

# Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*: The Case of Hebrew Translations

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## *Abstract*

*This article examines 17 translations of Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince* into Hebrew made between 1921 and 2008, and discusses Wilde's attitudes toward social minorities. The various translators' points of departure are clearly visible in their treatment of the original text, and in the degree to which they affected the translation and "conversion" of the text to a defined readership of Jewish children. Thus the translations were imbued with cultural values which reflect the period of each translation, and the linguistic community to which they belonged and within they worked.*

**Keywords:** *Oscar Wilde, *The Happy Prince*, translations into Hebrew, comparative literature, target audience*

## **Introduction**

*The Happy Prince*, published in 1888, is Oscar Wilde's story of a prince who had lived a life of joy and luxury in a large, secluded palace. After his death the prince turned into a statue and was placed on a high hill overlooking the town. It was from atop his new perch that he first learns about the suffering of the townsfolk, the desperation of their poverty, their troubles and their sorrows. A swallow, resting by the prince's statue on his way to warmer climes, becomes his messenger in helping the downtrodden people. On the prince's behest he brings them the ruby that adorns the prince's sword-hilt, the sapphires that are his eyes, and the gold leaves that cover his body. The swallow's delayed departure costs him his life – he freezes to death, and his small body is tossed onto a dust heap. The statue, now blind and denuded of its gold and gems, has lost its luster, and the burgomasters decide to melt it down. However, the broken lead heart will not melt, and is thrown onto the dust heap, alongside the swallow's body. The Happy Prince and the swallow reunite in Heaven, under the wings of the Divine Presence.

Since it was first published, *The Happy Prince* has been translated into many languages, and continues to be one of Wilde's better known and more popular fairy tales (Snider 2006; Gardner 2007). This short, tragic story, seemingly constructed as a children's fairy tale (Ruggaber 2003) contains Wilde's social and religious weltanschauung, and provides clues as to his sexual identity – the contrast between the tall, adult lover and his young and small beloved will reappear in his later works (Ellmann 1987: 253). The story's components have served a wide variety of studies, among them literary and linguistic studies (Edleson 1988; Goodenough 1999), social studies, including a look at Wilde's attitudes toward minorities and homosexuals (Martin 1979; Hitchens 1988; Nelson 1994; Duffy 2001), as well as social science and psychology (Quintus 1991; Thompson 2001; Wood 2002; Berman 2012; Snider 2006).

## **Corpus and Objectives**

Our study looks at 17 translations into Hebrew of *The Happy Prince* and compares them. These translations span nearly nine decades – beginning with four translations made in the 1920 in Europe and the United States. The fifth and subsequent translations were done in Israel, one before statehood, the remaining after statehood. The 17 translations examined are

the work of 15 different translators, as two translators wrote new versions of their translations some two decades after their first work appeared (Haim Tarsi, 1954, 1974 and Gila Uriel, 1954, 1979). In the course of the study we had found two additional translations that had been published with several inaccuracies, and were therefore not included in the research corpus. The first is a translation attributed to Aharon Bar;<sup>1</sup> however, an examination of the versions indicates that Uriel Ofek (henceforth Ofek, 1989) was the translator. The second is a translation attributed to Haim Tarsi, yet an examination revealed that it had been edited, and is not a new version.<sup>2</sup> Another version of the story, a rhymed poem by Nathan Yonathan, was not included in this study due to the broad poetic license taken in this genre.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the large number of translations of *The Happy Prince* into Hebrew, to date, these translations have not been compared. This article will discuss Wilde's attitudes toward social minorities. Such attitudes are expressed twice in the story: first, in the homosexual subtext about the relationship between the prince and the swallow, to which Wilde refers as male (The swallow, reed, and sparrows: Terminology and gender); second, in the description of the Jews in the Ghetto. The focus on the attitude toward minorities will serve our attempt to anchor the linguistic and cultural points of departure of the various translators' relation to the source text, and examine the degree to which the translators' language reflects the period and linguistic community to which they belonged and within which they operated. (See the Appendix for basic biographical information on the translators.) Furthermore, the examination may help us to shed light on the various registers in the new, written Hebrew against the background of the changes in norms of translation in Israel following the change from a purist approach to a more adapted language, more faithful to the source (Toury 1977, 1998, 2000; Zoran 1979; Ben-Ari 1992; Weissbrod 1992; Ben-Shahar 1994, 1998; Even-Zohar 2006). The following translations will be included in this study:

