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Expanding the Horizon of Equivalence: The Translation of Certain Objects in William Shakespeare's "Othello" and "The Merchant of Venice"

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ABSTRACT

This article concentrates on a new way to view translation and equivalence since some of the characters in William Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* turn into translators by translating certain objects. In these plays, the 'handkerchief' and the 'pound of flesh' respectively have different meanings to the individual characters. As translation deals with equivalence, the mentioned objects are equivalent to different things or concepts to the particular characters. Therefore, we can say that objects can also be translated and mistranslated since they are considered as equivalents to something else. Hence, the legacy of Derrida continues not only in the domain of equivalence but also in the newborn concept of the 'translation of objects'.

Keywords: Derrida, Equivalence, Handkerchief, Mistranslation, Pound of Flesh, Translation of objects

1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, translation is something very important and serious and the difficulty of translation takes place from the necessity of selecting proper equivalents. In William Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, it is really interesting to see the involvement of the particular characters in the process of translation as they have their own equivalents to the objects viz. 'handkerchief' and 'pound of flesh'. The former's meaning is mostly connected with the 'cultural practice' and 'fidelity' and the latter's one is related to 'revenge', 'life', 'death' etc. Significantly, the characters, Shylock, Portia, Othello, Desdemona, Iago and Emilia, do not translate from one language into another rather they do it by using their mother tongue and, sometimes, conceptually. Since translation deals with equivalence and the latter refers to an object, quantity, expression, word etc. that is equal to something else, then we can strongly say that the mentioned characters *are* translators since they have their individual concepts of equivalence. However, the way they translate the objects cannot be called "perfect, ideal or 'correct'" (Newmark, 1988, p. 6). Some of them get something and some others lose much in their endeavours. "Nevertheless, we must value the translator's work particularly because the 'go-between' (translator) perpetually works as a 'get-between'. However, it is generally thought that we constantly lose something in translation; conversely, we can also gain something from it" (Ziaul Haque, 2012, p. 109).

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EQUIVALENCE AND TRANSLATION

Evidently, the word *translation* originates from the Latin *translatio* that means "transferring" or "the act of rendering into another language" (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1913, p.1529). In fact, the emergence of written literature has paved the way so that translation can flourish. In *In Search of a Theory of Translation*, the formalist theorist Gideon Toury (1980) defines "translation as a communicative act while acknowledging the domestic values that come into play, the target norms that constrain communication. Translation, he wrote, is communication in translated messages within a certain cultural-linguistic system, with all relevant consequences for the decomposition" (as cited in Venuti, 2004, pp. 469-470). In a word, it is the "communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text" (Bhatia, 1992, p. 1,051).

Now, equivalence means "a thing, amount, word, etc. that is equivalent to something else" (Hornby, 2001, p. 423). It is defined as the state of being "equal in value, meaning etc." (Elliott, 2001, p. 251) or having the equal or a related effect or significance. Thus, it indicates "a pair (at least) between which the relationship exists, a concept of likeness/sameness/ similarity/equality, and a set of qualities. Thus, equivalence is defined as a relationship existing between two (or more) entities, and the relationship is described as one of

likeness/sameness/similarity/equality in terms of any of a number of potential qualities” (Halverson, 2006, p. 3). So, a suitable equivalent expression is the first step toward a faithful or acceptable translation and a wrong one destroys the translation process at the very beginning. Anyway, the important status of equivalence can be shown through the following diagram:

