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Signs Taken for Wonders: *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and the Production of a "Relevant" Translation

Hueikeng Chang
Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures,
National Taiwan University

ABSTRACT

The essay proposes a reading of *TVHW* in formal terms, by situating the poem in the historical context, in which translation of Classical texts into the English tongue was generally undertaken on a strong ideological position. The proposed formal analysis adopts Derrida's concept that translation operates as a position-marked transformation of the symbolic machine of the original, and the task of transformation is conducted usually in terms of the logic of supplementarity. The analysis is meant to recommend a re-interpretation of the poem in light of the strategic play it puts on in order to arrive at a "modern" textual and cultural translation of its Latin original.

Keywords : Samuel Johnson; *The Vanity of Human Wishes*; Juvenal; imitation; familiarization project; John Dryden; Jacques Derrida; logic of supplementarity; relevant translations; structure of exemplarity; moral discourse

詮釋奉為神蹟：《翼求終成空》與製作「恰當」翻譯的章法

張惠鎮
國立臺灣大學外國語文學系教授

摘　要

本文重新檢閱姜生的模仿詩《翼求終成空》，首先用以廓清該詩與英國十八世紀翻譯文化的歷史關連，其次藉分析該詩與裘文諾之第十首諷刺詩的間文網絡，說明文學翻譯過程，翻譯者如何作介入操作，製作「恰當」譯本。

關鍵詞：善謀・姜生；《翼求終成空》；裘文諾；模仿詩；同化外來文化；德萊登；德希達；置換邏輯；恰當之翻譯；例釋規格；道德論述

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I. Proposing a Linguistic Turn

In *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, according to T.S. Eliot, Johnson found "a perfect theme for his abilities."[1] The theme is said to be universally accepted and it does not need or allow development; what it takes to give it a poetic body consists of nothing but figurative variation of this one theme. "If Johnson had confined himself to the general, and not supported it with instances," notes Eliot, "there would be little left of *The Vanity of Human Wishes"*(*Eliot,* 180). Eliot's observation resonates with these implications: first, Johnson's mind has an archive of received generalities and commonplaces, which serve as the mental grid by which to organize his experiences, conversations and writings; second, his talent is more for rhetorical performance of given themes than for independent philosophical queries; third, the evaluation of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* should be grounded on the figurative management of the instances. Eliot's criticism as such sets a precedent in invigorating Johnson studies by a shift of critical paradigm from the philosophical to the rhetorical mode. Rhetoric means more than the art of eloquence, though eloquence is Johnson's recognized strength. In *A Theory of Semiotics,* Umberto Eco demonstrates that the use of traditional rhetoric amounts to providing a set of well-tried formulas for sign production,[2] which is the part of the science of signs, linguistic or otherwise, dealing with the condition and management of the performativity of symbolic structures. The integration of rhetoric into the science of signs makes it possible to give an account of the attempt of traditional rhetoric to manage the performativity of language--to control the proliferation of signification or to stabilize the volatile link between the signifier and the signified. Thus the switch to the rhetorical mode can be described as a choice of critical paradigm that

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1 T.S. Eliot, "Johnson as Critic and Poet," *On Poetry and Poets* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1957) 180.

2 Unberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979) 276-8.

focuses on the symbolic structure and the symbolic function of language and texts. In other words, it is a turning to the signification-sensitive form of formal study. Eliot's reading of *The Vanity of Human Wishes,* reframed in the critical lingua of formal analysis, amounts to a critical questioning of how Johnson's totalizing strategy operates to achieve defined structures of exemplarity and expected textual totality, as he re-contextualizes or re-embodies the received theme and philosophy.

One of the impacts generated by the linguistic turn is that it enhances critical awareness of Johnson's role as a "translator" in a broad sense, who made his literary career by playing the role of a mediator, anglicizing the classical and vernacularizing the canonical to facilitate historical, social, and linguistic crossing of texts. The task of a "translator" is to discover new readership for the original, and to carry out the task a "translator" gives the text a new form, so as to generate new interest in the potential readers. The emphasis on the role of "the translator" instances a shift of the focus of Johnson studies from the quality of thoughts to the efficacy of the forming and transforming performance. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* makes a good entry point for an inquiry of Johnson's mediating performance. To begin with, it is a modernization of Juvenal's *Satire X*, a literal case of a rendition in modern English of a text written in a Classical language. The modernization involves the restructuring of the linguistic signs as well as that of the symbolization of the ruling theme, which means taking apart the original symbolic machine and rebuilding it to accommodate the demands of an alternative linguistic and cultural sign system. The task of reprogramming the symbolic machine is, in Johnson's *Preface to the Plays of Shakespeare,* described as a familiarizing project, in which one "approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful."[3] Furthermore, the poem inscribes in its lines the ideology and the procedures of a familiarizing project. Indeed the act of inscription brings forth a narrative of the travail of grounding the instances on the re-drawn semantic field, which has to be accomplished before a projected textual totality can be achieved. In what follows I mean to advance these arguments. First, Johnson's familiarizing project, in the context of which *The Vanity of Human Wishes* was produced, is typical of literary translations or the transmission of literary texts across historical, linguistic or ideological boundaries: it justifies subjective intervention and aggressive appropriation in the name of "relevance," by a reformulation of the "debt" relation, in which a version is bonded

[3] Samuel Johnson, "Preface to the Plays of Shakespeare," *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo. Vol. VII (New Haven:: Yale Univ. Press, 1968) 65.

to the original, as a "gift" relation, in which a version can either do the service of replenishing the original or pollute the original as it brings along corruptions. Second, the narrative of the travail of translation in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is unfolded in the genre of the romance, staging the arrival of a textual whole as a wishful fulfillment, a miraculous transformation activated by the divine, and consequently both the aggressive reprocessing of the original and the destined provisionality of the version are conveniently obscured. Third, *The Vanity of Human Wishes* with the romance of wonder-making makes an allegory of translation.

