

## Prophets and Pandemonium: creativity in the translating self

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### ABSTRACT

In *Who Translates? Translator Subjectivities beyond Reason*, Douglas Robinson (2001) proposes a model of the self that he calls pandemonium. Pandemonium suggests a kind of disaggregated agency in which exterior and interior forces shape and are shaped by each other. As to translator subjectivity, these forces produce competing responses to a source text. This pandemonium model stands in opposition to the Western model, which Robinson considers a “spirit-channeling” model. In this model, the translator has no self; instead, the translator is simply a medium or machine through whom the original author speaks. To illustrate this model, Robinson uses the story of how Joseph Smith produced the *Book of Mormon*. Robinson then sets Smith aside. This choice is unfortunate, for Smith’s story actually presents an interesting test case for the pandemonium model. Rather than a case of classic channeling, Smith’s story represents a kind of creativity that successful translators need.

KEYWORDS: translator subjectivity, creativity, *Book of Mormon*, Joseph Smith.

In *Who Translates? Translator Subjectivities beyond Reason*, Douglas J. Robinson (2001) explores how translator subjectivity – the translator’s self – is constructed. This exploration goes far beyond what other translation scholars have done. Robinson poses the following questions to introduce the book:

Who translates? Who is the subject of translation? Is the translator allowed to be a subject, to have a subjectivity? If so, what forces are active within it, and to what extent are those forces channeled into it from without? (2001:3)

In developing his account of the translator’s self, Robinson responds to what he considers a “rationalist” model of translator subjectivity (2001:25). That model, he believes, posits translators who somehow set their own subjectivity aside and allow the source-text author’s intentionality to flow through them. This process sounds very much like spirit channeling, and Robinson uses stories of spirit-channeling translators to illustrate this rationalist tradition. Among these stories, Robinson includes a lengthy discussion of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith’s account of translating the *Book of Mormon*. After reviewing the stories of Joseph Smith and other translators he considers spirit channelers, Robinson persuasively argues that the translator-as-medium tradition does not reflect translation practice at all. As an alternative, Robinson proposes what he calls “disaggregated-agency” or the “pandemonium self” (2001:144). This pandemonium subjectivity – an attempt to account for the interior and exterior forces that shape the self – seeks to reflect the highly complex reality translators face as they engage with texts.

This paper describes Robinson’s notion of pandemonium subjectivity, then uses the story of Joseph Smith and the *Book of Mormon* to argue that Robinson’s model might be expanded. Section I briefly reviews opposing accounts of human subjectivity. Section II describes pandemonium subjectivity, contextualizing it within different accounts of translator subjectivity. Sections III and IV evaluate Robinson’s claim that the *Book of Mormon* represents a case of unmediated spirit channeling. Contrary to Robinson, these sections

conclude that Joseph Smith's translator subjectivity represents a hybrid, a combination of channeling and human pandemonium. This hybrid illustrates a kind of creativity that enriches Robinson's pandemonium model.

## **I. Opposing Accounts of Subjectivity: Humanism and Anti-Humanism**

Humanism and anti-humanism mark the poles of discussions about subjectivity. Humanists, for example, advocate the "notion of a core humanity or common essential features in terms of which human beings can be defined" (Soper 1986:11). Those essential features include "'consciousness,' 'agency,' 'choice,' 'responsibility,' 'moral value'" (1986:12). Such features indicate that rationality and subjectivity characterize human existence. Humanism thus assumes that human beings "have epistemological (and moral) autonomy and a capacity to act as free and responsible agents" (Kruks 1990:3). In other words, humanists emphasize unencumbered subjectivity.

In contrast to humanists, postmodern or anti-humanist theorists emphasize the social construction of subjectivity. The social 'structures' or systems of thought that construct subjectivity may be discursive practices (Michel Foucault) or ideology (Louis Althusser), but anti-humanists would nevertheless agree that community constructs identity. Foucault, for example, asserts the need "to dispense with the constituent subject ... to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework" (1980:117). In a similar vein, Althusser affirms that humans' perception that they are subjects – agents capable of acting and taking responsibility for action – "is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect" (1971:172). This anti-humanist notion of purely constructed subjectivity cannot be reconciled with the widespread view among humanists that freedom characterizes subjectivity.