1. Ben-Avram, Haim Shalom. 1921. The Prince and the Swallow. *Tales*. Warsaw: Lapid: 16-37.
2. Halpern (Halperin), Falk. 1923. The Happy King's Son. *Poets' Fairy Tales / Fairy Tales Anthology of Classical Writers: Dehmel Isemann/Wilde/Tolstoi/Daudet/Strindberg*. Warsaw: Barkai: 24-37.<sup>4</sup>
3. Ben-Eliezer (Glembotzky), Moshe. 1924. The Happy King's Son. *Fairy Tales*. Frankfurt [a.M]: Omanut: 63-78.
4. Maximon, Shalom Baer. 1924-1925. The Happy Prince. *Eden: Hebrew Monthly for the Youth*. New York: Bath Sheba Grabelsky, (vol. 5: 114-115; vol. 6: 142-143; vol. 7: 166.)
5. Orland, Yaacov. 1947. The Happy Prince. *A Book of Tales by Oscar Wilde*. Jerusalem: Ever: 83-93.
6. Skulsky, Shlomo. 1949. *The Happy Prince*. Tel Aviv: El Hama'ayan.
7. Tarsi, Haim. 1954. The Happy Prince. *Oscar Wilde: Stories and Fairy Tales*. Tel Aviv:

<sup>1</sup> Eyal S. & Levin, N. (eds). 2000. The Happy Prince. *Just Literature: An Anthology for 7<sup>th</sup> Grade*. Tel Aviv: Kineret: 42-50.

<sup>2</sup> Evyatar, N. (ed). 1976. The Happy Prince. *Fairy Tales, Legends and Folk Tales for 7<sup>th</sup> Grade*. Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hame'uhad: 61-69.

<sup>3</sup> 1976. The Happy Prince. *Poems of Dust and Soul*. Merhavva: Sifriyat Hapo'alim: 96-100.

<sup>4</sup> During a search conducted in *The Bibliography of the Hebrew Book, 1473-1960* in the Jewish National and University Library (Jerusalem), a cataloguer's note was found, stating that this translation had been made from the German. Indeed, the Hebrew title seems to indicate that the version that Halpern held was *Dichtermärchen: Dehmel/Isemann/Strindberg/Wilde/Tolstoi*, Wien: Rikola, 1921, or a translation done a decade earlier, *Die Erzählungen und Märchen/ von Oscar Wilde*, Leipzig: Insel, 1911.

- Sifrey Zahav: 161-171.
8. Uriel, Gila. 1954. The Happy Prince. *Oscar Wilde, Selected Stories*. Tel Aviv: Idit: 17-25.
  9. Yoram, Shlomo. 1959. The Happy Prince. *The Miracle Jugs*. Tel Aviv: Yavne: 113-124.
  10. Elgad (Chachik), Raphael. 1971. The Happy Prince. *The Happy Prince: Fairy Tales and Stories by Oscar Wilde*. Tel Aviv: Yehoshua Chachik: 5-17.
  11. Tarsi, Haim. 1974. The Happy Prince. *Oscar Wilde: Fairy Tale and Stories*. Tel Aviv: Misrad Habitahon, Sifriyat Tarmil: 50-67.
  12. Uriel, Gila. 1979. The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde. In: Uriel, G. (ed) *Ziva: Selected Stories and Poems for the Youth*. Tel Aviv: Reshafim: 37-45.
  13. Bason, Adina. 1984. The Happy Prince. In: Harel, N. (ed) *Friends on the Shelf: Selection from the Global Literature for Children*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved: 155-162.
  14. Bar, Aharon. 1988. *Oscar Wilde – The Happy Prince*. Ben-Shemen: Tamuz-Modan.
  15. Ofek, Uriel. 1989. The Happy Prince. *Oscar Wilde – The Nightingale and the Rose: Fairy Tales and Stories*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved: 7-16.
  16. Ben-Moshe, Ben-Zion. 1999. The Happy Prince. *Oscar Wilde – Fairy Tales*. Kfar Sava: Hanut Hasfarim: 95-103.
  17. Adler, Sigal. 2008. The Happy Prince. *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. Jerusalem: Carmel: 74-83.<sup>5</sup>