II. Making the Ancient Speak English

Dryden's theory of translation as advanced in the preface to his translation of *Ovid's Epistles* reduces all translation to these three heads: metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation. Metaphrase describes the mode of operation in which the translator turns an author "word by word, and line by line, from one language into another."[4] The translator who does this is, in Dryden's words, a verbal copier, whose task is compared to "dancing on ropes with fettered legs," which is but " a foolish task"(*Schelte & Biguenet,*18). In the case of paraphrase, the author's words are "not so strictly followed"(*Schelte & Biguenet,*17), and sense too "is admitted to be amplified, but not altered"(*Schelte & Biguenet,*17). This method of translation is likened to portrait painting: "when a painter copies from the life," it is his business " to make it resemble the original" (*Schelte & Biguenet,*19). In doing an imitation, the translator is said to assume the liberty " to vary from the words and sense," and takes "only some general hints from the original, to run division on the groundwork"(*Schelte & Biguenet,*17). Yet the license "to add and to diminish" is only granted to accomplished poet who is capable of making an unwieldy or ambiguous author "amend" (*Schelte & Biguenet,*19). This benevolent service, Dryden fears, may turn out to be a disservice, especially when performed by a vulgar hand, for while improving the author, the translator may fall into the pitfall of presenting an unsolicited "present" instead of paying an expected "debt" (*Schelte & Biguenet,*18). Giving primary recommendation to paraphrase, the theory shows itself to be grounded on an idea of text as a well-formed union of sense and words,

[4] John Dryden, *Preface to Ovid's Epistles* (1680), in *Essays of John Dryden,* vol. 1, ed. W.P. Ker (New York: Russell, 1961). Excerpts from the collection reproduced in *Theories of Translation*, eds. Rainer Schelte and John Biguenet (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 17.

and a principle of fidelity which defines a proper translation as a faithful reproduction of the well-formed union. On the other hand, imitation, which adds, diminishes or introduces divisions at will, bringing unwanted "gift," or annoying "excess," and challenging the rule of the proper, operates suspiciously to turn translation into a frivolous figurative play. The caution against the polluting potential of an imitation reveals a wariness of the derivative, disintegrating or transforming effects likely to be engendered in a translation.

In principle Johnson's linguistic policy endorses the defense of the proper use against the threats of irregularity and the loss of sense. His loud disclamation against wanton stylistic play, idle metaphorical dangle and faddist Gallic translations in *Preface to the Dictionary* argues for a deliberate maintenance or a diligent vigilance of the given norm of linguistic transparency. In the *Dictionary* the entry, "translation," includes these senses: removal, interpretation, tralation and metaphor. The verb "to translate" also emphasizes the operation of "change." This seems to show an understanding of the practice of translation as necessarily deconstructive of a normative linguistic economy. The readings of metaphrase, pharaphrase, and imitation in the *Dictionary* duly register this formal understanding. Metaphrase is defined as a translation that gives "a close interpretation"; paraphrase is "to translate loosely"; and imitation "a method of translation looser than paraphrase." Placing emphasis on the degree of closeness, the definitions of the three methods of translation bear testimony to an opinion that considers it superfluous to touch upon the impact of translation on linguistic or authorial integrity, or pointless to give priority, as Dryden has done, to any of them.

In light of the definitions in the *Dictionary* it is reasonable to infer that theoretically Johnson admits that translation, whichever method is adopted, invariably activates a process of change or transformation of the symbolic scheme of words and, in extension, that of texts. In other words, he seems neutral about the metaphorizing process which a translation invariably sets in motion and the potential effect it has of upsetting the received semantic closure of words and texts.[5] In

[5] In *Preface to Dictionary* Johnson talks a good deal about the corruption and the obsolescence of linguistic signs. Johnson's semiotics does acknowledge the negative impact of time and use on the opacity of language. His discussion of linguistic change shows himself to be rooted in what Derrida terms "the epoch of logos"(*Of Grammatology,* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, 12), which is characterized by a strait investment in a metaphysic of presence. Yet Johnson's logocentrism is complicated by such rhetorical preference to variety and amplification. His defense of a stable ultimate signified thus follows the position of classical rhetoric, which favors the multiplicity of signifiers, so to speak, for better illumination of the presence of the signified or for more vigilant patrol of the founding semantic ground. In classical rhetoric, the stable relation

practice, however, Johnson on the one hand warns against the Gallic infiltration mediated by popular translations of modern French romances, and on the other favors English translation of Classical canons, the transforming effects of which is welcomed as negotiations for a linguistic and cultural union of the Classical and the English. In Johnson's view, the merging of the Classical texts with the English tongue is a positive phenomenon of familiarization. In this respect Johnson echoes Dryden's pro-modern, pro-English, and elitist attitude. For instance, Cowley's imitation of Pindar, in Dryden's opinion, does not only tame Pindar's dark and ungovernable wildness, but also enable Pindar to "speak English" (*Schelte & Biguenet,* 20). While confessing to "have both added and omitted" in his own production of a version of Lucretius and Virgil, such performance is justified on the ground that it discovers "some beauty yet undiscovered"[6] and makes the authors shine in English. The addition and subtraction he commits in modernizing Chaucer, Dryden explains, is done with a larger vision to "perpetuate" or "refresh" Chaucer's memory.[7] With similar familiarizing enthusiasm, Johnson gives high credit to Pope's translation of Homer, though he suspects Pope to have relied considerably on other translations, for Pope has turned out a true "English Iliad."[8] Furthermore, Pope's imitations of Horace afford Johnson an occasion for talking about the

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between multiple signifiers and the absolute signified is charged to the ethical restraint of the rhetor. Trained in classical rhetoric Johnson shows some degree of confidence in the reproductive stability of the signifying machine, when he is theorizing on the functional aspect of metaphorizing practices such as producing an imitation. Yet his confidence begins to waver when he is faced with actual metaphorizing practices, and raises his voice against all possible corrupting factors. His wariness of the collapse of stable signification seems to reflect a cynical distrust of entrusting the responsibility of semantic justness to individuals in thick flow of everyday border-crossing sign transactions in his days. His occasional cynicism, however, does not give him a strong enough push to go beyond the reign of logos. In *The Vanity of Human Wishes* Johnson shows his strong allegiance to the reign in the defense of the necessity of an absolute signified by which to give defined rhetorical functions to the examples he throws out. His concerns as such, understandably, prevents him from noticing that in producing an imitation of Juvenal he is in fact running a logic of supplementarity before he can reaffirm the logic of logos.

6 John Dryden, *Preface to Sylvae, or the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (1685), in *Essays of John Dryden,* vol. 1, ed. W.P. Ker (New York: Russell, 1961). Excerpts from the collection reproduced in *Theories of Translation*, eds. Rainer Schelte and John Biguenet (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 22.

7 John Dryden, *Preface to the Fables* (1700), in *Essays of John Dryden,* vol. 2, ed. W.P. Ker (New York: Russell, 1961). Excerpts from the collection reproduced in *Theories of Translation*, eds. Rainer Schelte and John Biguenet (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 29.

8 Samuel Johnson, *Life of Pope,* in *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* vol. II (Oxford, 1825), reprint (New York: AMS Press, 1970) 295.

operation of familiarization in concrete practical terms. Imitation, he observes, familiarizes the ancient by "adopting their sentiments to modern topics," for instance, by "making Horace say of Shakespeare what he originally said of Ennius," or "accommodating his satires on Pantolabus and Nomentanus to the flatters and prodigals of our own time" (*Works,* II, 295). In the *Dictionary,* the practice is summarized in a formula: it is a method of translation "in which modern examples and illustrations are used for ancient, or domestic for Foreign."