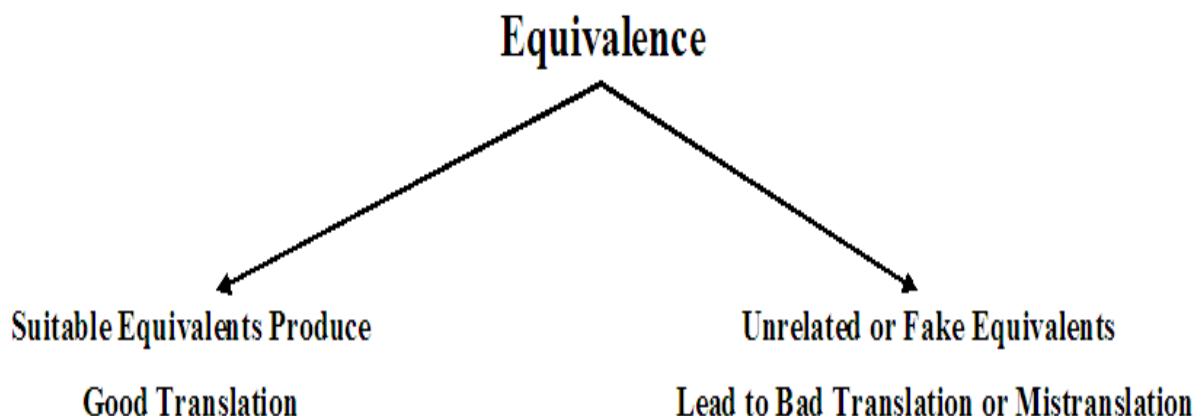


Fig. 1. The Importance of Equivalence in Translation

3. EQUIVALENCE AS A PRECONDITION IN THE 'TRANSLATION OF OBJECTS'

Without the help of equivalence, we cannot think about the translation of objects. But, there are some limitations for the translators since the “meaning and equivalence in translation should not be considered as total, but only partial due to the fact that equivalents in various languages do not always cover all the aspects of the terms...Translators should acknowledge the fact that each term in any given language covers a reality and aspects that cannot be transferred...as meaning in any language is based on the culture of the language in question” (Miyanda, 2007, p. 55). “However, the translators can try to find equivalence in translation and show the cautious nature of their assertions accordingly and request the readers to join and select which translation renders the thoughts, notions and words of the original text correctly. The imperative suggestion is that the meaning of the translation is supposed to be the same...” (Ziaul Haque, 2012, p. 109). Let us shed light on the following elements that will help us to understand the terms viz. *equivalence* and the *translation of objects* in a better way. They are-

1. The translation of the 'handkerchief' in William Shakespeare's *Othello*, and
2. The translation of the 'pound of flesh' in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

Undoubtedly, the concepts of 'equivalence' and the 'translation of objects' are interconnected. The former has already been highlighted and the latter can therefore be explained by Ayn Rand's "theory of conceptual equivalence". However, Ernst Cassirer (1946) is doubtful about the correlation between objects and the words that designate them. As he mentions in *Language and Myth*, "But how can such differentiae [of objects] exist prior to language? Do we not, rather, realize them only by means of language, through the very act of naming them?" (as cited in Fram-Cohen, 1985, p. 7).

"Cassirer's view demonstrates a common erroneous equivocation of concepts and words. He assumes that reality is interpreted verbally, without a prior stage of conceptualization. Most people equate concepts with words because they never conceive of concepts as separate from words. It is impossible to conceive of a concept without naming it, which is why words are necessary. Words are necessary so that we can grasp our mental integration of two or more units into a concept. Without naming the concept, man cannot hold it in mental focus. Phases of conceptualization are mentally experienced as an integrated single process. Thus it is easy for most people to believe that concepts are identical with the words that designate them, and that since words are optional, concepts are optional too. But only the selection of words, not of concepts, is by social agreement. The social agreement enables people to communicate their thoughts to one another...The Sapir-Whorf theory reverses the temporal sequence of cause and effect, because it is the conceptual faculty that organizes the flux of perceptual experience into concepts, which are then named. There is no such thing as a linguistic faculty that creates concepts in the form of words as the theory claims" (Fram-Cohen, 1985, pp. 7-8).

3.1. THE TRANSLATION OF THE 'HANDKERCHIEF' IN *OTHELLO*

In *Othello*, the 'handkerchief' has diverse meanings to the different characters. Othello gives the handkerchief to Desdemona as the first gift and she considers it as a symbol of Othello's love. The red signifies love and the red strawberries like red hearts on the handkerchief indicate the sign of love and are also connected with the red marks from the first night of love on the wedding sheets of Othello and Desdemona.

Iago manipulates the handkerchief so that Othello translates it into Desdemona herself— her loyalty and integrity. By taking possession of it, he is able to convert it into evidence of her infidelity. Obviously, both Iago and Desdemona come to know about the importance of the handkerchief from Othello. He tells Desdemona that a 200-year-old sibyl or female prophet wove it by using silk from sacred worms and dye taken out from the hearts of the mummified virgins:

There's magic in the web of it
A Sybil, that had numbered in the world
The sun course two hundred compasses
In her prophetic fury sewed the work (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 935).

