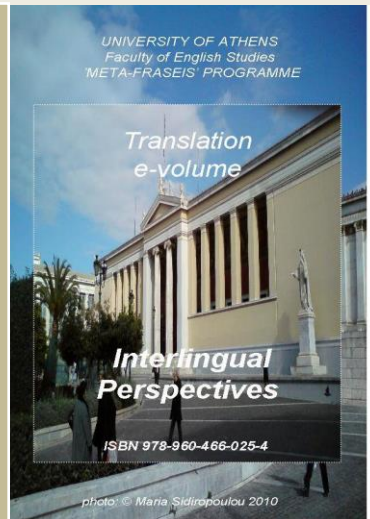


Argyro Kozatzanidi 2011

Translating Aesop's  
*The Wolf and the Lamb:*  
Ethics and  
responsibility



## TRANSLATING AESOP'S *THE WOLF AND THE LAMB*: ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY

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### Abstract

The paper explores ideologically motivated shifts in two German translations of Aesop's "The Wolf and the Lamb" fable, to show the potential of translation to disseminate knowledge following from discursive formations, which motivate target versions. Contrastive analysis of the two German versions shows that they privilege a diversified ideological perspective. While TT1 focuses on the positive symbol (the lamb) and the inadequacy of reasoning as a strategy against oppressors, TT2 rather focuses on the negative symbol of the duality (the wolf) and majors on the intricacies of authoritative manipulation and strategies of oppression. The claim is that translators are ethically responsible for rendering presuppositions following from symbolic representational paradigms.

### Key words

Wolf and lamb, fables, Aesop, moral, authority, social criticism, representation

### 1. Aesop's fable *The Wolf and the Lamb*

A fable is a legendary story of supernatural happenings, a "narration intended to enforce a useful truth" (Merriam-Webster, online). The truth in *The Wolf and the Lamb* fable is highlighted in the last lines of the fable.

#### Λύκος καὶ ἄρην

Λύκος θεασάμενος ἄρνα ἀπὸ τινος ποταμοῦ πίνοντα, τοῦτον ἐβουλήθη μετὰ τινος εὐλόγου αἰτίας καταθινησασθαι. Διόπερ στὰς ἀνωτέρω ἡτιᾶτο αὐτὸν ὡς θολοῦντα τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ πιεῖν αὐτὸν μὴ ἐῶντα. Τοῦ δὲ λέγοντος ὡς ἄκρις τοῖς χεῖλεσι πίνει

καὶ ἄλλως οὐ δυνατόν κατωτέρω ἐσθῶτα ἐπάνω ταρασσεῖν τὸ ὕδωρ, ὁ λύκος ἀποτυχὼν ταύτης τῆς αἰτίας ἔφη· «Ἀλλὰ πέρυσιν τὸν πατέρα μου ἐλοιδόρησας.» Εἰπόντος δὲ ἐκείνου μηδὲ τότε γεγενῆσθαι, ὁ λύκος ἔφη πρὸς αὐτόν· «Ἐὰν σὺ ἀπολογιῶν εὐπορήῃς, ἐγὼ σε οὐχ ἥττον κατέδομαι». **Ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ ὅτι οἷα ἡ πρόθεσις ἐστὶν ἀδικεῖν, παρ' αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ δικαία ἀπολογία ἰσχύει.** (Αἰσώπου Μῦθοι/Λύκος καὶ ἀρήν, Βικιθήκη online)

An English adaptation of the source text is provided by Penguin Classics:

*While lapping water at the head of a running brook, a wolf noticed a stray lamb some distance down the stream. Once he made up his mind to attack her, he began thinking of a plausible excuse for making her his prey.*

*"Scoundrel!" he cried, running up to her. "How dare you muddle the water that I am drinking!"*

*"Please forgive me," replied the lamb meekly, "but I don't see how I could have done anything to the water since it runs from you to me, not from me to you."*

*"Be that as it may," the wolf retorted, "but you know it was only a year ago that you called me many bad names behind my back." "Oh, sir," said the lamb, "I wasn't even born a year ago."*

*"Well," the wolf asserted, "if it wasn't you, it was your mother, and that's all the same to me. Anyway, it's no use trying to argue me out of my supper."*

*And without another word, he fell upon the poor helpless lamb and tore her to pieces.*

*A tyrant will always find a pretext for his tyranny. So it is useless for the innocent to seek justice through reasoning when the oppressor intends to be unjust.*

*(Aesop's Fables, selected and adapted by Jack Zipes. 1996. p. 18. London: Penguin Popular Classics)*

Translating useful truths and hidden meanings poses questions of ethics and responsibility. It is the responsibility of the translator to do justice to implications following from expressions realizing au-

thor/text intention. It is also a question of ethics for the translator to decide what is to be left out or included in target versions. It is widely acknowledged, in the literature, that

translators and interpreters are unavoidably and actively involved and implicated in questions of responsibility to others, whether in actual situations of judicial, political, military or ideological conflict or in the representation of such situations in fictionalized accounts that they undertake to translate (Inghilleri and Carol Maier 2011: 102).