Dryden and Johnson's ideologically marked position is significant in the sense that it provides a highlighted illustration of a semiotic view of reading, which in terms of the pragmatics of language argues that a reader, in the present case the translator as the privileged reader, reads always in frames. The idea that Cowley, Dryden or Pope amends, improves, amplifies, enlivens, refreshes or revives the original presumes that the privileged translator is privileged with the ability to uncover certain lack in the original, and at the same time to provide certain supplement, which enables the emergence of a new whole and an extended circulation among an enlarged reading population. In the name of modernizing and domesticating the ancient, Dryden seems to find it out of place to dwell on the issue of unwanted gift or unfulfilled debt, or that of semantic closure being disrupted by figurative translation. The reticence does not signal the resolution of the issues; rather they re-emerge in a different light. In a familiarizing project particularly or in all literary translation projects generally, the translator does not take upon himself a simple charge of transporting a substantial content across linguistic barriers, rather he enters into a contract to carry on the life of the text at issue. At the moment of birth, a text enters a fate of inadequacy, which is the limit imposed at its formalization experienced as an eternal lack. The translator is contracted to address the lack, yet unfortunately while a translation brings along a gift to enable the fashioning of a new form, it engenders a new lack or a new desire for the wishful ultimate fulfillment. Thus the translator participates, along with the original author, in the dynamic of sense and meaning, or in the continuing expansion of the text. In this scenario of how text extends its life across the boundaries of history, geography and tongues, both the author and the translator are partners endeavoring to fill a debt which, at the formation of a version, seems almost, yet never quite, balanced. The scenario does not only redefine the nature of the debt, but also presents the author and the translator as equally in debt in terms of the ultimate fulfillment of the ideal transparency. Johnson's definition of imitation, which considers the ancient and the modern at work producing parallel examples or corresponding figures, seems to

imagine such a scenario.

The familiarization project which defines Dryden's and Johnson's general attitude on the translation and transmission of Classical texts, however, has holes in it. In the first place, the lack-and-supplement dynamic has a potential for open-ended rhizomic movement, it takes deliberate framing to move it along a linear progression. In the second place, the author and the translator may participate in a shared pursuit of the Adamic language, they are not necessarily moving on parallel lines, nor the outputs of their work mirroring each other in close correspondence. It is likely that they operate as two independent synecdochic figures, each pointing to a separate utopian whole. The original and the version, thus, are not necessarily parallel embodiments of a defined content or philosophy. Johnson's definition of imitation places the level of figurative play or the flow of intertextual traffic at the level of examples. The issue of managing the signifying performance of substitutive examples in a version so as to maintain the guarded linearity, signifying transparency, or semantic unity of the original thus poses a tough challenge in undertaking an imitation. Words, Johnson ruefully admits, "are the daughter of earth."[9] Examples as artificial meaning-producing devices belong to the same category: they are as much fluid and ready to fall into new relations as words. Although late in his life Johnson remarks in *Life of Pope* on the uncertain reception of imitations of the ancient, saying that the ignorant may not be able to recognize the Classical precedent and the learned may detect "strained applications" or "irreconcileable dissimilitude" (*Works,* II., 342). The uncertainty raises concerns of firstly how the structure of exemplarity in the original is deciphered; secondly how the materiality of the modern embodiment exceeds or disrupts the given sign structure. The first concern is related with the issue of whether the translator and other readers go through the same procedure of processing the original, and come up with corresponding conceptual or structural patterns. The second touches upon the issue of symbolization. Even when the presence of uniform horizons of expectation rules out the chaos of interpretive divergences and stable signification of examples in the original is assured, the re-embodiment of the commonly agreed patterns inevitably opens up, for an imitation composer, a gap of irreconcilability or a chance for promiscuous free play. What Johnson observes as the issues of imitation is in fact a resurfacing of the fundamental issues of all symbolic devices: the issues of an internal split between the signifier and the signified.

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[9] Samuel Johnson, *Preface to the English Dictionary,* in *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* vol. V (Oxford, 1825), reprint (New York: AMS Press, 1970) 27.

In "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?"[10] Jacques Derrida makes an allegorical reading of *The Merchant of Venice,* by which he affords an illustration of how in a translation project the translator reads and rewrites to effect the restructuring of the signifier and the signified of a text, and how the reprogramming of the symbolic structure functions as an ideological machine, as it carries out forced substitution, expropriation, or conversion. Derrida's allegory of translation parallels a translation contract to the bond of a pound of flesh for a sum of money that organizes the dramatic action in *The Merchant of Venice.* In the play, Derrida points out, three readings of the bond are introduced. The literal reading on which Shylock dwells emphasizes a justice and an economy based on quantitative equivalence, to which is countered with a reading complicated by the issue of blood and life, or the return of an excess that upsets the reductive balance. The opposition of the economy of mathematical equivalence versus that of ethical concerns makes it impossible for the involved parties to reach a compromise. Portia disguised as a judge introduces the idea of mercy and divine providence as a supplement, and produces a reading that invokes a form of justice seasoned with mercy, to overrule the dispute over the bond. Derrida's analogy highlights the issues of "gift" and "debt" brought up by Dryden. The task of translation is by the analogy shown to be an asymmetrical contract, which entails an impossible debt. As the insertion of Portia from outside the establishment into the judicial process to make a new turn in reading the bond, intervention by strategic maneuver in a translation practice makes turns and twists to facilitate an otherwise impossible transaction. By the analogy Derrida emphasizes that subjective intervention creates the condition of translatability by enforcing a logic of supplementarity.[11]

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[10] Jacques Derrida, "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27.2(Winter 2001): 174-200.

[11] In *Of Gramatology* Jacques Derrida, in critiquing Saussure's linguistics and Rousseau's idea of speech and writing, points his finger at the several forms of hitherto taken for granted mode of truth or knowledge such as logocentrism, phonocentrism, or ethnocentrism, and endeavors to expose the grammatological nature of the various alleged self-evident truth or knowledge. His critical performance exemplifies markedly a decisive semiotic turn, shaping his argument in terms of the logic of supplementarity, and denounces "the logic of logos" as an arrested or privileged form of grammatology in a train of floating signifying transformations. The logic of supplementarity as demonstrated in the Deridean critical discourse shows that it is based on these semiotic awareness: first, the production of truth, knowledge, meaning or content is a semiotic behavior; second, the production as such consists in the signifying effects as a result of the coordination between the signifier and the signified; third, the signifier and the signified are themselves signs, or sign effects produced by a multiplicity of possible alternative signifiers and signifieds. Simply put, the logic of supplementarity refers firstly to Saussurean semiology and

Furthermore, Derrida's allegory of translation directs attention to the relocation of the debt and the exaltation of the gift as divine grace. The impossible textual transaction is finally made possible and carried out self-righteously at the expense of Shylock, who is made to give up his legal claim to the debt, deprived of his property, and forced to an unwilling conversion. Moreover, the conversion is by the manipulating party celebrated as a testimony to a higher justice and a promise of life regenerated by faith.