While one cannot reconcile humanist and anti-humanist views of subjectivity, neither can one consistently choose either view over the other. As Sonia Kruks points out, consistently choosing one of these views invites "persuasive criticism from the other" (1990:7). As to humanism's autonomous subjectivity, Kruks notes the following:

[A]nti-humanist works and much other macro-analytic social science...offer considerable evidence in support of the critique of the autonomous subject. We are to some degree the products of external circumstance, not only in the sense that, for example, economies or state systems develop functions that are beyond individual control, but in the stronger sense that...what we experience as personal values, beliefs, tastes, etc., [is] culturally specific. (*ibid.*)

Humanism's autonomous subjectivity, in other words, does not account for how social structures – discursive practices and ideology – shape subjectivity.

Humanism's autonomous subjectivity may be flawed, but anti-humanist arguments for purely constructed subjectivity are flawed as well. Indeed, anti-humanists have never successfully eliminated autonomous subjectivity. The explanation lies in anti-humanists' failure to account for the very activity they champion most: critical thought. The course of Foucault's thought illustrates this point. As Sonia Kruks has shown, Foucault moved from rejecting autonomous subjectivity to affirming something very much like it near the end of his life (Kruks 1990:4-5, 184-188). This change occurred when Foucault became an advocate for prisoner and homosexual rights. Such advocacy implied the ability to determine truth as something other than local or culture-relative. That is, Foucault could not simply argue that *for him*, prisoner and homosexual rights were morally right. Instead, he needed to identify arguments that

would – or should – be right for everybody. Consequently, Foucault required a means of identifying non-culturally relative truth. The means he required were reason and critical thought. Accepting this implication, Foucault defined *thought* as “freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem” (1984:388). This definition is “strikingly Cartesian” (Kruks 1990:5), and it certainly acknowledges the possibility of autonomous subjectivity.

In summary, strict humanism does not explain the social structures that shape subjectivity, while strict anti-humanism never completely escapes the autonomous subjectivity it seeks to deny. The limitations of these two extremes suggest the need for a middle ground. Sonia Kruks has argued that such a middle ground requires “a relation of mutual permeability between subjectivity and its surrounding world” (1990:11). Douglas Robinson’s *Who Translates?* attempts to provide an account of such mutual permeability, specifically doing so in terms of translator subjectivity.

## **II. Studies in Translator Subjectivity: Nobodies, Habitus, and Pandemonium**

With its focus on translator subjectivity, Robinson’s book occupies a rather unusual place in modern translation studies. While a few scholars have addressed subjectivity in one way or another, most have done so only tangentially. In 2003, for example, Umberto Eco published a fascinating collection of essays entitled *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*. That collection includes an insightful and amusing essay in which Eco evaluates AltaVista, a machine-translation program. Eco concludes that AltaVista’s performance is analogous to that of a Morse-code operator. Morse-code operators do not need to understand the message they send; they simply transliterate a natural-language message into Morse. Similarly, AltaVista employs “a list of correspondences” or “alleged synonyms” (Eco 2003:15). AltaVista, in other words, performs like a dictionary (a transliterator) rather than an encyclopedia (a translator). This point suggests what kind of knowledge a translator needs to be successful, but it does not propose an account of translator subjectivity. Similarly, other researchers have studied translators’ mental processes, but they have not specifically addressed subjectivity. The *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker and Saldanha 2009), for example, contains articles about translators’ mental processes (‘Decision Making in Translation’; ‘Game Theory and Translation’; ‘Psycholinguistic/Cognitive Approaches’; ‘Think-Aloud Protocols’), but these articles concern how translators solve specific translation problems. Translator subjectivity is secondary to such research.

