came into being. This historical focus, which places the translator and the performance of the translation in its historical and political context. This approach is successful in doing justice to the broad scope of Yiddish theatre and its complex function in the history of Jewish immigrant communities. Warnke and Shandler elaborate on the interplay between German- and Yiddish-speaking intellectuals and actors, showing how by interrogating Shylock, both Jews and their neighbours reflected on larger debates about Jewish communities in Western Europe and also the United States (76).

All of the approaches above have been successful in shedding light on the extant Yiddish translations of *The Merchant of Venice* and give wonderful insights in the world of Yiddish theatre. They show how performances were loved or rejected by its audiences and how Yiddish playwrights continued to adapt the original plays to the ever-changing world of which their audiences were part. My thesis, however, will start from a different point of view: that of Translation Studies, which has not yet been linked to Yiddish theatre, even though the above-mentioned scholars have incidentally made mention of the language and style of the translations. Like Berkowitz did, I will also pay close attention to the plot changes introduced by the translator. As described, translators had a considerable amount of freedom, which allowed them

to add or omit full scenes, or even to change the setting of the play entirely. These changes will be described in the first part of my analysis. In the second part, more attention will be given to the translation on the word level. Apart from some incidental mention, Yiddish translations have not been studied on the level of individual words, which in my view creates a niche in the field of Yiddish Shakespeare. After all, these Yiddish plays constitute translations and the perspective of Translation Studies will provide relevant insights into the methods, procedures, and approaches of the Yiddish playwrights concerning Shakespeare's plays. In the final chapter I will combine the two approaches and draw a conclusion as to how Yiddish Shakespeare differs from the original play, the translator's stance and the impact his work had in the audience.

3.2 Definition of cultural references

For this thesis, I defined cultural references as 'a word, concept or phrase in the source text that might be unknown to the reader of the target text'. As this thesis is about plays, 'the audience of the performance' could replace the 'reader of the target text'. As the original play was written for an early-modern Christian audience in the United Kingdom, there would have been many concepts that were deemed unknown for the Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrant audience in New York or Warsaw. The next chapter of this thesis will focus on the concepts that were considered unknown and the translation procedures used by the translator.

Newmark defines culture as 'the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression' (94). Cultural words are part of the language that is specific to a certain culture. He also includes 'cultural customs described in ordinary language' in his definition of 'cultural words' (95).

The excerpts shown in the table of analysis were selected according to their relevance. I first selected all references from Christian religion, such as 'church' or 'hermit', to classical mythology, such as 'Cupid' or 'Nestor', and references to Venetian culture such as 'signors' or

'gondola'. I am fully aware of the fact that although the play is set in Venice, Shakespeare in all likelihood never visited Venice himself, and probably was not fully acquainted with the Venetian culture of the late sixteenth century, apart from having read guidebooks and having heard about it from travellers. Still, *The Merchant of Venice* contains many references to Italian words and names. I compared all of these references to their corresponding Yiddish translation and included them in the table. Omitted text from the translator's part was also mentioned in the table.

3.3 The Translation of 'Cultural Language': Newmark's Procedures (1988)

The most well-known Translation Studies with regard to the use of cultural language was Newmark, who comprised his set of translation procedures in his book *A Textbook of Translation Studies* (1988). In it, he describes how he does not view language as a component of culture, which would make translation at all impossible (95). Rather, he argues that language contains all kinds of cultural deposits and cultural features, which create translation problems (95). Newmark defines culture as 'the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression' (94). He stresses that cultural words are part of the language specific to a certain culture, including 'cultural customs described in ordinary language' in his definition of 'cultural words' (95). Moreover, he proposes five domains for classifying foreign cultural categories: 1) Ecology; 2) Material culture; 3) Social culture; 4) Work and leisure; and 5) Gestures and habits. Newmark introduces twelve translation procedures that can be used to translate references to culture in a way that renders the culture specific element understandable for the target reader (Newmark 103). Short descriptions of the procedures, based on Newmark's own descriptions, have been added. The procedures used in the fourth chapter of this thesis are:

- **Transference:** the process of transferring a word into the target language, including transliteration or the conversion of different alphabets, thus creating a loan word.

- **Cultural equivalent:** replacing a cultural word in the source language with a word in the target language which has a very similar meaning.

- **Functional equivalent / neutralisation:** a culture-free word is used, which generalises the original word.

- **Literal translation:** the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds. Also known as calque or loan translation.

- **Label:** a provisional translation is given of a new, institutional term. It is usually first introduced between inverted commas, which can later be withdrawn.

- **Naturalisation:** the original word is adapted first to the normal pronunciation and then to the normal morphology of the target language.

- **Componential analysis:** comparing a source language word with a target language word which has a similar meaning by presenting, first, their common and then their differing sense components.

- **Deletion:** omitting the word.

- **Accepted standard translation:** the translator normally uses the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term.

- **Paraphrasing:** the meaning of the term is explained in several words.

- **Classifier:** the word is qualified with a generic, general or superordinate term to show the reader what it means. E.g. 'Brno' > 'the city of Brno'.

These procedures will be used in the following chapter to analyse the references to Venetian culture and Christian religion in the Yiddish translation of *The Merchant of Venice*. Newmark builds on several other translation models in order to define his procedures, including Vinay and Darbelnet's model (1965), although he is quite critical of most other models as well. Of all

translation models, I consider his model most useful in analysing the translation of culture specific elements, especially because he pays careful attention to the fact that 'culture' is a broad term. When dealing with Yiddish translations, I find it important to recognise the fact that 'culture', 'language' and 'community' are terms that are not dependent on national or regional boundaries. As described before, Yiddish theatre was a largely international enterprise and the Yiddish community was quite diverse, due to the massive Jewish migration mentioned in the previous chapter. Newmark's model is best applicable to a broad and hard to define area of study like Yiddish theatre.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have dealt with the two-fold focus of my thesis: the depictions of Shylock in the Yiddish translation, and the way in which references to Venetian culture or the Christian religion are translated. I have described how scholars on Yiddish Shakespeare plays have chosen an approach to analyse the plays, and I also described the approaches that I decided to take in studying the depictions of Shylock and the culture specific elements in the play. Of all the consulted and currently existing Translation Studies models, I have found Newmark's set of procedures most useful, as his procedures are general and broadly applicable in many different types of texts. In the following chapter, I will apply Newmark's procedures to the Yiddish translation.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will provide an analysis of the data – the cultural references and their translations – collected by me from Joseph Bovshover's translation of *The Merchant of Venice* (1911). The data will be categorised according to the model of Newmark (1988), as described in the previous chapter. As in this thesis I will apply a two-fold methodology, I will also apply a two-fold analysis. I will first introduce the translation and the translator Joseph Bovshover. Then I will answer the first research question concerning the depiction of Shylock in the play. For this objective I will elaborate on the translator's preface, which clearly describes Bovshover's view on Shylock. I will also mention how Bovshover dealt with the form, plot and style of the play. Concerning the translation of references to Venetian culture and the Christian religion I will present the data in a table, comparing samples of the original text with the translation, also offering a back-translation of the Yiddish content into English. In the same table I will state the applied translation procedure as defined by Newmark. I will then provide a broader analysis of the translation of cultural references concerning Venetian culture and Christianity, and what they indicate about what the translator assumed his audience would understand.

Whilst referring to the original text, I will make use of the line numbers as generally acknowledged in most modern editions of the play, in which e.g. 2.2.12 stands for Act two, scene two, line twelve. As for the Yiddish text: since Bovshover did not make use of line numbers, I will refer to page numbers instead. In order to establish the exact meaning of individual Yiddish words, I have consulted the *Jiddisch-Nederlands Woordenboek* [Yiddish-Dutch Dictionary] (web, 2018) by Justus van de Kamp et.al. as well as the *Araynfir in der Yidisher Sprach un Kultur,* [Introduction to the Yiddish Language and Culture] by Marion Aptroot and Holger Nath (2016). I have also used the system of transcription as suggested in

the same work by Aptroot and Nath, although I also took into account the possibility that the translator was probably using a different dialect than the standardised and international form of Yiddish that Aptroot and Nath describe. I have followed Bovshover's spelling in all instances.

4.1.1 Introduction to the play and the translator

The translation used and described earlier is titled *Shaylok oder der Koyfman fun Venedig* (Shylock or the Merchant of Venice). The play was translated by Josef Bovshover in 1899 and reprinted on several occasions. The Hebrew Publishing Company in New York published the print used in this thesis in 1899.

Joseph Bovshover (1873-1915) was a Yiddish poet, who was born in Belarus in a religious family and moved to the United States in 1891, where he worked as a furrier in a sweatshop. He quickly became involved in the anarchist movement and started writing poems in the style of the radical anarchist Yiddish poets of his generation. He is reported to have studied English Literature for a short period, and was strongly influenced by the works of Heinrich Heine. His translation of *The Merchant of Venice* was the only Yiddish translation of Shakespeare that he produced; nonetheless it soon gained widespread popularity (Schulman and Prager 108). The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* dubbed his translation 'the first "literary" translation of Shakespeare into Yiddish', which indicates that previous translations were distant adaptations rather than recognisable translations of the original (Prager 370). 'Literary translation' is a broad and rather vague term, and therefore in this chapter I will investigate to what extent this translation can be called 'literary', as in my view Bovshover did consciously deviate from the original in many instances.

Bovshover has often been accused of having created a very 'Daytshmerish' ['Germanised Yiddish'] translation: a term that was used to indicate a translation in which the language used was an artificial hybrid of German and Yiddish that did not represent an authentic

vernacular. Critics at the time and also later scholars found that 'his diction is a victim of a period when elegance meant Germanism' (Bovshover xi; Prager as quoted in Abend-David 78). However, Abend-David rejects this view, stating that, although Bovshover's poetry was indeed heavily influenced by German words and idioms, the same cannot be said about his translation of *The Merchant of Venice.* In fact, Bovshover uses less loanwords and German expressions than other translations, which were deemed more 'authentic' by critics (Abend-David 79-81). Although this thesis is not primarily concerned with the amount of German expressions and loanwords in this particular translation, it is worth mentioning that Bovshover did not produce a translation which was more German than Yiddish. This will be shown further in the paragraph on language use here below.