Derrida's allegorizing of *The Merchant of Venice* makes it clear that the logic of supplementarity effects alternative processing of a text, just as the introduction of

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secondly to Charles Peirce's concept of semiosis. Although Derrida problematizes Saussure' unwitting clinging to the metaphysic of presence, which considers meaning as self-evident presence, Derroda in fact learns from the Saussean linguistics that abstraction or formal reduction is what it takes to turn the spontaneous stream of sounds into a linguistic system or, more precisely, a system of linguistic signs. Signs (or mediated meaning-making devices), Derrida would later remark, start their signifying functions with the inevitable structural reduction or exclusion. The structural birth of signs as such produces the concept of exteriority/interiority or the concept of the "Other," and marks all signs with a destined structural "lack." The impact of Peirce further complicates Derrida's exposition of concepts such as the "Other" and the "lack," for Peirce's concept of "semiosis," which conceives of signs in circulation as in a process of rhizomic re-structuring, help him to see that the "Other" and "the lack" are also in transformation as signs are engaged in the re-structuring process. Furthermore, in light of the rhizomic dynamic, the "other" is seen to participate in the re-structuring which creates new signs with alternative modes of structural "lack." The re-entry of the structural other proposes alternative framing, rather than fills up the preceding "lack" and thus makes the preceding sign a complete whole. In view of the rhizomic re-structuring, Derria talks about the idea of supplement as the return of the "other" -- the repressed, the excluded or the residual-- and the generation of yet another "lack." In other words, the logic of supplementarity introduces supplement to activate sign re-structuring that is bound to create new demands for further supplements. On some occasion, Derrida also describes the phenomena of semeosis as "différance" or "trace." In re-reading *The Merchant of Venice* Derrida, in light of the logic of supplementarity, is able to discern that Portia's attempt to supplement "justice" with "mercy" effects an ethnocentric and pro-Christian re-structuring of values such as personality, property and propriety, resulting, in empirical terms, in the de-personalization, expropriation and degradation of Shylock. At the same time, Portia's biased intervention is highlighted as exemplary of how the logic of supplementarity works in the process of a semiotic translation (the transformation of linguistic, literary or other signs). The logic of supplementarity, the re-structuring or re-framing operation of which in Portia's case, for example, enforces the deconstruction of given signifying structures so as to set up a new signifying economy, by which to generate preferred sign effects, works in a rereading of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* to enable critical readers to detect the parallel substitutive and constitutive functions in Johnson's rhetorical performance. In both cases, the on-going dynamic of deconstructive operation of the logic of supplementarity is cleverly put to a halt by the assignment of a metaphysico-theological absolute signified. The reliance on a transcendental signified for securing a seemingly permanent signifying closure, as shown in these two cases, throws a mythic cloak over the need for a managed sign (textual)closure in every production of a "relevant" translation.

the element of mercy affords Portia to restructure the signifying elements of the bond. The formal restructuring engenders the rhetorical effects of enhancement and sublimation. Formally or rhetorically what a translation performs are what it takes to endow a text with the property of relevance. The word "relevance" when translated into French, Derrida points out, provides yet another illustration of the formal and rhetorical procedures involved in a translation project. In French "relevance" may assume these senses, "*relevé*," "*relever*," and "*relevant*." In different tenses the act of "lifting up" describes the shift of signifying responsibility and the emergence of new intelligence. By implication, the act of giving chance to the newly privileged effects suppression and substitution. In light of such formal and rhetorical operations, the task of a translator is always geared towards the production of a relevant translation. The production of a relevant translation, as illustrated by Derrida's allegorizing of *The Merchant of Venice,* assumes that the function of supplementary logic succeeds in producing a conclusive closure, the arrival of which represented as a divine gift lifts the version above the common fate of man-made signs. The allegory of translation indeed enacts the translator's wishful aspiration, and, for that matter, that of an author, for liberating his text above the ever returning cycle of reading or rewriting. Johnson's imitation of Juvenal's *Satire X, The Vanity of Human Wishes,* reenacts this very dream scenario. Putting into effect his own idea of imitation as the practice of providing modern examples for the illustration of sentiments highlighted in a Classical text, Johnson goes about the task of setting up a symbolic structure that will allow the new examples to be linked with the given sentiments, and in the process he, like Portia, activates the logic of supplementarity to force the arrival of a settlement, or the establishment of a viable structure of exemplarity that enables the emergence of a totalized new text. Moreover, the arrival is again made to occur as a divine gift. The poem as a familiarizing project does not only force Juvenal to speak English, but also imposes a Christian reading on his lines on the fall of the proper rational norm. For the emergence of Johnson's text, Juvenal's idea of the fall must fall in place in the new symbolic scheme; and for Juvenal's theme on the lapse of reason to take on the sense of the depravity of the fallen men, it must fall in line with Christian ethic and Biblical historiography. Johnson's version indeed depends on the fallability of ideas, themes, examples and texts as symbolic structures, for it is the precondition of the rise of Johnson's text. Fallability represented as a gift falling from the divine to enable an alternative textual economy hides away the deconstructive aggression of the act of translating. One of the reasons which makes Johnson's poem very

interesting is that, as it moralizes over the phenomena of falling and fallability of signs such as identity and values, it diligently engineers the fallability of Juvenal's text.

III. The Logic of Supplementarity at work

In Juvenal's *Satire X* the philosophy of "*mens sana in corpore sano*"(356)[12] is emphasized towards the end of the poem to provide a moral reference to the catalogue of misleading aspirations and their resulting miseries. Democritus and Heraclitus are placed on a transcendental position, to witness, in light of Stoic philosophy, a spatial display of how mankind tends to be led by folly, to overstep rational boundaries, to lapse into the Hobbesian state of nature and to become victims of the caprice of Fortune. The listing presents variations of the paradox of the logic of the more x the more y. The narrative gives examples of those who are short-sighted or single-minded as to take x and y as positive increments and run into foul reversals, when the growth in size, amount, or degree of the object obtained, yields negative outcome. In light of the given moral norm the examples are brought forth to illustrate how excess incurs the negative turn of Fortune. According to the given proposition, money, fame, grandeur, longevity and good look are not necessarily forbidden or depraved objects of desire, if the pursuit of them observes the limits of the given norm. Abiding by the norm, one would assume the dignity of a rational being, enjoy the favor of gods and keep a safe distance from the mischief of Fortune. Conversely, excess in whichever form triggers depersonalizing, dehumanizing and life-destroying aggressions. For instance, the narrative stages scenes of mob violence, massive blood-shedding, mutilation of the body and sexual intrigues. Indeed the satire depends on a metaphysic of presence, or the tenet of a sound mind in a sound body, as the ethical ground for its stricture on excesses. A sound mind in a sound body figures the absolute sign, the golden moment of transparency, ontological harmony or metaphysical presence; whereas folly, irrationality, and other indulgences in excess crack open a split in the sign. In Juvenal's scenario of the disintegration of sign, Fortune is the eternal Other, the disintegrating agent or sinister hidden in the chasm of the split. In every illustrative narrative Fortune enters on the scene to reverse the progress of events. Fortune or

[12] Juvenal, *Satire X,* in *Juvenal and Persius,* with an English translation by G. G. Ramsay, LL.D., Litt.D. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), 196-220. Citations from the poem will be documented with line numbers as appearing in this version.

the Other is what Juvenal relies on for the play of paradox or for the exposure of the negative potentials of human nature.