Among the few scholars who have actually addressed translator subjectivity, the topic has been approached in several ways. The first considers how a translation’s *readers* construct translator subjectivity. Anthony Pym and Lawrence Venuti have addressed this issue, although they reach different conclusions. Pym argues that for readers, the translator is “nobody in particular” (2004:69). The translator is “nobody” because the translated text functions as an “ideal equivalent” (2004:86) of the source text. Venuti recognizes this modern preference for translator nobodies, but, unlike Pym, he opposes the kind of idiomatic translations that make translators invisible to readers. Venuti argues that idiomatic translation creates two negative situations: first, it “reinforces” the perception that translation is a “marginal” (1995:8) or derivative activity; second, it elides “linguistic and cultural difference” (1995:18), providing target readers the “narcissistic” (1995:15) experience of seeing themselves reflected in the translated text. Venuti’s solution to this problem is to make the translator visible through foreignized translations – translations that deliberately maintain source-text features.

Because Venuti and Pym focus on readers' perceptions, the question of translator subjectivity in practice – 'Who translates?' – simply does not arise. A few scholars, however, including Moira Inghilleri and Daniel Simeoni, have addressed this question. Based upon Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of cultural reproduction, these scholars view translators as socially constituted within a "translational habitus" (Inghilleri 2003:244), the habitus being a "set of durable dispositions to act in particular ways" (2003: 245). Translators perpetuate these 'particular ways' – normative translation behaviors – as they produce what others consider acceptable translational discourse. Whether translators can question or change these normative behaviors is the subject of sharp disagreement. Simeoni, for example, promotes a strongly anti-humanist view of translator subjectivity, characterizing translators as "nearly fully subservient" to normative behaviors (1998:12). Inghilleri, in contrast, believes norms both shape and are shaped by practicing translators. This view seems similar to Sonia Kruks' argument for a middle ground between anti-humanism and humanism – the 'mutual permeability' of subjects and social structures. Such permeability is vital in Douglas Robinson's account of subjectivity, although he clearly favors anti-humanists' emphasis on socially constructed subjectivity.

In addressing a middle ground, Robinson posits that subjectivity is scattered (as a sower scatters seed) "across wide psychosocial networks" (2001:143). Individuals, in other words, have many exterior and interior forces pulling them in different directions. Concerning these forces, Robinson cites current cognitive science and neuropsychology to assert that no "executive 'mind'" mediates them (2001:152). In lieu of an executive mind, Robinson borrows philosopher Daniel Dennett's concept of a "pandemonium" (Dennett 1991:304): a place where demons gather. In this context, 'pandemonium' does not refer to a chaotic gathering of evil spirits; rather, it simply means "agents, forces, in the Greek sense of *daimon*" (Robinson 2001:151). As in Freudian psychology, these forces compete to create individual action. Unlike Freudian psychology, however, no one of these forces "*ever* seizes control" (2001:146). Instead, through a "very rapid sifting out of hundreds or even thousands of such forces," vast "numbers of action-potentials are constantly being generated, contrasted, explored, revised, discarded, [and] tried out in practice" (2001:146).

Robinson argues that in terms of translator subjectivity, the proposed 'action-potentials' can be characterized as word-demons. Informed by both exterior and interior forces – e.g. economic demons, ideological demons, personality demons – these word-demons represent responses to a source text. Importantly, these word-demons exist only in the translator's imagination. That is, the translator imagines them while working. "Imagined-source-author-demons," for example, will flow from the translator's "imagining what the source author was trying to say" (2001:164), while "imagined-colleague-demons" will arise as the translator imagines "how another translator in the same language combination . . . would render this or that" (2001:164). Similarly, "imagined-native-speaker-demons" will produce all kinds of sub-demons: "lexicon-demons, syntax-demons, collocation-demons, text-type-demons, relevance-demons, etc." (2001:165). These demons (and many others) bombard the imagination, "each carrying a bit of remembered experience, an interpretation, a suggested rendition, etc., and all of them overlapping, conflicting, fine-tuning each other, suppressing or resisting each other" (2001:165).