4.1.2 The translator's foreword

When analysing the depiction of Shylock, it is important to have a closer look at the translator's considerations on the topic. Bovshover added a *Kurtzer biografiye tsu shekspir* ['short biography to Shakespeare] and a *Farrede* ['preface'] to his play, in which he accurately describes his own view on the question of Shylock's character and Shakespeare's opinion on Jews and Judaism. The entire *Biografiye* and *Farrede* can be found in this thesis' Appendices. In the *Biografiye,* Bovshover focusses on Shakespeare's humble background:

> His parents were poor merchants and could not provide him with an education. He went to school for a very short period, after which he had to work to help his parents. (…) In London, as his biographers say, he started his career as a stable boy who held the horses of rich people and lords who stood as extras on stage (3).

It is clear that Bovshover displayed great interest in the character of the author of *The Merchant of Venice,* not only in the play itself. Bovshover also started the *Farrede* with describing his ideas about Shakespeare:

'Many Jewish readers think they might know what Shylock must have looked like, assuming that with Shylock's character, the so-called anti-Semite Shakespeare has drawn a proto-typical Jew, that is, the Jew how anti-Semites regard him: a mean, money-grabbing merchant, isolated from other people and obsessed only with his own kind, a natural usurer, who tries to flatter with his snake-like smooth talk and cunning. Those readers, however, are wrong' (4).

In other words, Bovshover refutes the widely shared idea that Shakespeare was an anti-Semite. He also substantiates his idea on why Shakespeare decided to create a character like Shylock, and how the reader should interpret the play. His understanding of *The Merchant of Venice* is a nearly socialistic interpretation of Shylock as a battered, oppressed creature, fighting against the 'grand people' who mock him while being morally inferior:

'Antonio spits on Shylock's beard in the presence of all other merchants. He laughs at him because of his trade and because of his origin, and why? Because he is a Jew! A person with stable, honest and liberal standpoints would not have done this. And besides, aren't Antonio and his friends money-makers like Shylock? (…) The only difference is that they, by trade, get money indirectly while Shylock asks rent directly. Is there any difference?' (8).

He recruits Shylock to the cause of revolutionary action: The previously oppressed, later self-delivered person, with oppressed patience, speaks from Shylock's lips (…) did not the labourer speak once in this way to his boss, the poor to the rich? (…) Did not America speak this way to England when they delivered themselves from the English tyranny?' (7). Bovshover refers back to Shakespeare's humble background, which he already mentioned in the *Biografiye,* and which in his view explains why Shakespeare would stand on the side of Shylock: 'Isn't it easy to understand that through Shylock's lips speaks Shakespeare alone, (…) the Shakespeare who in

earlier days used to live in poverty in the house of his parents, who took care of the horses of the rich people and the gentle-people who used to come to theatre to stand on the stage as extras' (5).

Bovshover seems to fully agree with Shylock's approach to Antonio.

> 'You see, if you examine the characters well, that Shakespeare did not draw the Jews as devils and the Christians as angels. A person who always turns the other cheek when someone hits him, is stupid. True, always adhering to the rule 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' is neither good. It is often worthwhile not to take revenge, but it is neither good to always keep silent, as you could lose your own future and cause harm for others indirectly!' (8).

His intention while translating this play is summarised in the last paragraph of his *Farrede*. 'I want to advise the young people who have not read the original work to carefully read and study this translation, in order to be able to assess it with knowledge and without prejudice' (8). Bovshover wants to make sure that his readers interpret his translation in what he sees as the 'right way': Shylock as the tragic hero, an equivalent to the other Shakespearean tragic heroes, such as Hamlet: 'Isn't it easy to understand that Shylock, like 'Hamlet', like 'King Lear', 'Othello' and many more characters which Shakespeare created, is a child of his fantasy, of his soul, his own blood and flesh, is part of himself?' (5). The true interpretation of *The Merchant of Venice* is, in Bovshover's view, a tale of an oppressed Jew who speaks for all oppressed and despised people, demanding justice and retribution.

4.2 Analysis of the form and plot

It is clear that the term 'Farteysht und farbessert' ['*translated and improved*'], a term often used to advertise Yiddish adaptations, does not apply to this translation, at least not when it comes

to the plot. Bovshover kept his translation very close to the original, only deviating in few, though meaningful, instances, as will be shown here below. He also closely followed Shakespeare's rhyme scheme closely, using blank verse in iambic pentameter, similarly to the original, and rhyming phrases in other occasions. When Shakespeare chooses to rhyme phrases, Bovshover most often follows him: 'Fast bind, fast find / A proverb never stale in thrifty mind' (2.5.54-5) is translated as 'Eyn sprikh-vort ligt dem sporer alts in zinen / vest fest ferbinden, vestu fest gefinen' ['A thrifty person has this proverb in mind / if you hold closely, you will find closely'] (44). In addition, the poetry that Shakespeare included in the text are translated as poetry. An example of this is the poem that Bassiano finds in the leaden casket, in which the translator tries to stick to the contents as well as to the form of the original poem, although changing the rhyme scheme:

> 'Had you been as wise as bold,
>
> Young in limbs, in judgement old,
>
> Your answer had not been inscrolled.
>
> Fare you well, your suit is cold' (2.7.70-4).

> 'Volt ir jung zayn in gestalt,
>
> Un geveyn in sechel alt
>
> Volt der entfer do nisht shteyn
>
> Zeyt gezund, ir kent eych geyn
>
> Eyr sidduch iz shoyn kalt' (50)

> ['If you were young in limbs
>
> and were in knowledge old
>
> the answer would not have been here
>
> farewell, you can go now
>
> your suit is cold already']

Other poems are translated in a similar faithful way. In the source text, the final two lines of a scene usually rhyme. Bovshover copied this: 'Come on: in this there can be no dismay / My ships come home a month before the day' (1.3.182-3) is translated as 'kum, kum; ikh zey nur git keyn slekhts derin / mayn skhore kumt a monat farn termin' ['come, come; I see only good, no trouble in it / my merchandise will arrive a month before the term'] (27). Most final lines are translated in rhyme, although Bovshover only deviates from this in Act 1 scene 1, where the final lines do not rhyme. In all other instances, Bovshover follows Shakespeare's rhyme scheme.

As shown, the translator took great efforts to transfer the original in a faithful way. He also did this by trying to imitate the original wordplay. For example, Portia's exclamation 'I had rather he should shrive me than wive me' (1.2.106) is translated as 'volt ikh liber velen er zol reynvashen fun zind mayn layb eyder mikh tzu neymen fir a vayb' ['I would rather want that he would clean my body from sin than take me for a wife'] (21). But when he could not find a Yiddish wordplay, he inserted a footnote in which he states: 'Dos iz a vord-shpiel in original, velkher men ken nisht iberzetzen in zhargon' ['this is a wordplay in the original, which one cannot translate into jargon' (Yiddish)] (80), instead of applying the procedure of compensation, by finding another wordplay in Yiddish.

4.2.1 Changes in the plot

There are but a few instances in which Bovshover deviates clearly from the original play. All these instances are relevant in relation to the depiction of Shylock. During the court scene, Bassiano's lines 'For thy three thousand ducats here is six' to which Shylock replies 'if every ducat in six thousand ducats / were in six parts, and every part a ducat / I would not draw them; I would have my bond' (4.1.84-7), are omitted in Yiddish. This is meaningful, as Bovshover in

most occasions sticks very closely to the original. It seems as if Shylock is depicted slightly less unforgiving, not refusing Bassiano's generous offer in the Yiddish translation.

Another instance in which lines are omitted is when Solanio says 'here comes another of the tribe / a third cannot be matched, unless the devil himself turn Jew' (3.1.61-2). It seems as if Bovshover did not want to repeat this offensive remark about Shylock and Tubal. Finally, when Jessica is referred to as 'most sweet Jew', the translation gives 'zise Yidish kind' ['sweet Jewish child'] (e.g. 2.3.11), which pictures her more like a child than like grown woman who wilfully deserts her father and her religion. In short, there are only three instances during which Bovshover clearly deviates from the original plot, all of which concern the image of Shylock or his daughter.

4.3 Analysis of collected data

This paragraph deals with the data, which was collected from *The Merchant of Venice* and from its translation by Joseph Bovshover. The table contains the references to Venetian culture or the Christian religion, its Yiddish translation and a back-translation into English. I have also mentioned the procedure according to Newmark's *Textbook of Translation* (1988), which I described in the previous chapter. Following the table, I will expand on the results found.

4.3.1 Table with collected data

Reference from the original	Yiddish translation	Back-translation of Yiddish	Procedure according to Newmark (1988)
Signors (1.1.10)	סיניארען [senyoren] p.10	Signors	Transference
Sandy hour-glass (1.1.25)	זייגער [zeyger] p.11	Clock	Neutralisation

Wealthy Andrew (1.1.27)	רייכעס שיף [Raykhes ship] p.11	Rich man's ship	Neutralisation
Should I go to church / And see the holy edifice of stone (1.1.29-30)	היינט אין קירכע [haynt in kirkhe] p.11	Today in church	Transference
I thank my fortune for it (1.1.41)	איך דאנקען גאָט [ikh danken Got] p.11	I thank God	Neutralisation
Fie, fie! (1.1.47)	פע פע [fe fe] p.11	Fie, Fie	Transference
By two-headed Janus (1.1.50)	בנאמנות [benemones] p.12	Upon my honour	Neutralisation
Nestor swear (1.1.57)	גאָט אליין וואלט שווערען [Got aleyn volt sveren] p.12	Only God would swear	Neutralisation
Dinner-time (1.1.70)	מיטטאָג-צייט [mitog-tsayt] p.12	Afternoon time	Neutralisation
Grandsire cut in alabaster (1.1.84)	געץ [getz] p.13	Idol	Neutralisation
I am Sir Oracle (1.1.93)	איך בין אן אורים ותומים [ikh bin an urim vetumim] p.13	I am an Urim and Tummim	Cultural equivalent
Exhortation (1.1.104)	דרשה [droshe] p.13	Sermon (in Jewish context)	Cultural equivalent
And many Jasons come in quest of her (1.1.171)	און פיעלע יאזאָנס קומען זוכען זיא.* (*יאזאָן איז א מיטהאָלאָגישע פערזאָן. ער איז געווען דער ליעב-האָבער פון מעדעא [un vile Jazons kumen zukhen zi.- Jazon iz a mitologishe	And many Jasons come to seek her.* *Jason was a mythological person. He was the lover of Medea.	Footnote