Translating a fable would thus entail an ethical responsibility for handling the ideology of the source text, while “a collective engagement with an ethics of translation, can [...] serve as a means of strengthening the possibility of elaborating a role for translation as a positive force for social and political change” (ibid: 103). Tymoczko (2003), for instance, points out a shift in ideology between ST and TT versions of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. While Sophocles’ source text is “a statement about the dangers of tyranny and [...] attempted to instill independence and moral responsibility in its audience” (ibid: 182, emphasis in original) celebrating Athenian democracy, Jean Anouilh’s version, in 1944 Paris, during the Nazi occupation of France, was “encouraging resistance against the Nazis” (ibid: 183). In the context of translating Aesop’s *The Wolf and the Lamb* fable into another language, the question arises as to what shifts may occur that can possibly modify the ideological prosody of the fable, foregrounding translator responsibility.

The paper analyzes ideological shifts between two German translations of Aesop’s fable *The Wolf and the Lamb* to highlight translators’ ethical responsibility in transferring ideological messages, and the potential of translation to serve as a ‘force for social and political change’. The data in this study derive from the following sources: the source version appears online. TT1 data derive from the *Wort und Sinn* German school series edition, with TT2 retrieved from the Archiv klassischer Werke website.

ST     Λύκος καὶ ἀρὴν (Αἰσώπου Μύθοι/Λύκος και ἀρὴν, Βικιθήκη online)

- TT1 Wolf und Lamm (Schöningh 1975)  
*Wolf and Lamb*  
TT2 Das Lamm und der Wolf (Archiv klassischer Werke, online)  
*The Lamb and the Wolf*

Evidently, an aspect affecting rendition of ideological messages in a target version is the age of intended audience. Analysis identifies shifts motivated by discourse strategies preferred cross-culturally, but the study focuses on ideological shifts between the target versions, which are assumed to be partly motivated by addressee age and purpose of translation. Both shift types highlight areas of translator responsibility: on the one hand, translators are assumed to do justice to (or challenge) target linguistic preference in discourse construction ensuring naturalness, on the other, they are responsible for doing justice to (or challenge) intended ideologies in agreement with discourse intentions.

## 2. Shifting perspectives through language

Target texts, even short ones like *The Wolf and the Lamb* fable, are extremely eloquent in showing translator intention. Contrastive analysis of the source fable to the two German versions shows at least two types of shifts, one of which would be linguistically/anthropologically relevant and rather lies beyond the scope of the present study, and another type which realizes a strong constructionist intention on the part of the translator.

### 2.1 The anthropological perspective

The anthropological perspective may be manifested by shifts like the ones shown in examples 1 and 2, which seem to highlight linguistic preference across cultures.

A major shift, in example 1, between ST and TTs is that no target version privileges representation of wolf's intention to trace an excuse for gobbling the lamb, as manifested through ST item τοῦτον ἐβουλήθη μετὰ τινος εὐλόγου αἰτίας καταθοιγήσασθαι (decided to gobble it using some plausible excuse). This intention is meant to be inferred from target discourses. This may be assumed to be a manifestation of discursive

preference across languages, which may relate to preferred linguistic/discursive traits across languages. For instance, in English-Greek translation contexts, Greek seems to prefer to highlight *contrastive*, *causal* and *purpose* relationships among parts of discourse, and this is assumed to be a strategy manifesting a preference for *strengthening cohesion* on the Greek side (Sidiropoulou 2004). Both German versions avoid purpose and causal information which the source version favours (έβουλήθη [decided]) and μετά τινος εὐλόγου αἰτίας [using some plausible excuse] respectively). Evidently, extensive research would be necessary for such a claim to be made across Greek-German, but this erasing of wolf's intention in the two German versions may be echoing a discursive preference on the German side, intended to let the audience draw their own inferences about what is being said and implicated. In terms of politeness theory, helping the audience with processing may be assumed to be a positive politeness device (Sifianou 1992, House 1998), while letting the audience draw their own intentions about what the text may be implying may be a manifestation of a negative politeness intention.