This process of demonic bombardment reflects "*multiplicity and functional redundancy*" (2001:169, emphasis in original): *multiplicity* because the demons are seemingly numberless; *functional redundancy* because different demons approach the same problem – e.g. rhetorical

patterns, syntax, lexicon – from different perspectives. Of course, the demons’ sheer numbers mean that many demons “make serious mistakes about the text” (*ibid.*) and will never appear in print. Other competing demons, however, may well be “equally correct” (*ibid.*). Robinson’s point is that in this pandemonium, no particular type of demon ever takes the role of an executive mind: “There is no Satan, no king of the demons, to lay down the law. The demons just continue to compete until a coherent and (hopefully) accurate or otherwise successful translation emerges” (*ibid.*).

While the pandemonium model rejects the notion of an executive mind, Robinson grants that the role of experience – habit – at least approaches humanist models. Specifically, translators become more efficient at demon-sifting as they gain experience. Beginners, for example, may sift many demons without producing “significant emergent patterns” (2001:170). Experienced translators, in contrast, will quickly produce a “‘stock’ or ‘standard’ transfer pattern” (*ibid.*). These quickly produced patterns reflect the power of habitualization. Such habitualization, one might argue, supports the rationalist account of an executive mind. Robinson asserts, however, that habitualization simply makes the process of demon-sifting more efficient: “Pandemonium ensues anew with every new translation. It’s just that [with experienced translators] the pandemonium is a bit more streamlined, a bit less like a bar room brawl” (*ibid.*).

### **III. Robinson and the *Book of Mormon***

Before developing the theory of pandemonium subjectivity, *Who Translates?* critiques what Robinson considers Western translation tradition. In terms of translator subjectivity, that tradition reflects Pym’s argument that readers expect translators to be ‘nobodies’. Robinson finds an analogue for these translator nobodies in spirit channelers or mediums: “The dead writer ‘inspires’ or ‘overshadows’ the translator’s work on his or her text. The translation is a joint project undertaken by the translator’s body and the author’s spirit” (2001:36). One example of a translator-channeler is Ion, the Greek rhapsode whom Socrates characterizes as possessed by Homer’s spirit. Another example comes from the legend of how the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, a translation known as the Septuagint. According to legend, 72 rabbis independently produced 72 identical translations. These identical translations imply divine inspiration or possession.

After discussing Ion and the Septuagint, Robinson devotes eight pages – more than any other channeling story – to the *Book of Mormon*. Along with the Bible, the *Book of Mormon* is considered scripture by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Joseph Smith published the *Book of Mormon* in 1830 (Hardy 2003:x). He described it as a translation of an ancient text engraved on gold plates, which he claimed to have found buried in a New York hillside after following the instructions of an angelic messenger (Hardy 2003:x-xi). The text recounts the story of two Old World groups that emigrated to the Americas, one during the time of the Tower of Babel and the other much later, at approximately 600 B.C.E. Smith said that he translated the engravings using two different kinds of instruments: the Urim and Thummim, which were similar to a pair of spectacles (Hardy 2003:xi; Givens 2002:22-24); and a seer stone (Hardy 2003:xi; Givens 2002:32). The first edition of the *Book of Mormon* contained 588 pages, a number that does not include 116 manuscript pages lost by Smith’s first scribe, Martin Harris, and which Smith did not produce again (Givens 2002:33-34). Smith dictated the text of the first edition between April 1829 and June 1829 (Hardy 2003:xi; Givens 2002:37-39), working at a pace of approximately 3,500 words per day (Givens 2002:37).

Douglas Robinson considers the “creation” of the *Book of Mormon* to be “the most striking story of spirit-channeled translation we have” (2001:55). The *Book of Mormon* represents spirit channeling, Robinson says, because Joseph Smith could not have been translating in any “modern, rationalistic sense” (2001:58). That is, Smith himself did not transform an ancient text into a translated English text. Rather, says Robinson, Smith “was only the human channel of an essentially divine act of translation” (*ibid.*). The seer stone and the Urim and Thummim functioned as a “spiritualistic MT program” (*ibid.*).