	person. Er iz geveyn der libhober fun medeye] p.16		
Holy men (1.2.23)	פרומע מענשען [frume menshen] p.18	Pious people	Neutralisation
Monsieur Le Bon (1.2.45)	מאָנסיער לע-באָן [monsieur le-bon] p.18	Monsieur Le Bon	Transference
God made him (1.2.46)	דיא נאטור האט איהם שוין בעשאפען [di natur hot ihm shoyn beshafen] p.18	Nature has made him that way	Neutralisation
The Scottish lord (1.2.63)	דער שאָטלענדישער לאָרד [der shotlendisher lord] p.19	The Scottish Lord	Transference
Sponge (1.2.81)	שכור [shikker] p.20	Drunk	Neutralisation
Lords (1.2.82)	געסט [gest] p.20	Guests	Neutralisation
I had rather he should shrive me than wive me (1.2.106)	וואָלט איך ליעבער וועלען ער זאָל רייַנוואשען פון זינד מייַן לייב איידער מיך צו נעהמען פיר א ווייב [volt ikh liber velen er zol reynvashen fun zind mayn layb eyder mikh tzu neymen fir a vayb] p.21	I would rather want that he would clean my body from sin than take me for a wife	Compensation
Rialto (1.3.16)	ריאלטאָ [rialto] p.21	Rialto	Transference
Our sacred nation (1.3.40)	מייַן פאָלק [mayn folk] p.22	My people	Functional equivalent
Well-won thrift (1.3.42)	כשר'ען פערמעגען [kosheren fermegen]	Kosher (or: lawful, permitted) assets	Cultural equivalent

My tribe (1.3.43)	מיין פֿאָלק [mayn folk] p.22	My people	Functional equivalent
Notary (1.3.137)	נאָטאריוס [notarius] p.23	Notary	Transference
O father Abraham (1.3.154)	רבונא דעלמא כולא [Reboyne dalme kule] p.27	Lord of the universe	Cultural equivalent
What these Christians are (1.3.154)	וואָס דיא גוים זיינען [vos di goyim zaynen] p.27	What the gentiles (non-Jews) are	Cultural equivalent
Phoebus' fire (2.1.5)	פֿייערדיקע ליכטיגקייט [fayerdike likhtigkeyt] p.28	Fiery lightness	Neutralisation
Says very wisely (2.2.11)	זאָגט מיר וויא א חכם [zogt mir vi a khokhem] p.30	Tells me like a wise man (Jewish context)	Cultural equivalent
Be God's sonties (2.2.35)	בנאמנות [benemones] p.32	Upon my honour	Neutralisation
Gone to heaven (2.2.53)	געגאנגען אין זיין רוה [gegangen in zayn rue] p.32	Went in (his) peace	Cultural equivalent
God rest his soul (2.2.59)	עליו השלום [alav hasholem] p.32	Peace be with him	Cultural equivalent
Lodging (2.2.96)	לאָדזי [lodzh] p.34	Lodging	Transference
While grace is saying (2.2.164)	עסן בענשען [esn benshn] p.37	Bless the food (Jewish context)	Cultural equivalent
Most sweet Jew (2.3.11)	זיסע יידיש קינד [zise Yidish kind] p.39	Sweet Jewish child	Componential analysis
In faith (2.4.12)	אויף עהרענוואָרט [af erenvort] p.40	Upon my word of honour	Neutralisation
If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven (2.4.33)	אויב דער ייד, איהר פֿאטער וועט זיין וועַן אין גן עדן [oyb der yid, ir	If the Jew, her father, would be in the garden of Eden	Cultural equivalent

	feter vet zayn ven in gan eyden] p.41		
Black Monday (2.5.24)	שװארצען מאָנטאג [svartzen montag] p. 43	Black Monday	Literal translation
Ash-Wednesday (2.5.25)	אשער-מיטװאָך [asher-mitvokh] p.43	Ash-Wednesday	Literal translation
There will come a Christian by / Will be worth a Jewès eye (2.5.40-1)	'ס װעט א קריסט דאָ געהן פארביי / װערטה, איהר זאָלט איהם ליעבען טריי ['s vet a krist do geyn farbay / vert, ir zolt im liben tray] p.43	A Christian will come by / who is worthy that you should love him truly	Compensation
What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha? (2.5.42)	װאס זאגט דער שוטה דער ישמעאל, האָ? [vos zogt der shute, der yishmoel, ho?]	What does the idiot, the Ismael say?	Cultural equivalent
Venus' pidgeon's fly (2.6.6)	דיא טויבען פון דער געטין װענוס [der toyven fun der getin venus] p.44	The doves of the goddess Venus	Classifier
Cupid (2.6.39)	יוצר הרע [yetzer hara] p.45	Evil inclination	Cultural equivalent
Gondola (2.8.8)	שיפעל [shipl] p.51	Little boat	Neutralisation
Solanio: here comes another of the tribe; a third cannot be matched, unless the devil himself turn Jew. (3.1.61-2)	Deletion	Deletion	Deletion
Break (3.1.90)	באנקראָטירען [bankroptiren] p.60	Go bankrupt	Transference

Synagogue (3.1.102-3)	שוהל [shul] p.61	Synagogue	Cultural equivalent
Marriage (3.2.53)	חופה [khupe] p.63	Marriage (Jewish context)	Cultural equivalent
Young Alcides (3.4.55)	דער העלד אלסידעס [der held alsides] p.63	The hero Alcides	Classifier
Infidel (3.2.217)	יידין [yidin] p.69	Jewess	Functional equivalent
It is much that the Moor should be more than reason; but if she be less than an honest woman, she is indeed more than I took her for. (3.5.33-5)	עס איז פיעל, דאס דיא מורין זאל זיין מעהר וויא פערשטאנד * *דאָס איז א וואָרד-שפיעל אין אָריגינאל, וועלכען מען קען ניט איבערזעצען אין זשארגאָן. [es iz fil dos di morin zol zayn mer vi fershtand* *dos iz a vord-shpil in original, velchen men ken nisht iberzetzen in zhargon.) p.80	It is much, that the Morin should be more than reason.* *This is a wordplay in the original, which cannot be translated into jargon. (=Yiddish)	Footnote
Bassiano: for thy three thousand ducats here is six Shylock: if every ducat in six thousand ducats / were in six parts, and every part a ducat, / I would not	Deletion	Deletion	Deletion

draw them; I would have my bond. (4.1.84-7)			
Pretty Jessica (5.1.20)	קליינע יעססיקא [kleyne Jessica] p.103	Little Jessica	Functional equivalent
Holy crosses (5.1.31)	היייליגע צלמים [heylige tslomim] p.104	Holy statues	Neutralisation
Hermit (5.1.33)	א היייליגע מאנן, וואס לעבט זיך אבגעזאָנדארט [a heylige manen, vos lebt zich abgezondert] p.105	A holy man, who lives isolated	Paraphrase
Watch me like Argus (5.1.230)	היט מיך מיט טויזענד אויגען [hit mikh mit toyzent oygen] p.113	Watch me with thousand eyes	Paraphrase

4.3.2 Analysis of the translation of cultural references to Venetian culture and Christian religion

Upon analysing the translation of cultural references in the play, as summarised in the table above, it becomes clear that the translator did not overtly 'judaize' the play. He did not change the setting of the play nor did he obscure the fact that the story takes place in Venice, and that most characters are Christian. Many of the references to the Christian religion, such as 'church' (1.1.29), or 'Black Monday' (2.5.24) were maintained and translated literally, as Bovshover applied the procedure of transference. The translator does not obscure the fact that the play is set in a Christian context and that only Shylock and his friend Tubal are Jews. This does not mean, however, that all cultural references are translated literally. In this section I will analyse the way in which the cultural references have been changed.

In many instances Bovshover decided to change the reference to either the ancient religion or the Christian religion to a Jewish concept, by applying the procedure of cultural equivalence. 'Cupid' is translated to 'yetzer hara', which is a dualistic concept from rabbinical literature, derived from the Bible verse: 'For the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth' (Genesis 8:21). According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, this inclination 'corresponds roughly to man's untamed natural appetites or passions, is not intrinsically evil and, therefore, not to be completely suppressed' (Rosenblatt and Kasher 756). In other words, Bovshover changed a reference to classical mythology to a fully Jewish concept that his audience would understand. Another example of this is 'If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven' (2.4.33), which is translated as 'Oyv der Yid, ir faters vet zayn ven in gan eyden' ['if the Jew, her father would be in the garden of Eden'] (41). Moreover, when Gratiano says 'I am Sir Oracle' (1.1.94) this is translated by 'ich bin an urim vetunim' ['I am a Urim and Tumim'] which refers to the precious stones that the high priest wore on his breast plate, which were used in Israel as a source of knowledge (Exodus 28:30). Finally, in some of the references to religious rituals such as 'marriage' (3.2.53) or 'saying grace for food' (2.2.164) the translator refers to typically Jewish rituals: 'khupe' ['Jewish marriage'] (63) and 'benshn' ['the Jewish prayer after food'] (37). Bovshover used the procedure of cultural equivalence in half of the cases. In the other half of the cases he transferred the references into Yiddish.

References to classical myths are often explained, such as 'Venus' pidgeon's fly' (2.6.6) which is translated as 'Die toyven fun der getin Venus' ['the doves of the goddess Venus'] (44) and 'Young Alcides' (3.4.55) which is translated as 'Der held Alsides' [the hero Alcides] (63). In these occasions Bovshover used a classifier. In other occasions Bovshover made use of footnotes to clarify the reference, at least in the script of the play: for example, 'And many Jasons come in quest of her (1.2.71)', carries a footnote with the explanation 'Jazon iz a

mithologishe person. Er iz geveyn der libhober fun Medeye' [Jason is a mythological person. He was the lover of Medea' (16).

When it comes to expletives, Bovshover used in nearly all instances the procedure of neutralisation, by changing words that originated from ancient or Christian concepts into neutral or Jewish concepts. 'By two-headed Janus' (1.1.50), a reference to a Roman god, becomes 'benemones' [upon my word of honour] (12), and 'Nestor swear' (1.1.56) becomes 'got aleyn volt sveren' [God alone would swear] (12). These references, in other words, are neutralised. An instance of cultural equivalence in relation to expletives occurs when the phrase 'O father Abraham' (1.3.153) is translated with 'Reboyne dalme kule' [Lord of the universe] (24), which is a Yiddish exclamation.