Satire X enters the moralist discourse with the proposition that failing the coding restraint of the totalizing scheme of a sound mind in a sound body can result in returning men to the precoding state of animality and thingness, and that a sound mind in a sound body figures the stable reproduction of humanity, reason, wisdom, and philosophy. For Juvenal relapses into the state of Hobbesian nature or naked material facts occur as symptoms, and at the same time the hold of rational judgment is given affirmative embodiment in the positive presence of "*pauci*"(2), the few who are free from the evils of excess, and the presence of Democritus and Heraclitus, who with their reputed metaphysical lucidity are able to diagnose the symptoms. Johnson's poem preserves two main features of Juvenal's moral discourse: first, moral investment in regulated semiotic economy, which in Juvenal is embodied in the wisdom of a sound mind in a sound body; and second, moral denunciation on the splitting or proliferation of signs. The defense of a regulated sign economy is what founds a moral discourse, and a moral satire invariably directs its attack on the corruption of the guarded foundation. A theory of corruption is invariably a theory of how the invested signifier-signified correlation is eroded, collapsed, defiled, or displaced. Juvenal's satire exposes how the action of corruption can finally collapse human identity, and while exposing how identity is subjected to destructive forces of native aggression and impersonal contingencies, uncovers that human identity is after all a construct maintained by the exercise of reason. Johnson's poem participates in the moral discourse as he activates the logic of supplementarity in an endeavor to re-consider the theory of corruption and to re-imagine the possibility of grounding man and man-contrived symbolic practices on bases beyond the destruction of time and Fortune.

Johnson's poem begins by inviting the reader to assume the extensive view of Observation. The elevation of the impersonal figure of Observation marks the empirical pretension of the poem. Ian Donaldson makes a good point in relating the personification with "the cult of observation" prevailing in the eighteenth century. He points out that projects were put up for making observation of hitherto uncharted waters, land masses, coastal forms, fish, birds, insects, plants or peoples in the New World, and that the observers were equipped with a variety of optical devices for looking at the heavens, at the leaves of plants, or at the bottom of the ocean.[13] The act of observing at issue is performed with technical devices to maximize the power

[13] Ian Donaldson, "Samuel Johnson and the Art of Observation," *ELH* 53(1986): 779-799.

of vision, and with the assumption that it will see what the plain eye can not see. Telescopes or microscopes are emblems of what may be termed scopic vision. The insertion of optical devices into the function of visual perception indicates the enforcement of method or theory as the tool for abstract analysis. Scopic vision contributes to what Foucault in *The Order of Things* describes as epistemic rupture beginning in the seventeenth century Europe.[14] It produces a mode of knowledge different from that depending on the classical metaphysical categories, for the power of abstraction effects an alternative ordering of knowledge on a scheme of abstract differentiations. The alleged historical epistemological split occurred as the operation of scopic vision fragmented the traditional metaphysical categories. As scopic vision won ever wider reception, it rivaled, questioned or marginalized the old philosophic eye.

The elevation of Observation situates Johnson's poem in a historical milieu where market, credit, science and technology had extended the scope and dimensions of epistemological inquiries and invented new media for the new epistemological exploration. On the one hand, the privileging of Observation and its extensive view signals the ascendancy of a new epistemological regime, and the decentralizing of the mode of knowledge depending on moral allegories and metaphysical categories. In the poem the narrator calls forth History and Democritus to accommodate the Juvenalian echoes in the presentation of historical or textual instances. The echoes, however, sounds rather remote, for the Juvenalian paradox of the-more-turned-to-be- the-worse does not provide an adequate account for the chain of events or the symbolization of bodies and things on the given scenes in Johnson's poem. The Juvenalian echoes, though remote, are nevertheless preserved in the text, serving as evidences of historical, epistemological and ethical rupture, and as reminders of the toils entailed in negotiating a bridge-over. On the other, the extensive view of Observation with piercing semiotic light uncovers the common career of signs that parallels the provisionality and insubstantiality of a pyrotechnic show. In semiotic light contents emerge as signifying effects, and the

[14] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vantage Books, 1973). In Chapter 3 of the book, Foucault makes an analysis of the alleged epistemological rupture, which functions in Foucault's historical discourse as the basis of periodization, setting the (neo)Classical age from the early modern age. The rupture is seen to have resulted from the emergence of an analytical method, which breaks down empirical units into abstract elements and thus enables an alternative ordering of knowledge and the cultural as well as the natural world. Natural history and the highlighted concept of money as an exchange medium, for instance, are discussed as the evidences of the currency of the analytical mode of knowledge.

signifying power of a sign is generated as the result of framing. The rise and fall of Wolsey, for instance, becomes intelligible in this very semiotic light. Wolsey's dignity and power are the framing effect of "the frame of gold"(86),[15] which in turn produces another face in another circumstance. Wolsey's fate and that of the one he has replaced or that replaces him follows the logic of sign or the logic of depostivized nature of truth, reason, or identity, which is emphasized in the remark that "The form distorted justifies the fall"(89). Wolsey meets his fall because the political scheme which supports him on a stand does not operate in terms of positive or constant values. As the scheme shifts its operating terms, it imposes a new economy, the residue of which having lost its signifying power exposes its mere thingness.

The scrutiny of Observation finds in the rise and fall of historical personages tangible manifestations of semiotic arbitrariness. Arbitrariness is also shown in the effect of general equivalence on social life produced by exchanges based on quantified units, whether in the form of metal tokens or paper notes. In the poem the medium-aspect of gold is problematized. Gold, for instance, reduces both ruffians and judges to the providers of purchased services. The undifferentiating impacts of gold or money comes exactly from its arbitrariness and liquidity, which make it the ultimate sign of the exchange economy that was gaining a strong hold in the eighteenth-century England. Its almost limitless signifying and substituting potential misleads and deludes, when the negative expression of its arbitrariness is not recognized. For instance, Johnson's man in old age, dreading the collapse of selfhood in the process of physical decay and social rejection, tries to salvage his dwindling self-importance by turning "his bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands"(288) or counting his gold till he dies. Investment in other social or cultural sign systems in a society that runs on an exchange economy may be as much delusive. Learning, for instance, which once functioned as a sure social capital, is suspected to have become a shaky speculation. The young enthusiast's wholesale investment in letters, dreaming of eventual honor and material comfort, the narrator of the poem warns, may meet with a downright crash, for letters, in an exchange economy, do not always function as sure carriers of merits and rewards, and hence the signifying power of man-of-letters floats in the general flux of shifting signs.