Joseph Smith never explained how the translation process worked. Instead, he simply affirmed that he translated “by the gift and power of God” (Roberts 1976:537). As reported by eyewitnesses to the translation process, the few particulars known are as follows: Smith completed the first 116 pages using the gold plates themselves and the Urim and Thummim (Bushman 2005:66). After Martin Harris lost the 116 pages, Smith no longer used the plates for translation. Instead, while the plates lay covered on a table, he used a translation instrument, such as the Urim and Thummim or a seer stone (Ricks 1993:203; Bushman 2005:72). English words appeared on the instrument, and Smith then dictated the words to a scribe (Ricks 1993:203; Bushman 2005:72).

As Robinson tells the story of the *Book of Mormon* translation, Joseph Smith simply read aloud an English text that appeared before him. If so, then Robinson’s conclusion about spirit channeling is right: the translation instruments acted as a spiritual machine-translation program, and Smith simply transcribed words that appeared before him. Without any elaboration, Dirk Delabastita agrees with Robinson’s conclusion, describing Smith’s translation instruments as equivalent to the Babelfish found in *A Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (2009:111). Robinson’s account would find plenty of support among eyewitnesses to Smith’s translation process. After all, eyewitnesses undoubtedly “understood translation as transcription” (Bushman 2005:72). Furthermore, after Martin Harris lost the 116 manuscript pages, Smith seemed to believe that he could reproduce those pages, a belief that would support Robinson’s reading of the story. Under this view, Smith would have had no translator subjectivity at all.

Theo Hermans agrees with Robinson’s understanding of Joseph Smith as a subject-less channeler. Specifically, with reference to both Smith and the seventy-two translators of the Septuagint, Hermans affirms the following:

In each of these texts the translator and the originary speaker speak with the same voice, intent, force and authenticity. As a result, no dissonance or interpretive difference opens up between original and translation, and the translator, as the producer of the secondary discourse, nowhere utters a thought or occupies a subject-position that is not wholly consonant and indeed identical with that of the first speaker (2007:4).

Interestingly, Joseph Smith’s translation process is not Hermans’ principal reason for arguing that Smith had no ‘subject-position’ separate from God. Instead, Hermans makes a kind of legal argument: like international treaties, he says, the *Book of Mormon* functions as an “authenticated” text, and such texts effectively eliminate the translator’s presence (2007:26).

In international law, authentication is the process by which multiple language versions of the same agreement are deemed equally authoritative. Their authority does not derive from some kind of linguistic comparison. Rather, the parties make a declaration affirming that other language versions are “equivalent, and therefore identical in meaning” (Hermans 2007:8).

Different versions may thus be translations in a genetic sense, but they are not translations in a legal sense. These authenticated texts enjoy a perfect equivalence that no translation can achieve. They reflect “convergence of meaning,” “consonance of voice,” and “singularity of intent” (2007:26). Such perfect equivalence eliminates translation. Furthermore, if there are no translations, there can be no translators. Under these conditions, Hermans concludes, “the translator is evacuated entirely” (2007:27).

In arguing that the *Book of Mormon* functions as an authenticated text, Hermans points to a “performative external speech act” that authorized the *Book of Mormon* as a perfect equivalent to its source (2007:26). Specifically, eyewitnesses testified that upon having an opportunity to see and touch the golden plates, they heard a heavenly voice declare that the *Book of Mormon* “was true and the translation [was] accurate” (2007:2). Hermans affirms that this divine authorization rendered the source text “redundant,” effectively “overwriting” and completely replacing the plates (2007:5). Indeed, the *Book of Mormon* literally replaced the plates because an angel “took them under his wing and vanished with them” (2007:3). As a result, the *Book of Mormon* ceased to function as a translation, and Joseph Smith’s translatorial presence was eliminated as well.

Hermans’ argument about authentication eliminating translator presence is persuasive, but authentication only eliminates translator subjectivity after the fact. That is, authentication addresses product, not process. Indeed, concerning Joseph Smith’s translation process, Hermans says very little. He simply notes that Smith used the Urim and Thummim “to read the script on the gold plates, and therefore to translate it” (2007:3). Thus, while Hermans and Douglas Robinson both conclude that Smith lacked translator subjectivity, they do so for very different reasons. Hermans’ legal argument simply does not address the question of ‘Who translates?’, whether the purported translator be Joseph Smith or anyone else. In contrast, Robinson’s principal interest is process. And concerning the *Book of Mormon*, Robinson is convinced that ‘Who translates?’ cannot be Joseph Smith.