In short, upon analysing the translation of the cultural references as described above, several conclusions can be drawn. When it came to expletives, Bovshover mostly used the procedure of neutralisation. This was probably because he wanted the language to flow naturally for the audience or reader. He did not want the audience to wonder at a very unfamiliar exclamation that was not relevant for the plot at all, so he changed it into an exclamation that a reader or viewer would understand, in order not to keep the reader focused on the plot. References to classical mythology Bovshover often explained, usually by giving a classifier. This might have been because Bovshover considered these references essential to the plot. Another explanation could be that he wanted to educate his audience: being new in the United States meant that they would have to get familiar with classical mythology as well. Finally, for references to Venetian or Christian culture, such as 'marriage' or 'pray' or the afterlife, Bovshover nearly always tried to find a cultural equivalent. Not all references to Christianity were omitted or replaced by a cultural equivalent. After all, the Jewish-American audience would probably be familiar with words like 'church' or 'statue', as the culture of the United

States was largely influenced by Christianity and also immigrants would encounter churches or statues on the streets of their hometowns.

4.3.3 Language use

As was already pointed out by Abend-David, Bovshover did not use more German words than would be normal in Yiddish at the time. The translator in many instances replaced a cultural reference such as 'marriage' or 'match, suit' by a Yiddish word of Semitic origin rather the Germanic counterpart. For marriage he used in several instances 'khupe' [marriage] and not the word 'heyrat' [marriage] from the German word 'heirat' [marriage] which would also have been a possibility. Neither did he use the Germanic word 'beten' for prayer; instead he used 'benshn' [prayer]. Bovshover chose not to differentiate between the language of specific characters by making Shylock's speech more 'Semitic' and e.g. Portia's way of speaking more 'Germanic' or more 'English'. All characters use the same type of Yiddish, just like in the original all characters use the same type of English. Along with this, Bovshover maintains the Venetian setting by transferring most of the Italian words. This also applies to loanwords that Shakespeare took over from Italian: *Signors* (1.1.10) is transferred as 'senyoren' and the word 'Rialto' is maintained as well.

The fact that the English language influenced Bovshover comes back in many English loanwords that he uses. He often transfers the word 'lord' as 'lord' (e.g. 1.2.63) and also makes use of English financial terminology. The word 'lodging' (2.2.129) becomes 'lodge' (34) and for 'break' (3.1.90) meaning 'go bankrupt' he uses 'bankroptiren' ['to go bankrupt'], another English loanword. The interruptive expression 'fie, fie' is taken over as 'fe, fe', a non-existent expression in Yiddish which does not carry any further meaning (e.g. 1.1.47). One instance where Bovshover used an Anglicism was in the short biography of Shakespeare he wrote, where

he uses the word 'skul' ['school'], which reflects the English pronunciation, instead of giving the Yiddish word 'shul' ['school'] (Bovshover 3).

The analysis of the language used in the play leads to several conclusions. Firstly, it shows that Bovshover wanted to maintain the Italian setting of the play, by transferring Italian words into the Yiddish translation. He did not use a would-be elevated Germanic type of Yiddish, known as 'Daytshmerish', and he did not make the Jewish characters speak a different type of Yiddish than the non-Jewish characters. In some instances his Yiddish reflected the English spelling rather than the original Yiddish spelling, which might be explained from the fact that Bovshover was a learned man who spoke English well. He knew enough of Shakespeare and his works to add a biography of Shakespeare to his translation. This biography also shows that Bovshover took a personal interest in Shakespeare's ideas and opinions on Jews.

4.4 Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of the translation by Bovshover it is quite clear why the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* would call this 'the first literary translation' of *The Merchant of Venice*: after all*,* Bovshover took over Shakespeare's rhyme schemes and style of writing, thus copying Shakespeare's literary style. He transferred the words referring to the Venetian setting of the play, and along with that, he left in many of the references to Christianity and to classical mythology. Yet, it is also clear that the translator had a different audience in mind to the one Shakespeare had.

Early in the translator's foreword, Bovshover made sure that the reader would not assume from the play that Shakespeare was an anti-Semite. Bovshover took great effort in convincing his reader that Shakespeare was not at all an enemy of the Jews: he was 'on Shylock's side'. Bovshover places Shylock in the same position as all other tragic heroes created by Shakespeare: *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*. Rather than a

Jewish villain, Bovshover concludes, Shylock is depicted as a tragic hero and he is also the main character of the play. This is also why Bovshover's translation is renamed *Shylock, or the Merchant of Venice* rather than *The Merchant of Venice*, in which there is no mention of Shylock at all.

It is worth noting that the translator tried to find cultural equivalents for many of the references to Venetian culture. Many words referring to church sacraments, for instance, were replaced by their Yiddish counterparts, which are normally used in a Jewish setting. Another example of the fact that Bovshover downplayed the religious setting of the play is that he neutralised many of the expletives which either referred to Christianity or ancient mythology. For several of the references to classical mythology Bovshover decided to add a footnote with explanation. In other instances, Bovshover simply transferred the reference to the Christian religion into Yiddish. For these cases, Bovshover was helped by the fact that his audience was familiar with at least the outward features of the Christian religion, and he therefore did not need to explain words like 'church'. This indicates that he attempted to find a balance between presenting the readers with an 'authentic Shakespearean play' on the one hand, and maintaining a relatable setting on the other hand.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis has described the history of Yiddish theatre in New York, and how playwrights translated Western canonical works, such as those of Shakespeare, for their Jewish-American audiences. Of Shakespeare's oeuvre, Yiddish playwrights mainly translated the author's tragedies such as *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Besides these tragedies, a frequently translated play was *The Merchant of Venice*, which was originally dubbed as a comedy. However, the tragic features of this play were often emphasised by Jewish-American playwrights, who often did not find the play to be a comedy at all. On the one hand *The Merchant of Venice* held great interest for Jewish authors and audiences, but on the other hand it was considered Shakespeare's most problematic play due to its so-called anti-Semitic contents. After all, the occurrence of a negatively depicted Jew posed a problem for authors and audiences who were all too familiar with anti-Semitism and who were still struggling to find their place in new and often hostile surroundings. Playwrights found a solution to this problem: they changed the depiction of Shylock from a merciless moneylender to a tragic hero who is beaten by circumstances.

In this thesis I used a two-fold methodology: the first question to be answered was how the translator depicted Shylock's character in the play; the second question was how the translator dealt with the translation of references to Venetian culture and the Christian religion. In order to answer the first question, the translation was closely read and compared to the original play. Also the translator's foreword appeared to render useful insights concerning the translator's attitude towards Shylock. In order to answer the second question, the translation procedures by Newmark (1988) were used. This final chapter aims to summarise the results of this thesis by finally answering the research questions. I will also comment on the limitations of the present study and provide some suggestions for further research, which in my view will contribute to the field of Yiddish Shakespeare and Yiddish theatre in general.

5.1 The Depiction of Shylock in Bovshover's Translation

The first research question posed in this thesis is concerned with the manner in which the translator, Joseph Bovshover, dealt with the depiction of Shylock: did he make significant changes to this character or did he keep it unaltered? In answering this question, the translator's foreword appeared to be most insightful. In this foreword, Bovshover praised Shakespeare for creating the image of Shylock, who in his view could be compared to all other Shakespearean tragic heroes: *Othello, Hamlet, Romeo* and *King Lear*. Bovshover claimed that, similarly to these heroes, Shylock was a victim of his hostile surroundings, who treated him unfairly and disrespectfully. Shylock, as Bovshover argued, stood up against his oppressors and claimed what was legally his. He had been mocked all too often, and his patience had come to a breaking point. Bovshover even drew a comparison between Shylock and Shakespeare himself: both had grown up in poverty and had suffered under the mockery and cruel ambitions of 'di groyse leyt' ['the great people']. When Shylock demanded his 'pound of flesh', Shakespeare was speaking through him, demanding justice for the poor and oppressed, Bovshover claims.

Bovshover's socialistic and anarchistic interpretation of Shylock's character did not lead him to apply severe changes to the plot or style of the play. He did not differentiate between the language used in Shylock's speeches or those of other characters. Neither did he cut storylines or scenes – apart from two instances – in order to change the focus of the play. He did not deny that there were storylines in the play other than the storyline of Shylock, but he did change the title of the play to 'Shylock, or the Merchant of Venice'. Bovshover's strategy was to directly address the readers of his play in the foreword, implying that once the reader was informed about the 'right' interpretation of the play, the audience would actually agree with his view. This way, Bovshover tried to influence the reader's opinion – especially that of the 'young people' – regarding their view on Shylock.

5.2 The Translation of References to Venetian Culture and the Christian Religion

The second research question in this thesis is tied with the translation of cultural references to Venetian culture and the Christian religion, for Shakespeare's play is replete with these as well as classical mythology. These references and their translation were thoroughly analysed and categorised according to the translation procedures defined by Newmark (1988).

Upon a close analysis, it stood to reason that regarding references to Venetian culture, especially loanwords from Italian such as 'Rialto' or 'signor', Bovshover applied the procedure of transference, and it therefore remains clear for readers that the play is set in 'Venedig' ['Venice']. Apparently, he assumed that his audience would understand these references anyway, and that loanwords from Italian would render an exotic flavour to the play without obscuring the storyline. References to classical antiquity, such as 'Jason' or 'Cupid', were often classified. This means that Bovshover expected his audience to be not too familiar with classical mythology and that they would need some explanation. In several instances, Bovshover even provided a footnote so that at least his readers would know what the reference denoted.

Bovshover did not obscure the fact that Shakespeare wrote his play in a Christian setting. In some instances, references to the Christian religion, such as 'kirche' ['church'] were maintained in translation. However, in many instances Bovshover did apply the procedure of cultural equivalence, by replacing the reference with a Yiddish counterpart, which would normally be used in a Jewish setting. Another example of this tendency is that Bovshover neutralised many of the expletives which either referred to Christianity or to ancient mythology. Bovshover's audience lived in the United States, a country in which, at the time, Christianity was the most dominant religion. His audience would therefore be familiar with concepts such as 'churches' and 'statues' and for that reason he did not have to explain, paraphrase or replace all these references. However, he did not want his audience to feel estranged from the play, so he slightly adapted the setting to what they would encounter on a daily basis. This is probably

the most plausible explanation for why Bovshover maintained some references and replaced others with a cultural equivalent.