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[15] Samuel Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes,* in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Poems,* ed. E.L. McAdam, Jr., with George Milne, vol. VI (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964) 90-109. Henceforth citations from the poem will be documented with line numbers as appearing in this edition.

Arbitrary shift of the value of signs entails the collapse of the foundation of political hierarchy, social categories, military conquest, money and letters; furthermore, its ramification permeates private lives, for instance, the psychology of aging or gender performance. Age, as Johnson's poem shows, can be a scourge, for age subjects one to the pressure of obsolescence. The pain of obsolescence comes from an awareness of being displaced, decentered, diminished, estranged or eliminated: "New forms arise, and different views engage,/Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage"(306-7). One can become obsolescent at a very young age, yet age, as shown in the poem, bears the affliction of obsolescence as its fate. In other words, time rather than Fortune reigns supreme. More properly, time as the dynamic of arbitrary semiotic deformation and reformation sets the course of fate. As the wayward dynamic of semiotic mobility gathers momentum in an exchange economy, it witnesses "decay pursues decay"(305), for mobility of sign effects exclusion and produces residues. The sorry spectacle of objectified Marlborough and Swift affords stark emblems of ultimate obsolescence and superfluousness. Beauty, especially male beauty, is by Juvenal taken as a natural gift that exceeds the norm of usefulness, an abnormality inducing lust, perversity, vengeance, and brutality; Observation in Johnson's imitation shifts attention to female gender performance, in terms of which beauty amounts to no more than coquetry, manners, fashion, and romance. Thus in Johnson's poem beauty is enumerated as another instance of semiotic game, the descriptive trait of which is that there is nothing but surface, and that the content-effect it produces can be nothing but provisional and fictitious. In other words, beauty does not necessarily signify the presence of virtue; furthermore, beauty soon becomes outdated. Beauty as well as age is the locus for Observation's investigation of the instability and arbitrariness of sign.

Observation does not, as posed, pursue a global survey; his lenses do not spot any sight or scene in either China or Peru or any region in between. Observation with its affected extensive view marks a privileging of a subjective generalizing seeing. In his essay on Johnson Eliot remarks that "Johnson's mind tended towards the general reflection supported by instances"(*Eliot,* 179). In *The Vanity of Human Wishes,* Observation figures such a mind in function. This means that the scopic vision of Observation operates to reinforce given generalities by providing them with supporting instances, rather than to discover novel details of particulars in an objective environment. Furthermore, all the instances fall within the range of the knowledge and experience of "Britain's modish tribe"(61). In the same essay on Johnson, Eliot extols Johnson's grasp of a sense of mode in the presentation of

Swedish Charles. The strength of the "quite perfect form"(*Eliot,* 180) is such that the reader is compelled to see the conqueror in terms of the mapped curve of rising, reversal, decline and degradation. The shaped passage of Charles' life in fact is but one of a series of repetitive emblematic representations of the trajectory of fate predicted for the crowd at preferment's gate: "They mount, they shine, evaporate and fall"(76). In fact, it is the predominant ontological paradigm, through which Observation makes an inventory of instances of rising and falling. Perceptively Eliot notes that the Charles passage does not preserve "its full value when extracted"(*Eliot,* 180), for it is to be read in the context of the poem. Cutting it out of the context would invite a reading of the tale in light of heroic tragedy or De Casibus narrative of illustrious persons victimized by fortune. The recurrence of the patterned rise-and-fall which organizes the narrative examples in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* occurs more to accentuate the instability of institutions, by means of which identity, merits, and values are defined, than to give an account of flaws, conflicts, intrigues, or malice that result in personal downfall. Moreover, the mount-shine-evaporate-fall trajectory compares the "falling into" and "falling out of" to a form of recognition, authority or power in terms of light and visibility. The fading of light and the loss of visibility evokes the fear of loss of personal and existential significance, or more precisely, the obsolescence, transformation or substitution of the form, apparatus, mechanism, or evaluation, by which face, fame, honor, status and value are produced. The fear of identity and meaning being collapsed is intimated in scenes showing the remains of a fall, the sights of mere thingness of men and things. Commenting on the emptying-out process in the Charles and Xerxes passages, Lawrence Lipking remarks, "Again and again, a passage that begins with a human being's desires and purposes will end with disembodied things or empty signs."[16] The heroes in the embedded biographies are in turn turned into war-making machines and then finally merged with ruins and fragments: "Things," Lipking observes succinctly, "take over the poem" (*Lipking,* 93).

In Johnson's dictionary, "modish" is defined as "fashionable." "To fashion" is given several senses, including "to form," "to make," or "to accommodate." To be fashionable means to assume the form, make or mode according to the reigning practice or to current general approbation. The term "Britain's modish tribe" thus evokes a social world in which trade, credit, specialization and commodification

[16] Lauwrence Lipking, *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998) 93.

have enhanced an awareness of the plurality and provisionality of form. With forms floating and circulating, political offices do not necessarily signify merits and dedication; letters do not necessarily convey true judgment; learning does not necessarily point to wisdom; wars do not make heroes; age does not ensure dignity; and beauty does not have intrinsic essence. The depiction of Britain's modish tribe gives support to a theory of corruption in terms of intermediaries or substitutions. Time is experienced as a process of change, and change opens up a room for choices, which in turn is to effect decenterization and displacement. In *Virtue, Commerce, and History,* J.G. A. Pocock, while discussing the mobility of property and its social and political consequences in the eighteenth-century Britain, uncovers the theory of corruption that underlines the conservative rhetoric against credit, patronage, or specialization. It is, he notes, "a theory of how intermediaries substitute their own good and profit for that of their supposed principals."[17] On the one hand, the theory registers the phenomena of once stable signifying apparatus being derailed by the logic of supplementarity, or a situation in which the introduction of supplements results in the de-constitution of established signs. On the other, it justifies the conservative reaction against change, and the demonizing of change as that which inflicts loss and danger. In *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, "the maze" is employed to configure the state of corruption or a situation of anxiety-ridden uncertainty. The maze is a multicursal labyrinth, of which only the designated among the multiplicity of passages is to lead, through dark confusion, towards the light of sense and certainty. It poses an "either-or" circumstance: either risk of the Minotaur or salvation by Adriadne's thread. Observation's survey of Britain's modish tribe suppresses the availability of Adriadne's thread by zeroing in on scenes of confusion and threat: "Remark," the narrator of the poem bids the reader, "how hope and fear, desire and hate/Overspread with snares the clouded maze of fate"(5-6) where wavering man is "To tread the dreary paths without a guide"(8).