### Example 1

ST Λύκος θεασάμενος ἄρνα ἀπὸ τινος ποταμοῦ πίνοντα, τοῦτον ἐβουλήθη μετὰ τινος εὐλόγου αἰτίας καταθοινήσασθαι.  
*A wolf, seeing a lamb drinking from a brook, decided to gobble it using some plausible excuse.*

TT1 Ein Wolf kam an einen Bach, um dort zu trinken. Da gewährte er ein Lamm, das ein Stück unterhalb von ihm seinen Durst löschte.  
*A wolf went to a brook to drink water. There he glanced a lamb, which extinguished its thirst a little farther.*

TT2 Ein Lämmchen löschte an einem Bache seinen Durst. Fern von ihm, aber näher der Quelle, tat ein Wolf das gleiche.  
*A lamp extinguished its thirst in a river. Farther than this, but closer to the source, a wolf did the same.*

Example 2 seems to echo another preference (also manifested across the English-Greek paradigm), namely, that the Greek text shows the

illocutionary potential of the wolf's utterance (*ἡτιᾶτο αὐτὸν*, *accused the lamb*), which is avoided in both target versions through the use of direct speech. Direct speech lets the audience infer the illocutionary potential of utterances, whereas the Greek text prefers facilitating the audience with processing. This is a highly preferred option in English-Greek press translation, where English verbs of *saying* are rendered in terms of their illocutionary potential (*accused, protested, appreciated, conceded*, etc.) in the Greek target versions of news items (Sidiropoulou 2004).

### Example 2

- ST Διόπερ στὰς ἀνωτέρω ἡτιᾶτο αὐτὸν ὡς θολοῦντα τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ πιεῖν αὐτὸν μὴ ἐῶντα.  
*So he stood above and accused the lamb of muddling the water and not letting him drink.*
- TT1 "Warum trübst du mir das Wasser, das ich trinken will?"  
Wollte er wissen.  
"Why do you muddle the water that I want to drink?" he wanted to know.
- TT2 Kaum erblickte er das Lämmchen, so schrie er: "Warum trübst du mir das Wasser, das ich trinken will?"  
*When he saw the lamb he shouted: "Why do you blur the water that I want to drink?"*

As suggested above, types of shifts which allude to cross-cultural preference in discourse construction needs extensive research for claims to be made about the German-Greek paradigm, and lies outside the scope of the present research.

The next section focuses on shifts which construct ideological perspectives (beyond the anthropologically oriented ones). One such shift may be traced through contrastive analysis of the fable title.

### 2.2. The constructionist perspective

The first shift that strikes the reader, when contrasting the two German versions, is the order the animals appear on the title. The princi-

ple of end-weight<sup>1</sup> in functional linguistics would suggest that in TT1 the focus is on lamb, with TT2 focusing on wolf. The shift in focus would most probably go hand-in-hand with a shift in intended audience. Why would a school edition be interested in focusing on the negative symbol of the duality, the wolf? The educational value of the wolf-lamb duality rather rests with the lamb. Conversely, TT2, which seems to be addressing a more mature audience, through the Archiv klassischer Werke website, is assumed to be interested in focusing on the intricacies of authoritative manipulation of sources of power. Translation of the Greek and German texts into English is the researcher's.

In example 3, the focus of attention lies with TT2, which provides additional information emphasizing insecurity and weakness on the part of the lamb: for instance, ST evaluative item *schüchtern* (*shyly*) and the apologetic utterance *glaube mir, es kam mir nie in den Sinn, dir etwas Böses zu tun!* (*Believe me, I never meant to hurt you!*) foreground a weak version of a protester, rather unable to stand up to the threat.

### Example 3

- ST Τοῦ δὲ λέγοντος ὡς ἄκροις τοῖς χεῖλεσι πίνει καὶ ἄλλως οὐ  
δυνατὸν κατωτέρῳ ἐστῶτα ἐπάνω ταράσσειν τὸ ὕδωρ,  
*When it said that it drinks out of the corner of the lips and that it is  
certainly not possible, itself being at a lower level, to stir up the  
water,*
- TT1 "Wie kann ich das Wasser trüben, das von dir zu mir herab-  
fließt?" Antwortete das Lamm.  
*"How can I muddle the water that flows from you to me?" Replied  
the lamb.*

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<sup>1</sup> New/important information comes at the end of the clause.