According to Othello, his mother used it to keep his father truthful to her. That is why, the handkerchief is equivalent to 'marital fidelity'. The outline of three marked strawberries on a white background strongly implies the bloodstains left on the sheets on the bridal night of a virgin. Accordingly, the handkerchief indicates a guarantee of virginity and faithfulness. In this regard, Ghisalberti (2011) mentions:

Since Thomas Rymer's comments on the handkerchief in *Othello*, unable to recognize its meaning and therefore dismissing its "passion," the piece of cloth has remained both a fascinating and incomprehensible object- its cultural meaning (perhaps known by Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience) as neglected and mistaken as the true ethnic identity of Othello himself. Shakespeare, however, has given the audience/reader several indications of the meaning of the handkerchief, its description (Egyptian, embroidered with spotted strawberries) related both to Othello's ethnicity and to a particular premarital ritual practiced by a people sometimes, if deceptively, called Moors; important remains Othello's origins and his experience prior to arriving in Venice. Once the handkerchief (*fazzoletto* in Italian) becomes understood as necessary as a crucial pre-marital ritual – one first intended to check Desdemona's virginity, as in the Gypsy "test of the handkerchief" – then Othello's murderous rage and his concealed ethnicity becomes interrelated and provides insights into the meaning of the tragedy (p. 10).

Linda E. Boose (1994) writes in "Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love'" that the significance of the handkerchief "may well lie hidden in rituals and customs which were accessible to Elizabethans but have since been lost" (as cited in Ghisalberti, 2011, p. 11). Desdemona holds the piece of cloth to Othello's forehead in Act III, Scene 3 in order to soothe his headache. Obviously, we can see that the handkerchief is very important to Desdemona and she believes that it will relieve Othello from his pain. This proves that the piece of cloth is not meaningless; we can translate it as 'healer'. In other words, on Othello's forehead, the piece of cloth becomes, as has been mentioned in Andrew Sofer's (2003) *The Social Life of Props*, a "*lintheum* and *sudarium*" (as cited in Ghisalberti, 2011, p. 13). That means it implies blood, death, sacrifice and martyrdom and symbolically corresponds to the soothing of the wounds on Christ's scalp. In the scene, the handkerchief characterises the problems of both of them. Desdemona is unable to translate the piece of cloth (the *fazzoletto*, that absorbs blood) as holy (symbol of Christ) and sexual (her bridal sheets) at the same time.

Certainly, the meaning of the handkerchief has much to do with the ethnicity of Othello and the pre-marital practice of the "Moors" that brings the tribal members together. But, it becomes equivalent to almost 'nothing' when he tells Desdemona, "Your napkin is too little". At this moment, his mind translates it as just a trifling piece of cloth. In fact, he does not care about its secret cultural meaning and puts the handkerchief from him and "she drops her handkerchief". However, Emilia finds it and becomes very happy because Iago has asked her "a hundred times...to steal it" and she says to herself: "I am glad I have found this napkin" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 933).

Here, a kind of transformation takes place. We see that 'the piece of cloth' has been mentioned in two words i.e. a 'handkerchief' and a 'napkin'. Noticeably, Othello calls the piece of cloth 'napkin' when he is very depressed. Again, Emilia names it napkin perhaps because of the fact that it is only a piece of cloth and should not be considered as something valuable. Therefore, it is conceptually equivalent to 'nothing'. All she tries to do is performing the duty of a wife and she will copy the pattern of the handkerchief 'spotted with strawberries'. She does not realise that this handkerchief has a very valuable meaning to her husband who loves to translate it in his mind as a 'powerful weapon' to destroy Othello and Cassio.