Of course, this last point illustrates why Robinson chose the stories of Ion, the Septuagint, and Joseph Smith. For Robinson, all of these stories serve as illustrations for the Western translation model that Robinson rejects: the translator without a self. After reviewing these stories, Robinson abandons them to develop his pandemonium model. This choice is unfortunate in the case of Joseph Smith, for Smith’s story actually offers an opportunity to enrich Robinson’s model.

Before evaluating Joseph Smith’s translator subjectivity, I should first address the issue of whether Smith was translating at all. That is, given that most people would conclude that Smith was either deluded or a fraud, why should translation studies even pay attention to him? One answer is that Smith founded an entire religion based largely upon the concept of translation. In addition to the *Book of Mormon*, Smith published writings purporting to be “inspired ‘translations’” of Moses and Abraham (Bushman 2005:131). He also revised the King James Bible, a revision he labeled as a “translation” (Faulring *et al.* 2004:8). All of this translation activity – however defined – served to create the myths unique to the Mormon worldview, as both Harold Bloom (1992:96-97) and Kathleen Flake have noted (2007:497). A second answer, however, and one illustrated in the work of both Theo Hermans and Douglas Robinson, is that Smith’s story helps us understand translation in arresting ways. For Hermans, the *Book of Mormon* is the most “dramatic” example of authenticated translation extant (2007:5); for Robinson, it is the most “striking” example of spirit channeling (2001:55). Neither of these evaluations requires Smith’s story to be objectively true. Indeed,

in using the story, both Hermans and Robinson bracket Smith's truth claims. I will likewise bracket Smith's truth claims throughout the remainder of this paper, but with one important distinction. Specifically, since I will be addressing Smith's translator subjectivity as he and others report it, I will assume that Smith sincerely believed he was transforming an ancient text into an English text. This assumption allows Smith's story to illustrate how Robinson's pandemonium model might be expanded.

As noted above, Robinson concludes that Joseph Smith is effectively a transcriber, the embodiment of "classic spirit-channeled translation" (2001:58). Two points, however, undermine the conclusion that Smith lacked translator subjectivity. The first point is that the translation did not occur spontaneously or easily; it required work. For example, after Oliver Cowdery had acted as Smith's scribe for some time, Cowdery attempted to translate but failed. Following this failure, Smith reported a revelation in which God took Cowdery to task for expecting translation to proceed easily:

Behold you have not understood, you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought, save it was to ask me; but behold I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right, I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. (1833:20-21)

As Kathleen Flake notes, Cowdery failed to translate because he failed to "study things out"; he seems to have believed that translation simply meant "parroting God's reading" (2007:507). In contrast to Cowdery, Joseph Smith apparently did "study things out." Specifically, the revelation above implies that Smith wrestled to render channeled impressions – the ancient text's content – into idiomatic English. This process would be analogous to that of a translator who understands the concepts of a source text but struggles to express them in the target language. This struggle to "study things out" does not fit well with a classic-channeling model.

A second point weakening the classic-channeling model concerns the numerous editorial changes Smith made in the 1837 (second edition) and 1840 (third edition) printings of the *Book of Mormon*. Granted, these editorial changes were "mostly of a grammatical nature" (Ricks 1993:205). Nevertheless, as Jeffrey R. Holland (1966:46) points out, Smith made changes unrelated to grammar that "could limit, change, or clarify the meaning of [a] passage". Holland identifies 97 such changes in the 1837 edition and 15 more in the 1840 edition (1966:121). At one point, for example, the *Book of Mormon* describes how the "plain and most precious parts of the gospel" (Smith 1830:31) have been withheld from the Gentiles. The text affirms that God will remedy this situation. Specifically, the 1830 edition says that God will not allow the Gentiles to remain in a "state of awful *woundedness*" (Smith 1830:31, emphasis mine). "Woundedness" suggests an injury of some kind. The 1837 edition, however, describes an "awful state of *blindness*" (Smith 1837:34, emphasis mine). This change specifies the Gentiles' injury: they cannot understand the scriptures as they have them.