- TT2 "Wie wäre das möglich", erwiderte schüchtern das Lämmchen, "ich stehe hier unten und du so weit oben; das Wasser fließt ja von dir zu mir; glaube mir, es kam mir nie in den Sinn, dir etwas Böses zu tun! "  
"How can that be?" The lamb replied shyly, "I stand here below and you stand higher, the water flows from you to me. Believe me, I never meant to hurt you!"

In example 4, TT2 builds on the threat dimension, enhancing the psychological pressure exercised on the lamb by the wolf, by providing TT2 item *das Fell abzog* (*I was pulling his skin off* because of his insults!). The device highlights manipulative strategies of authoritative sources of power, which the wolf represents.

#### Example 4

- ST ὁ λύκος ἀποτυχὼν ταύτης τῆς αἰτίας ἔφη · «Ἀλλὰ πέρυσι τὸν πατέρα μου ἐλοιδόρησας.»  
*The wolf, not achieving its purpose with this accusation, he said:*  
*"Last year, however, you insulted my father."*
- TT1 "Jedenfalls weiß ich", sagte der Wolf, "dass du vor fünf Monaten übel von mir geredet hast".  
*"I know, however," said the wolf, "that five moons ago you had talked bad about me"*
- TT2 "Ei, sieh doch! Du machst es gerade, wie dein Vater vor sechs Monaten; ich erinnere mich noch sehr wohl, dass auch du dabei warst, aber glücklich entkamst, als ich ihm für sein Schmähen das Fell abzog! "  
*"Oh, Look! You are doing the same thing that your father did six months ago. I still remember very well that and you were also there, but you got away while I was pulling his skin off because of his insults! "*

In example 5, TT2 enhances the lamb's weak profile through items *flehte* (*begged*), *zitternde* (*trembling*) and through highlighting the lamb's being a fatherless offspring (*I did not know my father at all, he's been dead for a long time*).

### Example 5

- ST Ειπόντος δὲ ἐκείνου μηδὲ τότε γεγενῆσθαι,  
*When it said that it had not yet been born,*
- TT1 "Wie sollte das möglich sein?" Erwiderte das Lamm. "Damals war ich noch gar nicht geboren."  
*"How is this possible?" Replied the lamb. "Then I was not even born."*
- TT2 "Ach, Herr!" Flehte das zitternde Lämmchen, "ich bin ja erst vier Wochen alt und kannte meinen Vater gar nicht, solange ist er schon tot; wie soll ich denn für ihn büßen."  
*"Oh, sir!" Begged the trembling lamb, "I'm only four weeks old and I did not know my father at all, he's been dead for a long time. Why should I pay for his mistake?"*

In example 6, TT2 highlights aggression on the part of the wolf through items *mit erheuchelter Wut, indem er die Zähne fletschte* (with anger showing his teeth) and *rächen* (take revenge). The source of power also assumes a racist ideology through item *euer ganzes Geschlecht mich hasset* (your entire race hates me) and expresses contempt towards the lamb through *Du Unverschämter!* (Shame on you!), thus highlighting strategies of authoritative exercise of control.

### Example 6

- ST ὁ λύκος ἔφη πρὸς αὐτόν · «Ἐὰν σὺ ἀπολογιῶν εὐπορήῃς, ἐγὼ σε οὐχ ἥττον κατέδομαι.»  
*The wolf said: "Even when you comfortably tell your excuses, it doesn't change the fact that I will just eat you up."*
- TT1 "Dann ist es dein Vater gewesen", schrie der Wolf und zerriss das Lamm, um es zu verschlingen.  
*"Then it was probably your father," yelled the wolf and devoured the lamb.*

TT2 "Du Unverschämter!" So endigt der Wolf mit erheuchelter Wut, indem er die Zähne fletschte. "Tot oder nicht tot, weiß ich doch, dass euer ganzes Geschlecht mich hasset, und dafür muss ich mich rächen." Ohne weitere Umstände zu machen, zerriss er das Lämmchen und verschlang es.  
"Shame on you!" Yelled the wolf with anger showing his teeth,  
"dead or not, I know that your entire race hates me, and that's why I should take revenge." And without delay he grabbed the lamb and devoured it. "

The last line of the fable summarizing its ideological meaning is omitted from the *Wort und Sinn* version of the fable (TT1) most probably because young readers will have an opportunity to explore the ideological potential of the fable through class discussion. TT2, on the other hand, assumes a different ideological perspective than that favoured in the ST. TT2 focuses on the authoritative power and its psychological motivation for doing harm, while the TT2 item *Gewissen* (*remorse*) seems to highlight the Christian virtue of being remorseful on the part of the villain, thus partly legitimizing injustice. By contrast, ST last line (summarizing the ideological significance of the fable) focuses on the inadequacy of reasoning as a means of challenging unjust authoritative positions, potentially suggesting a more active involvement on the part of the oppressed.