Understandably, it will not be irrelevant to make a connection between jealousy and the gypsy or racial origins of Othello since the discussion will rather help us to translate the object in a better manner. Gilad Margalit (2002) mentions in *Germany and Its Gypsies: A Post-Auschwitz Ordeal* that "the Gypsies' dark complexion was defined in Europe as black" (as cited in Ghisalberti, 2011, p.19). Nonetheless, the person, Othello, seems to have disappeared through the frequent use of the word, 'black'. It has taken him far away from the modern emotional response. Now, if we consider jealousy as a disease, then Othello suffers from this. His envy is closely associated with his version of the equivalent expression to the 'handkerchief'. The very germ is planted inside his brain by the cunning manipulation of Iago who tells him that Desdemona is having a secret affair with Cassio. From then onwards, Othello starts to feel 'jealous'. Perhaps, he feels inferior because of his black colour and becomes jealous both subconsciously and consciously because of Cassio's "white complexion" and handsomeness. Brabantio talks about Othello's 'black' colour on several occasions and this fact focuses on a much ignored ethnicity. He thinks that Othello has "enchanted" his daughter through the "chains of magic", "foul charms", "drugs or minerals" and he calls Othello "a practiser/Of arts inhibited" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 919).

Iago knows it well that the translation of the 'handkerchief' is 'love and chastity' to Othello. He succeeds in distorting the meaning of the tiny piece of cloth; what he does is actually 'transformation'. In fact, Othello's 'ego' (the element of personality that deals with reality), as Sigmund Freud (1923) states in *The Ego and the Id*, "has been modified by the direct influence of the external world" (as cited in McLeod, 2008, para. 7). Here, the 'external world' signifies Iago. However, Iago's intentional transformation of the meaning of the object i.e. handkerchief has an extremely cunning purpose behind it. He uses the handkerchief as a medium to achieve his goal. He realises that if Othello falls a victim to his cunning plot, then he will be able to come closer to Othello more than before and will also obtain a lucrative position.

Everything is going on according to the plan of Iago. Othello demands to see the proof of Desdemona's infidelity. In fact, his jealousy increases and he becomes blind to the truth. In other words, he cannot distinguish between fakeness and reality. As Othello says, "I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove" and tells Iago to give him "the ocular proof" (Shakespeare, 1973, pp. 932-933). He has accepted "error as truth, lies as reality" (Foucault, 2001, p. 23). Certainly, his problem is related to his "pride and blindness of a mentality" (as cited in Tyson, 1994, p. 63). Othello "is blind even with his good eyes...He has been unable to see what he is supposed to have seen essentially i.e. reality, and does wrong things..." (Ziaul Haque & Chowdhury, 2013, p. 118). He does not realise that 'seeing is not necessarily believing'! Othello indirectly asks Desdemona for the first time about the handkerchief and he wants her to realise that nothing will ever remain hidden; ironically, he refers to the truth about her so-called unfaithfulness. To be precise, Othello tries to threaten her with the superstition of an Egyptian sorceress:

That handkerchief
Did an Egyptian to my mother give;
She was a charmer, and could almost read
The thoughts of people (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 935).

Obviously, Othello's own rhetoric juxtaposes the handkerchief with virginity, the meaning of 'loss' and 'give it away' refers to her pre-marital chastity and not the piece of cloth. As he says, "To lose't or give't away were such perdition/As nothing else could match" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 935). In a word, the true meaning of the handkerchief is lost forever. However, he should not have worried much about the "loss of meaning" (Ziaul Haque, 2012, p. 108) and everything would be fine if he used his reason instead. In other words, he does not "rest in reason" (Gibran, 2005, p. 69) and lets his passion drive him.

According to Kirsten Wang (1990) in "The Changing Situation of the Spanish Gitanas", "this virginity test is the central and most sacred part of the ceremony" (as cited in Ghisalberti, 2011, p. 27) but Desdemona does not participate in the ritual before the marriage. Othello is on the verge of mental collapse and repeats the words 'the handkerchief' obsessively. His psychological disorders are caused because of the

distorted cognitive processes – such as selectively attending to some information and ignoring other information, exaggerating negative feelings, expecting the worst, or making inaccurate attributions about events (*Abnormal Psychology*, n.d., p. 319).

Now, the translation of the object (handkerchief) appears in a new way before Desdemona's mind. Othello's insane reaction makes her consider the piece of cloth as something equivalent to "wonder" and she feels "most unhappy in the loss of it" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 936). Othello gives the handkerchief another equivalent expression when he imagines that "the piece of cloth has committed an unspeakable act, as if the handkerchief/napkin is an animistic object capable of sexual desire and moral outrage, contrition and confession after the act" (Ghisalberti, 2011, p. 28).