5.3 Limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research

Scholars on Yiddish theatre have not fully studied Bovshover's translation from a linguistic perspective. Only Abend-David has remarked that Bovshover did not use a germanised type of Yiddish, a conclusion that I can wholeheartedly agree with. Other scholars such as Berkowitz have only briefly mentioned the play and mostly in relation to the critiques it received.

There is an element that I strongly appreciate in Berkowitz' approach which is the fact that he takes into consideration several Yiddish translations of the same play and puts them all in contrast. He does this giving extra focus to the actors and theatre groups who performed the play and on the audience's reception of the adaptation. This thesis has only studied one particular translation, but I expect that a similar study with a focus on language in the play would provide us with fascinating insights on the field of Yiddish theatre. Not only would this enable us to check whether there is a continuum in the translations, it would also allow for an explanation of the differences between the plays in relation to the historical circumstances of the Jewish population in the United States.

Many scholars leave out the linguistic part of the study of Yiddish theatre entirely, assuming that the Yiddish language is a static entity that is present in all plays. However, with my research and with the description of the debate on 'Daytsmerish' ['Germanised Yiddish'] I hope to have shown that the language used by a translator is, in fact, quite telling. The Yiddish language is a language that was spoken in many different regions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and is therefore composed of many dialects and various registers. There are many ways in which translators could use the language and a comprehensive comparison of multiple Yiddish translations of one play would prove especially insightful.

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Appendix A: A short biography of Shakespeare
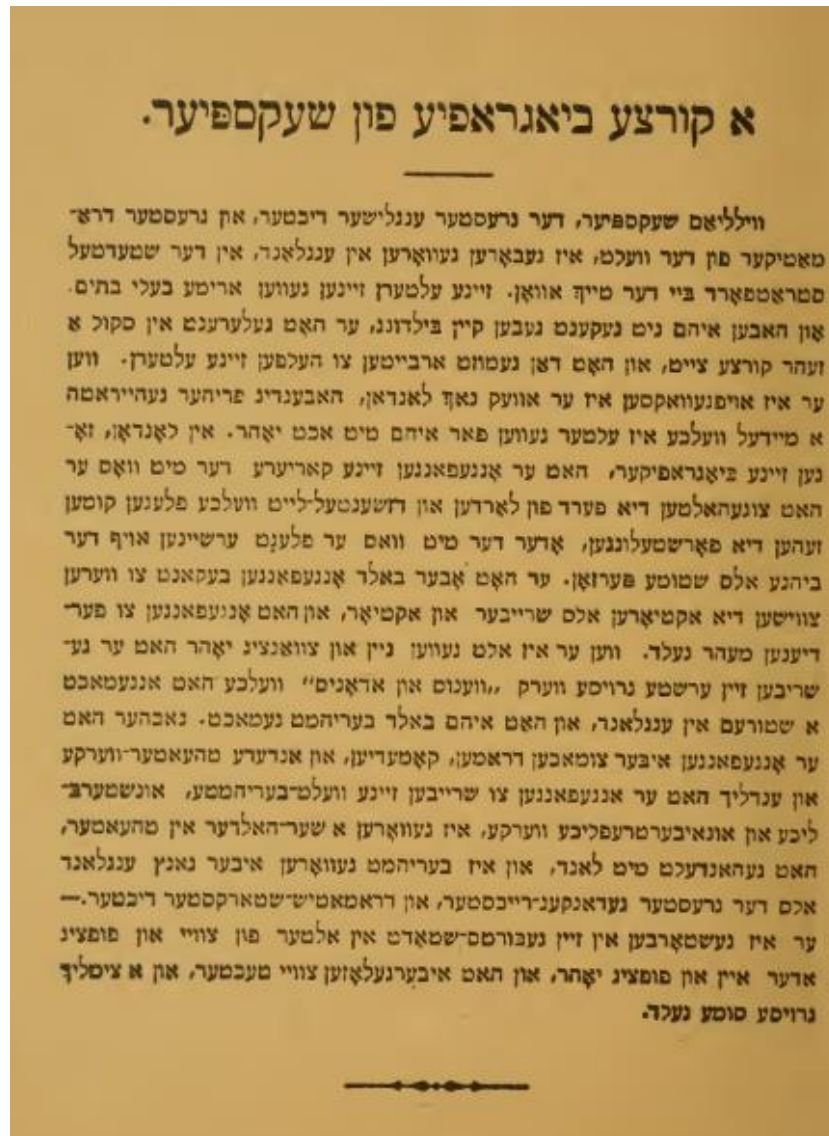
Taken from: Joseph Bovshover. *Shaylok oder der Koyfman fun Venedig* [Shaylok, or the Merchant of Venice]. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1899. 3.

Transcription:

א קורצע ביאגראפיע פון שעקספיר

ווילליאם שעקספיר, דער גרעסטער אנגלישער דיכטער, און גרעסטער דראמאטיקער פון דען וועלט, איז געבארען

געווארען אין ענגלאנד, אין דער שטעדטעל סטראטפארד ביי דער טייך אוואן. זיינע עלטערן זיינען געווען ארימע

בעלי בתים, און האבען איהם ניט געקענט געבען קיין בילדונג, ער האט געלערנט אין סקול א זעהר קורצע צייט, און

האט דאן געמוזט ארבייטען צו העלפען זיינע עלטערן. ווען ער איז אויפגעוואקסען איז ער אוועק נאך לאנדאן,

האבענדיג פרייהרער געהייראטה א מיידעל וועלכע איז עלטער געווען פאר איהם מיט אכט יאהר. אין לאנדאן, זאגען

זיינע ביאגראפיקער, האט ער אנגעפאנגען זיינע קאריערע דער מיט וואס ער האט צוגעהאלטען דיא פערד פון

לארדען און דזשענטעל-לייט וועלכע פלעגקען קומען זעהען דיא פארזטעלונגען, אדער דער מיט וואס ער פלעגט

ערשיינען אויף דער ביהנע אלס שטומע פערזאן. ער האט אבער באלד אנגעפאנגען בעקאנט צו ווערען צווישען דיא

אקטיארען אלס שרייבער און אקטיאר, און האט אנגעפאנגען צו פערדיענען מעהר געלד. ווען ער איז אלט געווען

ניין און צוואנציג יאהר האט ער געשריבען זיין ערשטע גרויסע ווערק "ווענוס און אדאניס" וועלכע האט אנגעמאכט

א שטורם אין ענגלאנד, און האט איהם באלד בערימט געמאכט. נאכהער האט ער אנגעפאנגען איבער צומאכען

דראמען, קאמעדיען, און אנדערע טהעאטער-ווערקע און ענגלעך האט ער אנגעפאנגען צו שרייבען זיינע וועלט-

בערימטע, אונשטערבליכע און אומאיבערטרעפליכע ווערקע, איז געווארען א שער-האלדער אין טהעאטער, האט

געהאנדעלט מיט לאנד, און איז בערימט געווארען איבער גאנץ ענדלאנד אלס דער גרעסטער געדאנקען-

רייכסטער, און דראמאטיש-שטארקסטער דיכטער. ער איז געשטארבען אין זיין געבורטס-שטאדט אין אלטער פון

צוויי און פופציג אדער איין און פופציג יאהר, און האט איבערגעלאזען צוויי טעכטער, און א צימלעך גרויסע סומע

געלד.

Translation to English:

A short biography of Shakespeare

William Shakespeare, the greatest English poet and greatest dramatist in the world, was born in England, in a small village called Stratford upon Avon. His parents were poor merchants and could not provide him with an education. He went to school for a very short period, after which he had to work to help his parents. An adult, he went to London, having got married young to a girl who was eight years older. In London, as his biographers say, he started his career as a stable boy who held the horses of rich people and lords who stood as extras on stage. But he soon became famous amongst actors as a writer and actor and started to earn more money. At

the age of 29, he wrote his first big work, 'Venus and Adonis', which caused much commotion in England and which also made him famous. Later on, he began to produce drama, comedies and other theatre productions. He finally started to write his world-famous immortal and unsurpassable works, he became share-holder in theater, he traded in land, and was famous across England as the greatest, most comprehensive and dramatic poet. He died in his home town at the age of 52 or 51, leaving behind two daughters and a reasonable sum of money.

Appendix B: Foreword to *Shaylok*

פארערע צו שאילאק.