### **The swallow, reed, and sparrows: Terminology and gender**

The swallow in Wilde's story is male, and when we first meet him, he is vigorously courting a reed, described as female. The research literature sees this description as hinting both at Wilde's complex and entangled marital relations and his true sexual preferences. When he wrote *The Happy Prince*, Wilde had been married to Constance, mother of their two sons, for four years;<sup>6</sup> in the years to come he expressed his sexual preferences, which took a tragic turn toward the end of his life. The deepening friendship between the prince and the swallow finally led to intimacy, both physical (with the bird kissing the prince on his lips) and metaphysical (their uniting in heaven). Other hints of Wilde's homosexuality appear in the story, and therefore it was important, in this study, to examine the translators' choice to ignore and hide this aspect, or leave things as is.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed [...]. After they [his friends] had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady-love. 'She has no conversation,' he said [...]. 'I admit that she is domestic,' he continued, 'but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also.' 'Will you come away with me?' he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home. 'You have been trifling with me,' he cried. 'I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!' and he flew away.

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<sup>5</sup> I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Sigal Adler, translator, and to publisher Israel Carmel (Carmel Publishing, Jerusalem) for granting me permission to use this translation prior to its publication.

<sup>6</sup> "Never a fluent talker, Constance seemed almost mute beside her husband. Asked how he had happened to fall in love with her, Wilde said, 'She scarcely ever speaks. I am always wondering what her thoughts are like.' In his story, 'The Happy Prince', the swallow falls out of love with a reed for several reasons, one being 'she has no conversation.'" (Ellmann 1987: 240). See, below, the swallow's complaint about his beloved reed's silence.

Later in the story another bird is mentioned: "Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, "What a distinguished stranger!"

Translators into Hebrew faced not only the question of gender but of terminology, as there is disagreement about the identification of the swallow (Korman 2006: 39-40, and notes 25-26). Some of the Hebrew dictionaries, especially the earlier ones (e.g., Krupnik 1939; Gur 1946; Ben-Yehuda 1948-1959) follow Mendele (1867: 426) and translate 'swallow' as *dror* or *snunit*, while later translators (e.g., Medan 1976; Even-Shoshan 1985; Bahat & Mishor 1995; Choueka 1997) distinguish between two kinds of birds – *dror* and *snunit*. All lexicographers agree that *dror* is a synonym for *ankor* (*Inkur* in the Talmud). Aharoni (2001: 213-218) attempts to create some order, combining his studies of zoology and Semitic philology with his extensive knowledge of Jewish sources.<sup>7</sup> According to Aharoni (213), "Only once in the Hebrew Bible is a bird mentioned as male and singular, the *koss*."<sup>8</sup> Later in the discussion he makes a clear distinction between *dror*, *snunit*, and *ankor* – the *dror* "is unique to our country [Israel] and does not migrate from place to place" (214), while the *snunit* "excels at flying, although, according to Proverbs 26: 2, the *dror* flies neither well nor much" (216). As for the *ankor* (*House Sparrow*, *Passer domesticus*) he writes that he found in responsa from the Gaonic period that the *ankor* is "a bird of blackness and of water, and has white spots on its forehead; hence it is called *inkuri* – for being as spotted as a *nikkur*, *pintura* (*Pointure*) [*puncture* in English]..." (215).