But, "by interpreting the translated word [*fazzoletto*] as a compound, as a *fazzo letto*, Iago's knowledge intertwines the handkerchief/napkin with their bed. The handkerchief/napkin becomes, literally, a 'false bed'" (Ghisalberti, 2011, pp. 29-30). Othello's belief that Desdemona has given the handkerchief to Cassio and the sexual connotations of the gift direct him toward the murder of his wife. Here, 'handkerchief' has become equivalent to 'life'. As he says looking at the handkerchief, "It is the cause, it is the cause" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 944).

So, the *translation* of the handkerchief by Othello is a kind of sacrifice, which leads him toward the supposed truth about Desdemona's betrayal. Undoubtedly, all the religions lay emphasis on "both taboo, in its narrower sense of specific interdiction, and sacrifice. It may be that the feeling of the necessity of sacrifice is no more than a translation into action of the sentiment of the holy" (Sapir, 1956, p. 138). To him, his honour and the dignity of the handkerchief can be restored through 'sacrifice' or the killing of Desdemona. He thinks that this is the only way that will lead him to "the termination of an incurable pain, or the avoidance of intolerable shame" (Al-Qassas, 2011, p. 4). Othello does not act "reasonably" and his manner is not "consistent with religion and piety" (More, pp. 126-127). Evidently, he considers "violence and ugliness as beauty and justice" (Foucault, 2001, p. 23). His agony and the wish to die have removed his fear and "this fearlessness translates into decisive action" (Hammond, chapter 45, para. 1). Consequently, he "smothers her" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 945) in order to be a so-called "honourable murderer" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 947). As soon as Othello comes to know about the truth, his 'superego' (consisting of the conscience and the ideal self), especially conscience, punishes "the ego through causing feelings of guilt" (McLeod, 2008, para 13). At that point, he feels extremely depressed and "hopeless about the future" and "experiences high levels of...conflict and stress" (as cited in *Abnormal Psychology*, n.d., p. 323) and ultimately decide to "die honourably" (Seneca, n.d., chapter 27), which indicates his own desire

to cease breathing but to free the
breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and
expand and seek God unencumbered? (Gibran, 2001, p.109).

3.2. THE TRANSLATION OF THE 'POUND OF FLESH' IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

Now, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock recalls that he has sworn under vow to value the original text of the agreement. Plainly, the 'pound of flesh' is owed to him. This promise binds him to "an oath, an oath...in heaven" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 214) and he cannot break it. The pound of flesh paves a way to several explanations. Firstly, it becomes a symbol of two closest relationships of the drama; secondly, it also represents Shylock's firm obedience to the law. The friendship of Bassanio and Antonio is very strong and it becomes stronger day by day. Shylock has the feeling that he has lost his own flesh and blood and is searching for the recompense by collecting it from his rival, Antonio. Lastly, the pound of flesh continually reminds us of the hard world of Shylock where numerical calculations are more important than sympathy or mercy.

Shylock does not openly demand that Antonio should die, instead his numerical mind asks for 'a pound of flesh' as a substitute for his 'three thousand ducats'. Everything appears in prosaic and mathematical amount before Shylock but the other characters take help of the extended metaphors and words to evaluate their sentiments. According to him, the exact equivalent to the sum of money is the 'pound of flesh', which ultimately refers to 'the death of Antonio':

In *The Merchant of Venice*, as in every translation, there is also, at the very heart of the obligation and the debt, an incalculable equivalence, an impossible but incessantly alleged correspondence between the pound of flesh and money, a required but impractical translation between the unique literalness of a proper body and the arbitrariness of a general, monetary, or fiduciary sign...This impossible translation, this conversion (and all translation is a conversion: *vertere, transvertere, convertere*, as Cicero said) between the original, literal flesh and the monetary sign is not unrelated to the Jew Shylock's forced conversion to Christianity, since the traditional figure of the Jew is often and conventionally situated on the side of the body and the letter (from bodily circumcision or *Pharisaism*, from ritual compliance to literal exteriority), whereas St. Paul the Christian is on the side of the spirit or sense, of interiority, of spiritual circumcision. This relation of the letter to the spirit, of the body of literalness to the ideal interiority of sense is also the site of the passage of translation, of this conversion that is called translation (Derrida, 2001, pp. 183-184).