פיעלע יידישע לעזער קענען געפינען וואס אויסצוחעצען נעגען שאילאק, רעד-
קענערין דאס אין דעם חאראקטער פן שאילאק האט דער זאנגאנגטער שונא ישראל
שעקספיער העראויסנעשטעלט דעם יידען וויא ער שטעהם און געהט, ד. ה. דעם
יידען וויא דיא שונאי ישראל בעטראכטען איהם,—דעם נעמינעם, נעלד-מאכענדען
שאכער-מאכער-דינען, פן דיא אנדערע פעלקער אבגעזאנדערטען, זיין פאמיליע-ליע-
בענדען אידען, וועלכער איז א פראצענטניק וויא פן דער נאטור און א חונף אויס
שלאנגען ארטינער נלאטקייט, און ניפטינקייט. אבער אויב מאנכע לעזער, וועלען
דענקען, אדער רענקען אזוי, האבען זיי א טעות. שעקספיער, וויא ווייט מען קען
פן זיינע ווערקע פערשטעהן. זיין חאראקטער, זיין נייסטעס—נרויסקייט, דיא רייב-
קיים פן זיין נאטור, און זיין נרויסע ליעבע, איז נעווים פעהיג נעוועו צו פערשטעהן,
און האם פערשטאנען פן וואו דער איינגעבוינענער רוקען, דער שטילער נייסט וואס
שאַרט זיך אן ננב'עם זיך הערין אין דער וועלט, פן וואו דיא פערביסענע, אין דיך
שמאלצע, איך וואלם קענען ביטערע אונטערמחענינקיים נעהמט זיך ביים אידען,—
שעקספיער, זאָן איך, האם עס נעווים נעקענט פערשטעהן, און ניט ער איז נעווען
א טענש צו פעראדאממען, צו פערשוואורצען, אהנע נרינדליך אויסצופארשען, פאאני-
רערצופלאנטערן, און צו דערנעהן דעם נרונד, דיא אורזאבע פן א מענשענ'ס, אדער
פן א פאלקס האנדלונגען, און נאטירליכע, אדער אנגענומענע חאראקטער-צינע.
אויך נים שעקספיער איז געווען דער מענש וואס האם נעקענט הערויסשמעלען דיא
שמארקע זייטע פן א מענשענ'ס חאראקטער,—דיא נעדולד וועלכע האם לאננ נע-
שוויינען, אריבערנעטראנען פיעלעס, פן ועמעם ענדליך נעפלאצט—אום דעם מענשען
דאדורך צו פערשוואורצען, אום צו בעווייזען דיא נעמיינהייט פן זיין נאטור. שעקס-
פיער וועמעם זעעלע איז געווען אזוי ערהאבען, אזוי שטארק, אזוי אמביציעז, און
הערש-זיכטיג, — שעקספיער וועלכער האם נעזעהען מים זיין נייסטינער אוינ קענינע
זיך ביקענדינ צו איהם, און פיעלע דורות איהם פערנעטערענדינ — שעקספיער פן
וועמעם נשמה, פן וועמעם פאנמאזיע, אזוי פיעל העלדען, מענשען—ריחזען, קעניגע
מיראננען, הערשער, און מהילכאזאפפען זיינען ארויסנעשפרונגען, ארויסנעוואוקסמען, לע-
בעדינ און אטהמענד, וויא פן דעם שעפער'ס האנר,—האם דיזער שעקספיער נע-
קענם פעראדאממען א מענשען דאפיר וואס ער האם זיך נים נעלאזם איטער קריכען

אױמ'ן קאָפ, אָן אַז נעדוילדיג געװעז ביז אַ צײם ז—דורכ-בלעטמערענדיג עמליכע פֿן
שעקספּיער'ס װערקע קען מען באַלד זעהען װאָס שעקספּיער האָט געדענקט פֿן זיך,
װאָס פֿאַר אַ קראַפֿט, װאָס פֿאַר אַן אױטאָרימעט ער האָט אין זיך געפֿיהלמ צו
זאָגען װאָס ער דאַרף, אױפֿצושמעהן פֿאַר דער װעלמ אַלס שמראָפֿער און לעהרער,
און װאָס פֿאַר אַ מײנונג ער האָט געהאַם װעגען אונמערדריקונג, מים װאָס פֿאַר
אַן אױג ער האָט געקוקמ אױף דיא „נרױסע", דיא העררשער, דיא קעניגע, פֿרינצען
און לאָרדען צװישען װעלכע ער האָם אַפֿם געלעבמ, און װיא ער האָם אין נרונד
האַרצען נים אײנגעשמימם מים זײער אונגערעכמינקײם, און אױם-געלאָסענע מענ-
שען-פֿרעסעריי. און האָם דיזער שעקספּיער געקענמ ארױסשמעלען שאַילאָק אזױ
װיא ער האָם איהם ארױכגעשמעלמ, אום צו פֿערדאַממען איהם און זײן ראַסםע
דאַפֿיר װאָס ער האָם זיך נים געלאָזמ אימער מרעמען מים דיא פֿים, אימער שפֿײ-
ען אין באַרד, אימער פֿן זיך אָפֿלאַבען, און אימער געשמעַרמ צו זײן אין זײנע גע-
שעפֿמען ? אין עס נים לײכמ צו פֿערשמעהן, דאַס שאַילאָק, װיא „האַמלעמ" װיא
„קעניג ליער", „אָמהעללאָ", אָן נאָך פֿיעלע אַנדערע האַראקמערע װעלכע שעק-
ספּיער האָם געשאַפֿען, איז אַ קינד פֿן זײן פֿאַנמאַזיע, פֿן זײן זעעלע, זײן אײנען
בלומ און פֿלײש, איז אַ מהײל פֿן איהם ? אין עס נים לײכמ צו פֿערשמעהן דאַס
דורך שאַילאָק'ס ליפּען רעדם שעקספּיער אַלײן, דער שעקספּיער װעלכער האָם אַ
לאַנגע צײם געלימען ביז ער האָם זיך ערװאָרבען אַ נאָמען, װעלכער האָם געלימען
פֿיעלע ערניעדערינגונגען און בעלײדיגונגען פֿן דיא „נרױסע" און פֿן פֿאָלק,—װעלבען
עס האָם געקעהרמ גרינ-ראָן-נאַל הערומקרײכענדיג צוזאַמען מים דיא קלײנע מענשען
װעריטעלאַף, און װעלכע זעהען נים מעהר װיא בעמקלאַף, און נאָך קלענערע ברואים-כאַף
װיא זײ זײנען,—דער שעקספּיער װעלכער האָם פֿריהער געלעבמ אין ארמומה אין
דער הײם בײ דיא עלמערן, דאַן צונעהאַלמען פֿערד, פֿאַר דיא רײכע לאָרדען. און
דיטעענמעל-לײמ װאָס פֿלעגען קומען אין מהעאַמער, און דאַן געשמא:גען אױף דער
ביהנע אַלס שמומע פֿערזאָן, און דאַן ערשמ אָנגעפֿאַנגען צו ערװאָרבען זיך אַ נאָמען
דורך זײן שרײבען,—דער שעקספּיער װעלכער האָם זיך געמאַכמ פֿאַר אַ בֿאַיאַן פֿאַר
לאָרדען און נראַבע מאַרקס-יונגען װעלבע זײנען נים װערמה געװען דעם צװונקעל פֿן
זײן פֿאָדעשוע,—װעלכער האָם זיך אַנגעלימען זאַנגאַר זײענדיג גרױם,—אַנגעלימען
אַלס אַקמיאָר, אַלס דער מאַן פֿן אַ פֿרױ און װעלכע האָם איהם נים פֿערשמאַנען,
אַלס צערמליכער, ליעבענדער מענש, אַלס גרױסער דענקער, און פֿריי-געזונמער
מענש,—דער שעקספּיער װעלכער איז נײסמין געמראָמען געװאָרען מים דיא פֿים ?
פֿיהלם איהר נים דאָס שעקספּיער, דער פֿריהער אונמערדריקמער, נאָכהער דיך —

תעלבסם — בעפרייענדער מענש, מים דער נעפלאצמער נעדולד, ־ערם הַערוּים פה
שיילאק׳ם ליפען.

שׁעלאק. סיניאר אנמאניא.

נאנץ אסם האם איהר אויף דער ריאלמא מיך
פערשפאם צוליעב טיין נעלד און מיין פראצענם —
יך פלענ אלץ צ קועטש מהאן מים דיא פלייצעם אן
פערשוויינען, דען דוכדען איז דער שמעמפעל פון
מיין פאלק. אונגלייבינער, האלז־שניידער, הונד
רופם איהר מיך אן, איהר שפייים אויף מיין איריׁשע
קאבאמע, און דערפאר אלץ וויל איך ניך
מים איינען נעלד ; נאנץ רעכם ! יעצם וויזם עם זיך
הערוים, דאם איהר בענעטהינם זיך אין מיר
אזו, אזוי ! — איהר קוטם צו מיר און זאנם :
„שאילאק, מיר דארפען נעלד ו'' איהר זאנט עם מיר, איהר,
וואם איהר האם מיר נעשפינען אין דער בארד
אן מיך פון אייער שׁוועל פערשטויסען וויא
מען שטויסט אוועק א הונגערינען הונד.
נעלד וויכט זיך אייך ; וואם זאל איך איצטער זאנען ו
זאל איך ניט זאנען : האם א הונד נעלד ?
איז׳ם מענליך, דאם א הונד זאל לייה׳ן דריי טויזענד
דוקאטמען ?'' ארער זאל איך אפשר זיך
צו אייך יעצם בוקען מים הכנעה, און
מים א פערשטיקמען אטהעם, וויא א קנעכט,
שעפמשען צו אייך מים אונטערמהענינקיים :
„מיין ווערמהער הערה, פערנאנג׳נעם מיטוואך האם
איהר מיך בעשפיענען, יענעם מאן האם איהר
אויף מיר נעטראטען מים דיא פיס, ניט לאנג
האם איהר מיך הונד נערומען, און דערפאר
וואם איהר האם מיר נעציינט אזא מין עהרע,
וועל איך אייך לייהען וויפיעל נאר איהר דארפם ?''

שׂאַילאָק   ניעב אויף איהם אכמונג נעפענגנים-וועכטער.

רערמיר ניט פון מיטלייד: דאָם איז דאָם דער נאַר,

וואָם האָט געליהען געלד נאָר אהן פּראָצענט.

ניעב אכט אויף איהם, נעפּענגנים וועכטער.

אַנטאָניאָ.   הער מיך נאָר רערען, גוטער שׂאַילאָק.

שׂאַילאָק.   איך וועל דעם אבמאַך האָבען. האָסט מיך התר
נערופען, אַיידער דוא האָסט נאָך געהאַט
אַן אורזאַכע; דאַך, 'זוי וויא 'ך בין א הונד,
היט זיך פאַר מיינע ציינה. מיך וואונדערט דוא
נאַכלעסינער נעפענגנים-וועכטער, וואָס
דוא ליעבסט אזוי מיט איהם העריומצונעהן
אויף זיין פערלאַנג.