Furthermore, in Judaism the question of the purity or impurity of a bird (for purposes of determining whether it is kosher, permitted for consumption by Jews) does not rely on prescribed signs but rather on tradition (Korman 2006: 39). The Hebrew Bible draws a parallel between 'bird' (*zipor*) and *dror* ("Yes, the sparrow [*zipor*] hath found an house, and the swallow [*dror*] a nest for herself" (Psalms 84: 4), "As a bird [*zipor*] by wandering, as a swallow [*dror*] by flying" (Proverbs 26: 2)).<sup>9</sup> Regarding the *dror*, all sources are in agreement that its status is that of a kosher bird (Amar 2004: 69-70). The question of the *snunit's* *kashrut* (i.e., the set of Jewish dietary laws) is problematic and ambiguous, and has been so since the time of the Talmud. The Talmudic sages could not determine whether a "white swallow" (*snunit levana*) is kosher, and later arbiters of the law – especially Sephardic arbiters – held different positions, each according to his personal interpretation (Amar 2004: 75). However, evidence has shown that in recent generations, up to the Holocaust, the *snunit* has been ritually slaughtered in Ashkenazi communities in Germany (Amar 2004: 85-86).

It was the *snunit's* misfortune that some of the commentaries on "The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces" (Proverbs 30: 28), related *smamit* (*spider* in the AV, *gecko* in Modern Hebrew) to *snunit*. Thus, the sage Sa'adia Gaon (882-942) who translated the Hebrew Bible into Arabic, used the Arabic *snunita* for *snunit*, and in the eleventh century, the sage Yona Ibn Janah thought that the *smamit* is "*khtaf*,<sup>10</sup> a type of bird (*zipor*), *snunit*, or *cees*" (Bilik 1976). Identifying the *smamit* with the *snunit* can also be found in some of the more modern Arab dictionaries that translate *cees* as *samamah* or *snunu*<sup>11</sup> (Kujman 1974; Sharoni 1992). Moreover, autobiographies written by Eastern European Jews bear evidence to the fact that the authors related the *snunit* and the *smamit* to the destruction

<sup>7</sup> His father had been the Head of the Yeshiva in Vidzy, Lithuania, and Aharoni had studied there and considered a prodigy (Leshem 2001: 3-6).

<sup>8</sup> "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top." Psalms 102: 7.

<sup>9</sup> All translations are from the AV.

<sup>10</sup> حُطَّافٌ

<sup>11</sup> السمامه, السنونو

of the Temple, and both have remained in infamy. Aharoni (2001: 8), who grew up in his grandmother's home, relates her words:

And she told me about the house-*snunit*, the bird that bore the Mark of Cain on her forehead and neck. What she was talking about were the bird's burnt-brown and fiery red colors on those parts of her body – a memorial and punishment for the fire that the *snunit* brought in her beak to the burning Temple, further kindling the fire so that the embers will not burn out.

Levin (1929: 78-79) further expands:

And just as seriously as she [mother] told us of Nebuchadnezzar and Titus the wicked, she told us of the hateful role played during the Destruction [of the Temple] by the spiders and swallows. These two creatures were on the side of the enemy. When the latter laid siege to the city [Jerusalem], they poured in from all sides, carrying fire in their mouths. The sparrows, however, were on our side, and they came scuttling in, carrying water in their mouths – but they could not prevail against the spiders and the swallows. Regarding the swallows she told us, moreover, that until this day they had the sign of their treachery stamped upon them: under their throats there is a speck of red which commemorates forever their incendiary role... I have often wondered where this strange folk legend came from, and why the hatred of a people has been directed against that innocent and charming bird, the swallow. But I have never been able to trace its origin.<sup>12</sup>

This wide range regarding the birds enables us to discuss both issues: The relationship between the prince and the swallow, and the Jewish aspects of the translations. The considerations given to terminology, kashrut, preference for Biblical names as during the *Haskalah* period (Fischler 1990), and perhaps even folk traditions that had been taught to children in the Diaspora, all contributed to the great variance between the translations. As for the reed – the Hebrew lexicon contains a variety of words to this term (e.g., *kane*, *suf*, *kne suf*, *agmon*). Table 1 presents the various terms for the swallow, the reed and the sparrows in *The Happy Prince* and their gender (all references to a female are bold).