Observation's scopic vision, in other words, produces instances of delusion and setbacks defined in terms of a period-and-region-specific theory of corruption. The theoretical frame condemns the wavering man to a fate which "wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,/Each gift of nature, and each grace of art"(15-6). Enveloped in the misty closure of the maze, the wavering man is bound to meet the Minotaur, whichever path he pursues. In fact the maze, in the corruption discourse, has become the Minotaur itself, figuring errors and delusions. Different from

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[17] J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985) 122.

Juvenal's theory of corruption, affliction is in this case conceived as impersonal: personal choice of path, forms of pursuit, or volume of aroused passion are but the instruments of the overdetermining fate. Juvenal's satire divides mankind in two categories: the proper subjects of the rational norm versus the Other, or simply put, "we" against "them." Speaking the voice of "we" as it denounces and ridicules "them," the satiric exposure of "them" carries the weight of mankind's universal warfare against the unruly Other. Yet in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* the afflictive fate which imprisons Britain's modish tribe is yet to be blown up to a universal scale. By situating the misty maze in the Christian grand narrative, Johnson subsequently turns "the maze" into the configuration of the moral and cognitive confusion of the fallen man. Historically the maze has been a stylized graphic design on the floor of a good number of cathedrals, serving as an emblematic account of how faith guides the fallen man through the danger of snares and traps toward the eventual salvation. In Johnson's poem the incorporation of the Christian outlook of life transforms instances of Britain's modish tribe into embodiments of a universal fallen world. The transformation thus universalizes the otherwise mere Britain's local experience of the afflictive fate. On the one hand, the universalizing is achieved by writing "we" into the Christian myth of the Fall; on the other, the fall of mankind becomes the ultimate semantic reference for the array of examples in the poem, that have, as the result of the mythic framing, been turned from an account of empirical details into a multiplicity of symbolic structures pointing to a uniform ultimate signified. In other words, the regulated symbolization and the ultimate signified establish the defined exemplarity of the given examples. As the examples are turned from empirical accounts into embodiments of the general condition after the Fall, their regulated rhetorical function contributes to the bridging over of the gap between the particular and the general. The myth of the Fall and the falling of individual examples into the privileged signifying frame, at the formation of the managed symbolic structure, strengthen the received argument in the poem of universal corruption, ruling out the possibility of redemption by secular reason, and preparing the way for the staging of the divine intervention. Elevating "the laws of heaven"(365) and the "celestial wisdom"(367), the poem makes it inevitable to conclude with a promise of the divine gift of happiness. The eulogy of "law," "wisdom," and "happiness," which echoes Portia's praise of a higher justice seasoned with Christian mercy, celebrates the work of sublimation carried out by the travail of translation, at the expense of the conversion and substitution of the original.

In Juvenal's *Satire X* the listing of exempla is brought to a halt by the introduction of a piece of stoic wisdom, a framing gesture, by which a defined metaphysical closure is produced. The shaping of the closure gives confirmation to the assumed ethical order and the presence of goodness and virtue, which reinforces the satire's moral position and justifies the satiric agenda. The closure in a way assures the possibility of the return to normality and transparency, which lends the satire a level of ritual significance, by evoking an enactment of a ritual anathema of the Other. Symbolic damnation works in this case to preserve the conviction in rational identity and stable metaphysical presence. In the formal aspect, the closure forms retroactively a mirror economy, by which the listed historical and literary biographies are transformed into illustrations of the theme on corruption. Johnson's familiarizing project includes in the main the re-embodiment of the theme of corruption and the redesigning of a mirror economy. As the embodiment of the given theme with fresh examples introduces empirical and ideological contents that go beyond the bounds of the given metaphysical closure in Juvenal's satire, it becomes imperative for Johnson to engineer a new closing devise, so as to maintain the mirror economy, which would then organize the examples on the ground of a just exemplarity. The resort to the myth and religion is a viable option for the purpose. First, it marks out the historical and the ethical distance over which the original is made to travel by the familiarizing will of the translator. Second, a closure achieved by the divine intervention tends to erase the labor on the part of the translator to reshape the destiny of the original on alternative terms. Third, the allusion to the Fall sets the limits of interpretive horizon, within which the symbolic function of the examples are regulated by a stable exemplarity. Finally, the teleological structure of the Christian concept of history helps to ward off the threat of open-ended drift of history, and thus to ensure the return of the golden age of the Absolute sign. Appropriating the thematic and formal properties of the original, Johnson's imitation strengthens the intertextual link in joining with the original in the moralist's discourse on the moral consequences of sign corruption. Simply put, it sets another example of producing examples to show how the sign effects of examples are kept within the limit zone. Johnson's choice of a symbolic closure sanctified by the divine conceals the labour involved in producing relevant examples. The formal and ideological management being shrouded in the mist of the divine, the utopia of transparent sign emerges as a wonder given as a token of divine promise.

IV. Translation as A Romance of wonder-making

In Juvenal's *Satire X* the satirist runs the "we"-against-"them" machine to warn against the danger of the cracking up of the rational foundation of a virtuous and sensible life. While "they" are represented as the forces destructive of the rational ground, the presence of "we" ensures that with conscious effort the forces can be effectively managed. Collapsing the we/they opposition and the rational ground, Johnson's imitation situates the entirety of mankind in an abyss opened up between the signifier and the signified: all of "us" are trapped in a "misty maze." The relocation of the subject results in a generic shift. The Juvenal brand of satire as exorcism of evil gives in to the mode of Menippean satire, which, according to Northrop Frye's definition, "deals less with people as such than with mental attitude,"[18] and which not being invariably satiric in attitude, makes an exhaustive or learned survey to provide evidences of a deplorable state of things or way of life. In agreement with Frye's description of the Menippean satire, Johnson's poem stages scenes of Britain's deplorable modish tribe. Most significantly the central figure in the poem, "the maze," in light of the generalized approach of a Menippean satire, begins to operate as a configuration of an entire world fallen into the wayward changes of time, being plagued by the general affliction of instability, insubstantiality, obsolescence, or deterioration. Furthermore, in line with the universalizing ploy, the rhetorical function of "the maze" is deliberately reframed in a biblical context. The strategic framing, once more, lands the poem on an alternative generic horizon, lending the poem a regular romance outlook. The privileging of the biblical context reorients the rhetorical function of "the maze"; on the one hand, it denounces the empirical phenomena of shifting framing multiplicity, which has caused the ills, as enumerated in the poem, of social, ethical and ontological instability, and on the other, it enables the emergence of the binary double—the positive rhetorical potential or symbolization option of "the maze"(the "Adriadne's thread" aspect of its symbolic significance) which has been deliberately repressed in the listing of ills of mutilation, insubstantiality, and loss of meaning, and which, when given a central position, upholds a managed economy that guarantees the narrative of the poem to roll on in a linear, teleological progression. In other words, the accentuation of the Christian metaphysical and historical linear economy shortly before the poem ends directs the narrative of the poem towards the anticipated religious and ethical enlightenment, foreseeing the eventual containment of the enumerated proliferating