Here, we have to think seriously over the reason behind Shylock's desire to get Antonio's flesh. Actually, Shylock lives in his own world "where all is ugliness..." (Sophocles, 1974, p. 63). May be, like Iago, he gets some kind of "mental luxury or cognitive crutch" (Thomas, 1989, para. 7) through this cunning plot. Indeed, the pound-of-flesh resolution itself is doubtful and his way of defending his position is more doubtful:

Pray you, tell me this;
 If he should break his day, what should I gain
 By the exaction of the forfeiture?
 A pound of man's flesh, taken from a man,
 Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
 As flesh of muttens, beefs, or goats. I say,
 To buy his favour, I extend this friendship;
 If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;
 And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 199).

Shylock strictly conforms to the contract and refuses to accept any new equivalent to the pound of flesh. But, Portia advances to offer him three times the sum of money he is to be paid. Certainly, this cannot be a suitable equivalent either; it will be like doing another crime. Such offer encourages the bad people more. But, the situation demands it. This phenomenon reminds us of the problems faced by a translator and the compromises that s/he has to make. Therefore, "the...translator has the right to differ organically, to be independent, if that independence is followed for the benefit of the original...Chinua Achebe's (1958) early work of fiction should express this point" (Ziaul Haque, 2012, pp. 104-105):

Mr. Smith said to his interpreter: *Tell them to go away from here. This is the house of God and I will not live to see it desecrated.*
 Okeke interpreted wisely to the spirits of Umuofia: *The white man says he is happy you have come to him with your grievances like friends. He will be happy if you leave the matter in his hands* (p. 134).

"Surely, this is a planned mistranslation. At this point, the *translator figure* has told a lie...to avoid a quarrel..." (Ziaul Haque, 2012, p. 105). Similarly, Portia has no other alternative. Therefore, she considers 'money' as an equivalent to the 'pound of flesh'. Here, Portia and Shylock come to the same position in the sense that both of them regard 'money' as suitable equivalent to the pound of flesh. However, it must be mentioned that their intentions are different. While Portia is trying to save Antonio's life, Shylock wants his death. Now, Shylock has the legal right to claim a pound of flesh and he exclaims:

Why, this bond is forfeit;
 And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
 A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off
 Nearest the merchant's heart (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 214).

Notably, throughout *The Merchant of Venice*, there is an obvious association of Judaism with the Mosaic code from Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament with its firm stress on righteousness and following the letter of the law. Conversely, we see the association of Christianity with the emphasis on the kindness of God and offer of salvation of the New Testament. Merchants like Antonio lend money and do not claim interest in return and even are eager to take risks for the loved ones. On the other hand, Shylock worries about the loss of his money and the people have seen him running through the streets with the expression of grief, "O my ducats! O my daughter!" (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 204). These words prove that 'greed' is more important to him than his 'love' since he regards 'money' as equivalent to his 'daughter'. However, this difference between Christian and Jew disappears especially in Act III, Scene 1, where Shylock feels sad because his daughter has sold a ring that his dead wife gave to him before their marriage. Here, he does not worry about the loss of the monetary worth of the ring. Therefore, Shylock does put emphasis on some human relationships compared to the money.

The city, Venice, has laws to look after the lawful rights of the foreign merchants like Shylock because they contribute much to the financial steadiness. It is expected that Shylock will be merciful even though the law is in his favour. Instead, he insists that he will have a pound of flesh rather than any amount of money and this proves that his hatred is stronger than his greediness. Here, we get another equivalent to the 'handkerchief' i.e. 'revenge'. Yet, his horrible nature becomes more obvious when he says:

You have among you many a purchased slave
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts
Because you bought them: shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
Why sweat they under burdens? . . .
You will answer:
'The slaves are ours': so do I answer you:
The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought; 't is mine, and I will have it (Shakespeare, 1973, p. 212).