Smith's editorial changes clearly indicate that he did not consider "only one rendering acceptable" (Ricks 1993:205). In other words, the English text that appeared on the translation instruments presumably represented *Smith's* formulation, not God's. As Kathleen Flake notes, "The appropriate question to God by the prophet-translator was whether his interpretation was correct, not what God's interpretation was" (2007:507). Divine approval of Smith's mental formulation became manifest when the words appeared on the instruments. This process fits well with the pattern described above, where the translator must first 'study it out' and

afterward receive confirmation. Smith obviously believed that this process allowed editorial changes. The classic-channeling model, however, does not appear to allow editorial changes, whether they be merely grammatical or clearly semantic.

#### IV. Hybrid Subjectivity: A Place for Creative Externalization

The foregoing points – Smith ‘studying things out’, Smith making extensive editorial changes – indicate how Smith’s human agency contributed to the final result. Indeed, these points support something much like the pandemonium model. Robinson’s *de facto* categorization of Smith as a channeler without subjectivity is therefore misplaced. Rather than “classic spirit-channelled translation” (2001:58), Smith’s account of producing the *Book of Mormon* represents a synthesis of channeling and pandemonium. Smith may be a channeler, but he is a channeler whose subjectivity remains intact and makes a significant contribution to text creation. Ironically, then, Robinson mislabels Smith when he could have used Smith as a test case for his pandemonium thesis.

The account of Joseph Smith’s translator subjectivity suggests that pandemonium can include articulating ideas that translators perceive as coming from a source exterior to themselves. In research on religious experience, this phenomenon of perceiving creative impulses as coming from outside oneself is known as *externalization*. In a sociological study on revelation, for example, Rodney Stark notes marked similarity between “artistic and religious creation” (1999:293). Mozart and Gershwin, he says, claimed to write music that “simply came to them in completed form” (*ibid.*). Similarly, prophets such as Muhammad and Joseph Smith dictated long texts they identified as divinely revealed (1999:293-294). In all of these cases, the artist or prophet denies that innovative ideas originate with him; he “externalize[s] the source” (1999:294).

In their influential model of personal religious experience, psychologists Daniel Batson and Larry Ventis likewise see externalization as common to creativity in both scientific thought and religious experience. They affirm that creativity involves some kind of mysterious “illumination”:

In terms of our cognitive-structure analysis, we might say that [illumination] does not occur in one’s thoughts but in what one uses to think, the cognitive structures themselves. Perhaps this is the reason that the creative process is not directly accessible to conscious thought and so is perceived to be illogical, mysterious, or unconscious. (1982:78)

Within the model of religious experience, the analogue to this mysterious illumination is a ‘new vision’ in which an outside source reveals ‘truth’ to the recipient: “Perhaps because it involves cognitive transcendence, the new vision often seems to come from a transcendent realm outside oneself. It and one’s place within it feel ‘bestowed’” (84).

Joseph Smith’s translator subjectivity served as a model for how he perceived his role as a revelator. Indeed, Smith did not usually claim that the words of his revelations were God’s. Consider, for example, Smith’s approach to the revelations he eventually published in a collection called the *Book of Commandments*, as described by Bushman:

The editing process uncovered [Joseph Smith’s] anomalous assumptions about the nature of revealed words. He never considered the wording infallible. God’s language stood in an indefinite relationship to the human language coming through the Prophet. . . . Recognizing the pliability of the revealed words, Joseph freely edited the revelations ‘by the Holy Spirit,’ making

emendations with each new edition. He thought of his revelations as imprinted on his mind, not engraved on stone. (2005:175)

Smith's willingness to 'freely' edit the *Book of Commandments* fits well with his approach to the *Book of Mormon*. In both cases, Smith experiences pandemonium as he attempts to render channeled impressions into English. A similar process appears in Smith's revision of the English Bible, known as the Joseph Smith Translation or the JST. Granted, the JST is not a traditional translation. After all, Smith's source text was his English Bible, not an ancient document. He reworded passages, added material, and omitted material. Nevertheless, he called this process 'translation,' apparently considering that "conveying [the Bible] in a new form" qualified as translation (Faulring *et al.* 2004:8).