[18] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957) 309.

confusion. The re-contextualization of "the maze" and the re-grounding of instances of disintegration in the biblical grand narrative thus give shape to a narrative trajectory of eventual salvation preceded or dramatized by a protracted process of demoralized digressions. Formally speaking, the re-contextualization as well as the act of re-grounding are strategic plays adopted for the management of the fundamental signifying plurivalence of signs. The strategic maneuver of the poem which effects the containment of the phenomena of instability in a nascent capitalistic society by resorting to the Christian idea of divine redemption is central to Johnson's "relevance project": it endeavors to produce an ideologically desirable semantic closure by effectively reducing the dysfunctional proliferating of signs, by which to replace the Juvenalian mode of closure in terms of classical reason. Both the lifting up of the positive binary of "the maze' and the marking out of a delimited semantic field of poetic symbolization, compel the narrative of the poem to go along a plot of wishful fulfillment. The strategic slight of hand enables Johnson to lift what is culturally and historically local preoccupations up to a seemingly universal discourse.[19] At the same time, the discourse creates the illusion that the wishful enlightenment, in the grace of divine light, is certain and inevitable. Johnson's ideologically grounded re-contextualization[20] echoes Derrida's reading of Portia's ethnically and socially biased intervention in making a breakthrough in a legal deadlock or, allegorically, a case of "intranslatability." In other words, Johnson's rhetorical performance in the poem, most obviously in the overturning of the paradoxical potential of "the Maze" and the grounding of the catalogue of modern and historical examples in a delimited ethical symbolization field, much like Portia's forensic rhetoric, gives sanction to the translator's manipulation in creating the textual condition for the arrival of linearity and totality, and by the arrival of the ideal closure testifies to the "translatability" of texts. The celebration of "translatability" or the achievement of a relevant translation in Johnson's poem eulogizes the vision of happiness, virtue and wisdom. The euphoria of such

[19] From a non-Christian point of view, which is the view of all non-Christians such as the present author, the Christian ethical and historical teleology is a culturally and historically local mode of arriving at an ideal semantic closure.

[20] The term "ideologically grounded" confesses the critical attitude this author has taken in trying to be analytical about Johnson's universalizing strategy. The criticism does not suggest wholesale deconstruction or depreciation of Johnson as a voice of the conservatism of England in his age, although it certainly encourages a reading of Johnson in a formal or, more precisely, semiotic approach, in which, this author is convinced, one has a better chance of grasping the historical, cultural and social bindings which both shape and set limits on *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and Johnson's other writings as well.

enlightened felicity obscures the ideological slight of hand and encourages faith in transcendental intervention in the social and cultural circulation of signs and texts. On the poetic level, the shift from a Menippean general castigation of general evils to a celebration of the achievement of happiness, virtue and wisdom effects a generic transformation from the satiric mode to that of a romance. The romance of wishful fulfillment gives rise to a view of translation as a "magical transformation,"[21] or a therapeutic relief from the pressure of the temporality of texts. However, the romance of the textual production of a relevant translation represented as the manifestation of transcendental intervention, as instanced in *The Vanity of Human Wishes,* makes a case of "signs taken for wonders." The relevance project is, unfortunately, nonetheless haunted by the fate of supplement and substitution in the process of circulation among an extensive and uneven range of readers across history and culture, and the fate as such, which it shares with all symbolic devices, and particularly with its original, is ironically what gives the poem its chance of being.[22]

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[21] Frederic Jameson, "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism," in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981) 103-50. In the chapter on magical narratives Jameson makes a formal appropriation of Northrop Frye's generic description of the romance. Frye places the romance on an ethical axis, and defines the genre as a narrative enacting a magical transformation of the evil world into a wishful Utopia. The magical transformation, read in terms of the ethical presupposition, takes places as a movement from the lower to the higher ethical scale, which then accommodates themes such as rebirth or regeneration. Jameson's reading of Frye emphasizes the paradigmatic antithetical structure of the romance narrative and, by moving the antithetical structure from the ethical grounding, allows it to work as a historicizing instrument. Jameson's redefinition of the romance preserves the concept of rivaling "worlds" and considers the "worlds" as embodiments of historically irreconcilable contradictory social, political, or economical principles. According to his definition, the romance narrative functions as a symbolic act by which the narrative imagines a form of reconciliation in a wishful fulfillment, dramatizing a transformation of the Other by the principle privileged by the narrating subject. Furthermore, it is observed that in the bourgeois society the "reinvention of romance finds its strategy in the substitution of new positivities (theology, psychology, the dramatic metaphor) for the older magical content" (134). Jameson's redefinition of the romance throws light on the strategic value of faith as a mode of subjective intervention in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and also on the significance of the mode of deliberate intervention as a metaphor of various manners of romanticizing strategic plays in achieving ideologically invested narrative or textual closure.

[22] Traditional Johnsonians tend to make commentaries on or produce interpretations of Johnson's texts, in light of the symbolization pattern and the metaphysical assumptions which Johnson inherited from the humanistic tradition in which he was educated. The downside of the commentaries and interpretations as such is that they reproduce Johnson's discursive presumptions and strategies. The reproductive mode of reading is inadequate in the sense that it readily enforces or promotes the linear economy, which Johnson relied upon in his poetic and non-poetic discourses, and which is sharply marked by its historicity. Furthermore, the reproductive mode of reading tends to read Johnson as a revered timeless monument, and fails to

give his texts the benefit of being reprocessed, which involves the reactivating of their symbolic potentials in a process of alternative contextualization. The reproductive mode of reading thus favors a definitive closure of Johnson's texts, and refuses to see Johnson's texts as in fact being sustained in a vast network of cultural, historical, and textual intertextuality. To replace the metaphysical foundation of the aforementioned reproductive mode of Johnson studies with a logic of supplementarity, as the present essay attempts to do, has the strength of reawaking an awareness of the semiotic nature of texts , Johnson's or other authors'. Such semiotic awareness allows one to recapture the dynamic intertextuality of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* in the present case. In view of the dynamic intertextuality, the provisionality of the poem is revealed. The dynamic intertextuality also tells of how the poem emerges, as other texts do, in a play of the inevitable paradox of translatability / intranslatability of texts (cf. Jacques Derrida, "Des tours de Babel," in *Difference in Translation,* Cornell University Press, 1985). In this sense, one is able to read the poem, as the present essay does, as a version, and at the same time, as an original.