Shylock thinks that "there is a pretense of elevating him above everything, with this tale of divine and sublime forgiveness, but it is a ruse to empty his pockets while distracting him, to make him forget what he is owed and to punish him cruelly. So he protests, he grumbles, he complains, he clamors for the law, his right, his penalty" (Derrida, 2001, pp. 188-189). Both Shylock and Portia have their own equivalents to the pound of flesh. Portia thinks that if Shylock agrees to her suggestion, then Antonio's life will be out of danger. Whereas Shylock's way of translating the pound of flesh is extremely destructive; to him, money becomes secondary as is proved through his insistence on cutting the particular amount of flesh from Antonio's body. In a word, 'pound of flesh' is translated into 'death'. But, this kind of translation can never be accepted. Therefore, Shylock's way of translating the 'money' into 'pound of flesh' is entirely wrong:

In human language, the element of translation is an inflexible law that at once prohibits the translation of the transaction but commands respect for the original literalness or the given word. It is a law that presides over translation while commanding absolute respect, without any transaction, for the word given in its original letter. The oath, the sworn faith, the act of swearing is transcendence itself, the experience of passing beyond man, the origin of the divine or, if one prefers, the divine origin of the oath. This seems true of the law of translation in general. No sin is more serious than perjury, and Shylock repeats, while swearing, that he cannot perjure himself; he therefore confirms the first oath by a second oath in the time of a repetition. This is called fidelity, which is the very essence and vocation of an oath. When I swear, I swear in a language that no human language has the power to make me abjure, to disrupt, that is to say, to make me perjure myself. The oath passes through language, but it passes beyond human language. This would be the truth of translation. In this fabulous tale of the oath, of the contractual bond, at issue is an indebtedness in which the exchange-values are incommensurable and thus each is untranslatable into the other (money/pound of flesh) (Derrida, 2001, pp. 185-186).

Portia checks the bond and states that Shylock should get Antonio's flesh lawfully. Hearing this, Shylock becomes extremely glad. But, Portia reminds him that no blood should come out as the contract does not give him the right to any blood. This logic traps Shylock and he agrees to receive Bassanio's money as a substitute, but Portia

disagrees. Now, she accuses Shylock of conspiring against the life of Antonio and suggests that half of his property should be given to the government and the other half to Antonio. Shylock's life is spared by the Duke; he takes a fine from Shylock rather than property. As has been suggested by Antonio, Shylock agrees to become a Christian and accepts the condition that Lorenzo and Jessica will be the owners of his whole property after his death. Here, his acceptance of the condition is similar to a 'promise', which indicates that his previous version of the cunning oath is replaced with a good one. Since the meaning of 'translation' is 'transformation' or 'change', we can rightly say that Shylock has become a translated person by promising to change himself:

...Shylock loses everything in this translation of transaction, the monetary signs of his money as well as the literal pound of flesh- and even his religion, since when the situation takes a bad turn at his expense he will have to convert to Christianity, to translate himself (convertere) into a Christian, into a Christian language, after having been in turn forced, through a scandalous reversal- he who was entreated to be merciful- to implore the doge for mercy on his knees...(Derrida, 2001, p. 189).

4. CONCLUSION

In fine, while "conceptual equivalence makes translatability possible..." (Fram-Cohen, 1985, p. 8), hopefully, the concept of the 'translation of objects' will open up new windows for the numerous translators and the readers from the perspective of cultures that those 'objects' originally belong to or originate anew. Thus, it can rightly be said that objects can also be translated and mistranslated since they have their equivalent expressions depending on the certain contexts as we have seen in case of the 'handkerchief' in *Othello* and the 'pound of flesh' in *The Merchant of Venice*.

As "concepts and words are not equivalent" (Fram-Cohen, 1985, p. 8), similarly, Antonio's inability to return the money to Shylock should not be considered as equivalent to the cutting of the 'pound of flesh' from Antonio's chest. The same is applicable with 'Portia's offer' of money to Shylock to save Antonio's life and Othello's command to Desdemona to 'display the handkerchief' as a proof of her chastity. On the whole, to Shylock, Portia, Othello, Desdemona, Iago and Emilia, their own equivalents to the mentioned objects are proper but to the readers, these are not since these equivalents disregard logic and generate confusion. This reminds us of Robert Payne (1971), Chairman of the Translation Committee of the American PEN Organization, who mentions in "On the Impossibility of Translation":

Whenever we translate exactly and accurately it is a coincidence--in the sense of the purest accident. And the task of the translator is to move sure-footedly among these accidents, he cannot do it by logic (as cited in Fram-Cohen, 1985, p. 2).

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