Concerning the translation process, many JST changes reflect "reading and rereading in search of flawed passages" (Bushman 2005:142). Those changes, Richard Bushman affirms, show Smith "searching his mind for the right words as a regular translator would do" (2005:142). Smith's search for the right words is particularly conspicuous in two JST passages that he unwittingly translated twice: Matthew 26:1-71 and 2 Peter 3:4-6. The translations, which were completed about six months apart, are not identical (Jackson and Jasinski 2003:62). As such, they provide an excellent example of how Smith represents a synthesis of channeling and pandemonium. Consider, for example, Smith's two renderings of Matthew 26:26, which are quoted below after the King James Version of the same passage. Differences between Smith's versions and the King James Version are highlighted in bold.

*King James Version*

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

*Smith No. 1*

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat **of it. And a commandment I give unto you, and this is the commandment which I give unto you, that as you see me do, you shall do likewise in remembrance of** my body. (Jackson and Jasinski 2003:47)

*Smith No. 2*

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, **and brake it, and blessed it, and gave to his** disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is **in remembrance of** my body, **which I gave a ransom for you.** (Jackson and Jasinski 2003:47)

In both of Smith's versions, Jesus clarifies that the bread represents or symbolizes his body. This clarification could be seen as an attempt to discourage the Catholic belief in transubstantiation, which holds that the emblems of the Eucharist actually become Jesus' "body, blood, soul, and divinity" (Catholic Answers 2004). The differences between Smith's versions are especially interesting. The first version contains a commandment to continue the practice of eating bread. The second contains no such commandment, but it does change the order of Jesus' actions (breaking the bread before blessing it) and explains why the disciples need to remember Jesus' body ("a ransom"). The differences make Smith's attitude toward revealed language clear: as in the case of the *Book of Mormon*, he felt free to change wording as pandemonium commenced anew.

Smith's attempt to understand what he perceived as supernatural communications reflects the truism in translation studies that all communication is translation. George Steiner describes this truism as follows:

[T]ranslation is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication, in the emission and reception of each and every mode of meaning, be it in the widest semiotic sense or in more specifically verbal exchanges. To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate. (1992:xii)

By producing the *Book of Mormon*, one might say, Smith learned to hear *channeled* significance. Indeed, as Robinson notes about translators and habitualization, Smith obviously grew more practiced over time. Specifically, he required two months to produce the initial 116 pages lost by Martin Harris (Givens 2002:36-37), but he later produced the first edition's 588 pages in approximately the same amount of time.

## **V. Conclusion**

In the conclusion to *Who Translates?*, Robinson concedes that he may be wrong about the specifics of his disaggregated-agency model: "Maybe discarnate spirits don't control translation. Maybe ideological norms are figments of our imagination. Maybe our cognitive processes are not controlled by what Daniel Dennett calls inner 'demons'" (2001:195). Robinson concludes, however, that even if his model's specifics are wrong, something similar to pandemonium occurs in translation. Furthermore, Robinson argues that disaggregated-agency reflects translators' reality far more accurately than humanist models in which the translating self controls everything.

Robinson's conclusion illustrates how he has tried to seek a middle ground between the irreconcilable extremes of humanism and anti-humanism. Pandemonium subjectivity – disaggregated-agency – acknowledges how interior and exterior forces shape each other and shape subjectivity. Furthermore, as this essay has attempted to show, the story of Joseph Smith's translator subjectivity represents a special case of pandemonium subjectivity. Indeed, Smith's story suggests that the pandemonium model should include attempts to articulate ideas the translator perceives as coming from an exterior source. To use Robinson's nomenclature, this perceived exterior source might be an inspiration demon. Openness to such demons may well be a characteristic of the most creative translators. Unlike Ion or the legendary translators of the Septuagint, the creative translator will likely never be fully satisfied with a particular rendering. Instead, like Joseph Smith, creative translators will enjoy pandemonium again and again as they explore the polyvalence of the texts they engage.

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