שׂאַילאָק   איך וועל מיין אבמאַך האָבען; איך וועל וויעדער דיך
ניט הערען רערען. 'ך וועל מיין אבמאַך האָבען,
און דאַרום רעד ניט מעהר. איך וועל ניט ווערען
אַ זאַנפטער, בלינדער נאַר, שׂאָקלען דעם קאָפ,
נאַבנעבען, זיפצען אן זיך אונטערנעהמען
צו קריסטליכע פערמיטלער. געה ניט נאָך.
וואָם טויג טיר רעד ? איך וועל מיין אבמאַך האָבען

רעדט ניט אזוי א מאָהל אין לעבען, אין דיא זעלבע, אין דער אין עטוואָם אַנ-
דערע ווערטער, יעדער אונטערדריקטער פערשפּאָבטעטער אן נעפּיינינטער מענש?
'רעדט ניט אזוי א מאָהל א דער ארבייטער צו זיין בעל הבית, דער אריימאן צום רייַ-
כען? האָט דען ניט ברוטום אזוי נערעדט צו צעזאַר ווען ער האָט איהם העריוננע-
שׂטאַכען רעם שפּיעז אין האַרצען; האָט דען ניט אַמעריקא נערעדט אזוי צו
ענגלאַנד ווען זיא האָט זיך בעפרייעט פון דער ענגלישער טיראַנייַ?—אמת, שׂאַילאָק
איז אפילו א בראַצענטמניק ווערכער נלויבט דאָם מען כוח האָבען: אין זינען „פעסט
צו פערבינדען אום פעסט צו נעפינען!" אבער זיינען דען דיא אי־בריגע פערזאָנען פון
דער שׂטיק בעסער פון איהם אין דער הינזיכט? וואָם זיינען זיי ? שנאָר-קערלען,
ליידאַקעם, ליידין־נעהער א. ז. וו. און שׂטעלט זיי רען שעקספיער ארוים פאַר פיינע
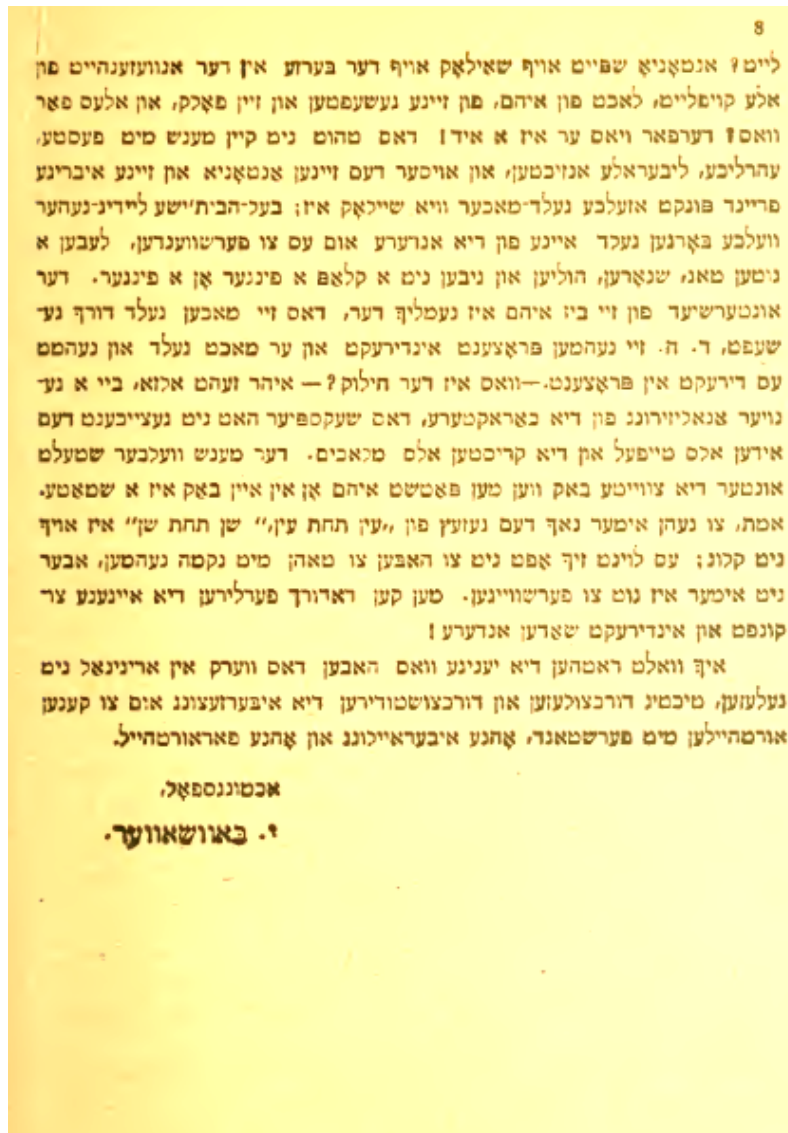
Taken from: Joseph Bovshover. *Shaylok oder der Koyfman fun Venedig* [Shaylok, or the Merchant of Venice]. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1899. 4-8.

Transcription:

פאררעדע צו שאילאק

פיעלע יידישע לעזער קענען געפינען וואס אויסצוזעצען געגען שאילאק, דענקעדיג דאס אין דעם כאראקטער פון

שאילאק האט דער זאגענאנטער שונא ישראל שעקספיער העראויסגעשטעלט דעם יידן וויא ער שטעהט און געהט,

ד.ה. דעם יידן וויא דיא שונאי ישראל בעטראכטען איהם, - דעם געמיינעם, געלד-מאכענדען שאכער-

מאכער'דיגען, פון דיא אנדערע פעלקער אבגעזאנדערטען, זיין פאמיליע-ליא בענדער אירען, וועלכער איז א

פראצענטניק וויא דיא פון דער נאטור און א חונף אויס שלאנגען ארטינער גלאטקייט, און ניפטינקייט. אבער אויב

מאנכע לעזער, וועלכען דענקען, אדער דענקען אזוי, האבען זיי א טעות. שעקספיער, וויא ווייט מען קען פון זיינע

ווערקע פערשטעהן. זיין כאראקטער, זיין גייסטעס – גרויסקייט, די רייכקייט פון זיין נאטור, און זיין גרויסע

ליעבע , איז געוויס פעהיג [פעהיק] געווען צו פערשטעהן, און האט פערשטאנען פון וואו דער איינגעבויגענער

רוקען, דער שטילער גייסט וואס שארט זיך און גנב'עט זיך העריין אין דער וועלט, פון וואו די פערביסענע, אין

זיך שטאלצע, איך וואלט קענען זאגען כיטרע אונטערטהעניגקייט נעהמט זיך ביים אידען, שעקספיער, זאג איך,

האט עס געוויס געקאנט פערשטעהן, און ניט ער איז געווין א מענש א פערדאממען, צו פערשוואוארצען, אהנע

גרינדליך אויסצופארשען, פאנאנ-דערצופלאנטערן, און צו דערגעהן דעם גרונד, די אורזאכע פון א מענשענ'ס,

אדער פון א פאלקס האנדלונגען, און נאטירליכע, אדער אנגענומענע כאראקטער-צינע.

אויך ניט שעקספיער איז געווען דער מענש וואס האט געקענט העריושטעלען די שטארקע זייטע פון א מענשענ'ס

כאראקטער – די געדולד וועלכע האט לאנג געשוויגען, אריבערגעטראגען פיעלעס, און האט ענדלעך געפלאצט,

אום דעם מענשען דאדורך צו פערשוואארצען, אום צו בעווייזען די געמיינהייט פון זיין נאטור.

שעקספיער וועמעס זעעלע איז געווען אזוי ערהאבען, אזוי שטאלץ, אזוי אמביציעז, און הערש-זיכטיג,- שעקספיער

וועלכער האט געזעהען מיט זיין גייסטיגער אויג קעניגע זיך בוקענדיג צו איהם, און פיעלע דורות איהם

פערגעטערערנדיג – שעקספיר פון וועמעס נשמה, פון וועמעס פאנטאזיע אזוי פיעל העלדען, מענשען – ריעזען,

קעניגע טיראנען, הערשער, און פהילאזאפען זיינען אריוסגעשפרונגען, אריוסגעוואקסען, לעבעדיג און אטהמענד,

וויא פון דעם שעפער'ס הענד, - האט דיזער שעקספיער געקענט פערדאממען א מענשען דאפיר וואס ער האט זיך

ניט געלאזט אימער קריכען אויפ'ן קאפ, און איז געדולדיג געווען ביז א צייט?

דורכ-בלעטערענדיג עטליכע פון שעקספיר'ס ווערקע קען מען באלד זעהען וואס שעקספיער האט געדענקט פון זיך,

וואס פאר א קראפט, וואס פאר אן אויטאריטעט ער האט אין זיך געפיהלט צו זאגען וואס ער דארף, אויפצושטעהן

פאר דער וועלט אלס שטראפער און לעהרער, און וואס פאר א מיינונג ער האט געהאט וועגען אונטערדריקונג, מיט

וואס פאר אן אויג ער האט געקוקט אויף די "גרויסע", די הערשער, די קעניגע, פרינצען און לארדען צווישען

וועלכע ער האט אפט געלעבט, און וויא ער האט אין גרונד האראצען ניט איינגעשטימט מיט זייער אונגערעכטיגקייט,

און אויסגעלאסענע מענשען-פרעסעריי.

און האט דיזער שעקספיער געקענט ארויפשטעלען שאילאק אזוי ווי ער האט איהם ארויסגעשטעלט, אום צו

פערדאממען איהם און זיין ראססע דאפיר וואס ער האט זיך ניט געלאזט אימער טרעמען מיט די פיס, אימער