### Example 7

ST Ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ ὅτι οἷα ἡ πρόθεσις ἐστὶν ἀδικεῖν, παρ' αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ δικαία ἀπολογία ἰσχύει.  
*The narrative shows that for those who intend to harm, fair grounds have no power.*

TT1 ---

TT2 Das Gewissen regt sich selbst bei dem größten Bösewichte; er sucht doch nach Vorwand, um dasselbe damit bei Begehung seiner Schlechtigkeiten zu beschwichtigen.  
*Even the greatest villain can feel remorse. That's why he always looks for an excuse to reassure himself while committing his crimes.*

Analysis shows that the two target versions assume different world-views, which show the potential of text producers to privilege competing aspects of a text's ideological implications.

### **3. Adaptation in cross-cultural migration of texts**

The study would *not* suggest that the TT2 translator *alone* has introduced these varying ideological perspectives in TT2 version. It may be the case that TT2 is a translation of a modified version of the *The Wolf and the Lamb* fable, resulting from the fable's cross-cultural migration on the international scene. Reconstructing classical texts, through their cross-cultural migration, is a typical practice world-wide<sup>2</sup> drawing on the historical and cultural status of a source text: this “transformative practice of resistance and reconstruction has drawn extensively on Greek plays as a source of raw material” (Hardwick 2011: 37).

The potential that a target version may be a translation version of some modified ‘original’ adapted through its intercultural journey should not underestimate the value of comparison between close translations and adaptations of an original text, like those of the *The Wolf and the Lamb* fable. Contrasting a close translation of an original (like TT1) to some adaptation (potentially resulting from the text's migration journey, like TT2) is meaningful, because the reconstructed version carries *accumulated* evidence of the power of translation to reshape experience and renegotiate ideological messages carried by intermediate target versions of texts. Nor should the ethical responsibility of a TT2 translator be downplayed. The very selection of a source text for translation assumes ethical responsibility, in the first place (Venuti 1995, 1998).

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<sup>2</sup> Hardwick points to such examples of “exchange between west African and Greek mythology and theatrical practices” (ibid: 36-37) enlisting Soyinkas *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973), Femi Osofisan's *Tegonni: An African Antigone* (1999) and Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame* (1971).

In fact, “ethics has become a cross-cultural concern” (Pym 2001: 130) entailing decision-making on the level of any type of information transfer, not just translation.

#### **4. Representation and the adult-child duality**

Addressing intended target audiences (and translator concern to meet expectations of these audiences) is a motivation which contributes to reshaping target discourses. In fact, translation “may alter the nature of the adult-child relationship implicit in the source text” and is a practice “indicative of political and social factors” (Lathey 2011:31).

The assumption in this study is that the two versions are reshaped to meet the needs of intended audiences. Renegotiating the title of the fable to focus on the lamb (TT1) or the wolf (TT2) is one such shift, which highlights a didactic intention of focusing on the positive symbol of the wolf-lamb duality vs. intention of focusing on the mechanisms of power to exercise control, in TT2.

TT2 assumes awareness of a threatening, racist, authoritative source, almost positively represented through the potential of its being remorseful. This interpretation assumes some rather mature audience than the one addressed in TT1 (which would need a sharper contrast between good and evil).

Omission of the concluding lines in TT1 may be taken as a strategy intended to invite exchange of ideas in a classroom context and evoke discussion.

The child-adult duality (as represented through the two German versions of the fable) brings to the fore the issue of censorship, namely, the “repressive, cultural, aesthetic, linguistic and economic practices” (Billiani 2011:28), the set of values and criteria (e.g. social or institutional conventions) which affect representation of knowledge in a target environment. Such conventions seem to be regulating choice across the two German versions, affecting representation of knowledge about oppressors and oppressed.

TT1 is rather assumed to be disseminating knowledge about the inadequacy of reasoning in oppressive regimes, while TT2 seems to elaborate on the practices of the oppressors, assuming Christian

value awareness. In any case, translators are expected to be critical and aware of the presuppositions following from discursive choices because they are ethically responsible for doing justice to the knowledge to be disseminated through the symbolic practices of representational paradigms.

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