שפּיעלן אין בּאַרד, אימער פֿון זיך אַפּלעכען, און אימער געשטערט צו זיין אין זײַנע געשעפֿטען? איז עס ניט לײַכט צו פֿאַרשטעהן, דאַס שאַילאַק, װי "האַמלעט" װיא "קעניד ליער", "אַטהעללאַ", און נאָך פֿיעלע אַנדערע כאַראַקטערע װעלכע שעקספּיער האַט געשאַפֿען, אין אַ קינד פֿון זיין פֿאַנטאַזיאַ, פֿון זיין זעעלע, זיין אײגען בּלוט און פֿלײַש, איז אַ טהײַל פֿון איהם? איז עס ניט לײַכט צו פֿאַרשטעהן דאַס דורך שאַילאַק'ס רעדט שעקספּיער אַלײן, דער שעקספּיער װעלכער האָט אַ לאַנגע צײַט געליטען בּיז ער האָט זיך אַרװאָרבּען אַ נאַמען, װעלכער האָט געליטען פֿיעלע ערניעדערינונגען און בּעלײדיגונגען פֿון דיא "גרויסע" און פֿון פֿאָלק, װעלכען עס האָט געקעהרט גרין-און-גאַל הערומקריכענדיג צוזאַמען מיט דיא קלײנע מענשען װערימלאָך, װעלכע זעהען ניט מעהר װיא בּרעקלאָך, און נאָך קלענערע בּרואיס'לאָך װיא זײ זײַנען,- דער שעקספּיער װעלכער האָט פֿריהער געלעבּט אין אַרמוטה אין דער הײם בּײַ דיא עלטערן, דאַן צוגעהאַלטען פֿערד, פֿאָר דיא רײַכע לאָרדען און דשזענטעל-לײַט װאָס פֿלעגען קומען אין טהעאַטער, און דאַן געשטאַנען אויף דער בּיהנע אַלס שטומע פּערזאָן, און דאַן ערשט אַנגעפֿאַנגען צו ערװאָרבּען זיך אַ נאַמען דורך זיין שרײַבּען, -דער שעקספּיער װעלכער האָט זיך געמאַכט פֿאָר אַ פּאַיאַץ פֿאַר לאָרדען און גראַבּע פֿאָלקס-יונגען װעלכע זײַנען ניט װערטה געװען דעם צװעקעל פֿון זיין פֿאַדעשוװע,- װעלכער האָט זיך אַנגעליטען זאַגאַר זײַענדיג גרויס,- אַנגעליטען אַלס אַקטיאַר, אַלס דער מאַן פֿון אַ פֿרוי װעלכע האָט איהם ניט פֿאַרשטאַנען, אַלס צערטליכער, ליעבּענדער מענש, אַלס גרויסער דענקער, און פֿריי-געזונטער מענש,- דער שעקספּיער װעלכער איז גײַסטיג געטראַטען געװאָרען מיט דיא פֿיס? פֿיהלט איהר ניט דאַס שעקספּיער, דער פֿריהער אונטערדריקטער, נאַכהער זיך – זעלבּסט – בּעפֿרײַענדער מענש, מיט דער געפֿלאַצטער געדולד, יעדם הערויס פֿון שײַלאַק'ס ליפֿען.

Quotes 1.3.104-127; 3.3.1-10; 3.3.12-7

רעדט ניט אַזוי אַ מאָהל אַ מענש אין לעבּען, אין דיא זעלבּע, אָדער אין אַטװעס אַנדערע װערטער, יעדער אונטערדריקטער פֿערשפֿאַמעטער און געפּײַניגטער מענש? רעדט ניט אַזוי אַ מאָהל דער אַרבּײַטער צו זיין בּעל הבּית, דער אַרימאַן צום רײַכען? האָט דען ניט בּרוטוס אַזוי גערעדט צו צעזאַר װען ער האָט איהם הערײַנגעשטאָכען דים שפֿיעז אין האַרצען: האָט דען ניט אַמעריקאַ גערעדט אַזוי צו ענגלאַנד װען זיא האָט זיך בּעפֿרײַעט פֿון דער ענגלישער טיראַנײַ? – אמת, שאַילאַק איז אפֿילו אַ פּראַצענטניק װעלכער גלויבּט דאַס מען מוז האָבּען אין זיינען "פֿעסט צו פֿערבּינדען אים פֿעסט צו געפֿינען" אָבּער דיא איבּריגע פֿערזאַנען פֿון דער שטיק בּעסער פֿון איהם אין

דער הינזיכט? וואס זיינען זיי? שנאר-קערלען, ליידאקעס, ליידיג-געהער א.ז.וו. און שטעלט זיי דען שעקספיער ארויס פאר פיינע לייט?

אנטאניא שפיעט אויף שאילאק אויף דער בערדע אין דער אנוועזעגהייט פון אלע קויפליייט, לאכט פון איהם, פון זיינע געשעפטען און זיין פאלק, און אלעס פאר וואס? דערפער וויאס ער איז א איד! דאס מהוט ניט קיין מענש מיט פעסטע, עהרליכע, ליבעראלע אנזיכטען, און אויסער דעם זיינען אנטאניא אין זיינע איבעריגע פריינד פונקט אזעלבע געלד-מאכער וויא שיילאק איז: בעל-הבית'ישע ליידיג-געהער וועלכע בארגען געלד איינע פון דיא אנדערע אום עס צו פערשוועגדען, לעבען א גוטען טאג, שנאדען, הוליען אין גיבען ניט א קלאפ א פינגער אן א פינגער. דער אונטערשיעד פון זיי ביז איהם איז נעמליך דער, דאס זיי מאכען געלד דורך געשעפט, ד.ה. זיי נעמען פראצענט אינדירעקט און ער מאכט געלד און נעהמט עס דירעקט אין פראצענט,- וואס איז דער חילוק? – איהר זעהט אלזא, ביי א גענויער אנאליזירונג פון דיא כאראקטערע, דאס שעקספיער האט ניט געצייכענט דעם אידען אלס טייפעל און דיא קריסטען אלס מלאכים. דער מענש וועלכער שטעלט אונטער דיא צווייטע באק וען מען פאטשט איהם אן אין איין באק איז א שטאמע. אמת, צו געהן אימער נאך דעם געזעץ פון "עין תחת עין". שן תחת שן" איז אויך ניט קלוג" עס לוינט זיך אפט ניט צו האבען טאהן מיט נקומה נעהמען, אבער ניט אימער איז גוט צו פערשווייגען. מען קען דאדורך פערלירען דיא אייגענע צוקונפט און אינדירעקט שאדען אנדערע!

איך וואלט ראטהען דיא יעניגע וואס האבען דאס שטען אין ווערק עין אריגינאל ניט געלעזען, טיקטיג דורכצולעזען און דורכצושטודירען דיא איבערזעצונג אום צו קענען ארטהיילען מיט פערשטאנד, אהנע איבעראיילונג און אהנע פאראורטהייל.

אכטונגספאל,

י. באושאוואר

Translation to English:

Foreword to *Shaylok*

Many Jewish readers think they might know what Shylock must have looked like, assuming that with Shylock's character, the so-called anti-Semite Shakespeare has drawn a proto-typical Jew; that is, the Jew as anti-Semites regard him: a mean, money-grabbing merchant, isolated

from other people and obsessed only with his own kind, a natural usurer, who tries to flatter with his snake-like smooth talk and cunning. The readers who think like this, however, are wrong. Shakespeare, as we understand him from his works, his character, the greatness of his spirit, his rich nature and his great love, was surely able to comprehend, and understood from where the bent back, the silent spirit, that secretly crawls through the world, from where the dogged attitude, I dare say, the sly obedience of the Jews came from. Shakespeare, I say, was surely able to understand this and he was not a person who judged easily, who condemned people without any further thought, without trying to unravel the cause of the actions of a person or of a people and his natural or adapted character traits. Neither was Shakespeare a person who could picture the good sides of someone's character – the patience that had long been silenced, had tolerated much, and finally burst – to condemn a person, to prove the meanness of his nature. Shakespeare – whose soul was so lofty, so proud, so ambitious and masterful, Shakespeare, who saw with his mind's eye kings bowing down to him, and many generations worshiping him, Shakespeare from whose soul, whose fantasy, so many heroes, people, giants, kings, tyrants, rulers, and philosophers originated, grew, living and breathing, like from the hand of a creator – could this Shakespeare condemn a soul because he did not always let himself be stepped upon, after he had been patient for so long?

Browsing through several of Shakespeare's work, one can quickly see what he thought, what kind of power, what kind of authority he felt to say what he must, to position himself as someone who reprimands and who teaches, and what his opinion was of oppressors, with what kind of eye he watched the 'big', the rulers, the kings, the princes and lords among whom he lived, completely and thoroughly disagreeing with their unjustness and unlimited people-swallowing. And could this Shakespeare have depicted Shylock like he did, so as to condemn him and his race because they did not always let themselves be trodden with the foot, be spit in the beard, always be laughed at, and always be looked at himself and his business? Isn't it easy

to understand that Shylock, like *Hamlet,* like *King Lear, Othello* and many more characters who Shakespeare created, as is a child of his fantasy, of his soul, his own flesh and blood, is part of himself? Isn't it easy to understand that through Shylock's lips speaks Shakespeare alone, the Shakespeare who has suffered for a long time until he made a name for himself, who has suffered many offenses and insults from the 'big' and of people, who have turned green-and-yellow [from anger], crawling together with the small people warmly, who see no more than dry bread and even smaller pieces of bread, who they are, the Shakespeare who in earlier days used to live in poverty in the house of his parents, who took care of the horses of the rich people and the gentle-people who used to come to theatre to stand on the stage as extras, and then started to acquire a name for himself through his writings – the Shakespeare who had made himself a clown in front of the Lords and young brutes, who were not worth even the nail in the sole of his shoe – who even suffered seeing, even as an actor, as the husband of a woman who did not understand him, as a mild and loving person, as a great thinker, and a free and sane person, the Shakespeare who was mentally trodden with the foot?

Don't you feel that Shakespeare, the previously oppressed, later self-delivered person, with tried patience, speaks from Shylock's lips?

Quotes 1.3.104-127; 3.3.1-10; 3.3.12-7

Did not once every oppressed, despised and hurt person speak, in these words or slightly different? Did not the labourer speak like this to his boss, the poor to the rich? Did not Brutus speak like this to Caesar when he stabbed him with a spear in his heart; did not America speak this way to England when they delivered themselves from the English tyranny? True, Shylock himself is a usurer who believes that one should listen to the words 'Fast bind, fast find' (2.5.52) but, in hindsight, are the other characters in the play better than he? Who are they? Poor bastards, sluggards, good-for-nothings and so on. And does Shakespeare depict them as good people?

Antonio spits on Shylock's beard in the presence of all the other merchants. He laughs at him because of his trade and because of his origin, and why? Because he is a Jew! A person with stable, honest, and liberal standpoints would not have done this. And besides, aren't Antonio and his friends money makers like Shylock? Bossy good-for-nothings who borrow money only to squander it later, to have a nice day, party people who are too lazy to lift a finger. The only difference is that they, by trade, get money indirectly while Shylock asks for rent directly. Is there any difference? You see, if you examine the characters well, that Shakespeare did not draw the Jews as devils and the Christians as angels. A person who always turns the other cheek when someone hits him, is stupid. True, always adhering to 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' rule is not good either. It is often worthwhile not to take revenge, but it is not good to always keep silent either, as you could lose your own future and harm others indirectly!

I want to advise the young people who have not read the original work to read and study this translation carefully, in order to be able to assess it with knowledge and without prejudice.

Yours sincerely,

J. Bovshover