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<sup>12</sup> The roots of this folktale are common to the folklore of many cultures where, because of the fiery-red spot on its neck, the swallow is seen as the creature that brought fire to the world in its beak (Frazer 1930: 14; Nimuendaju 1952: 131; Swainson 1886: 14; Taylor 1954). It is noteworthy that attitudes toward the swallow vary – some folktales endow it with a treacherous character which caused it to be expelled from human company (Plutarch 2002). Elsewhere the swallow is considered a harbinger of good luck, and, symbolizing Christ's materialization, it appears in scenes of the annunciation, nativity, and resurrection (Lifshitz & Lahav 2007).

<b>Wilde, 1888</b>	<b>Swallow (m)</b>	<b>Reed (f)</b>	<b>Sparrows</b>
Ben-Avram, 1921	<i>dror</i>	1. <i>kne-hasuf</i> 2. <i>kane</i>	-----
Halpern, 1923	1. <i>ben-dror</i> 2. <i>ben-zipor</i>	1. <i>kne-suf</i> 2. <i>nizat-hasuf</i>	<i>ankorim</i> <sup>13</sup>
Ben-Eliezer, 1924	1. <i>dror</i> 2. <i>zipor</i>	1. <i>kne hasuf</i> 2. <i>kane</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Maximon, 1924	1. <i>dror</i> 2. <i>zipor-dror</i>	-----	<i>ankorim</i>
Orland, 1947	<i>dror</i>	<i>agmonit-shel-suf</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Skulsky, 1949	<i>snunit</i>	<i>kane</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Tarsi, 1954	<i>snunit</i>	<i>agmon</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Uriel, 1954	<i>snunit</i>	<i>agmon</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Yoram, 1959	<i>snunit</i>	-----	-----
Elgad, 1971	<i>snuni</i>	<i>gveret mimishpahat knei-hasuf</i> <sup>14</sup>	<i>drorim</i>
Tarsi, 1974	<i>snunit</i>	<i>agmon</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Uriel, 1979	<i>snunit</i>	<i>agmon</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Bason, 1984	<i>snunit</i>	<i>kne-suf</i>	<i>drorim</i>
Bar, 1988	<i>snunit</i>	<i>agmon</i>	<i>drorim</i>
Ofek, 1989	<i>snunit</i>	<i>agmon</i>	<i>ankorim</i>
Ben-Moshe, 1999	<i>snuni</i>	<i>agmonit</i>	<i>drorim</i>
Adler, 2008	<i>adon</i> <sup>15</sup> <i>snunit</i>	<i>kanit</i>	<i>drorim</i>

Table 1 The swallow, reed, and sparrows: Terminology and gender

The comparison shows a high correlation between the translation of *swallow* and the country of translation: all translators in Europe and the United States preferred *dror*, whereas all translators in Israel (except Orland) preferred *snunit*. As for grammatical choice of gender, only six translations (about 35%) preserved the swallow's maleness as in Wilde's story, all the others depicted the swallow as female. It should be noted here that in both German translations – as we assume that Halpern was familiar with at least one of them (see above, f.n 4) – the swallow's grammatical gender was preserved, and the translation reads *Der Schwälberich* in the male (as distinguished from the German female *Die Schwalbe*).

Moreover, while we could have expected agreement between the bird species and Hebrew gender and the genderial choice (i.e., female for *snunit* and male for *dror*), some of the translations done in Europe and the United States are inconsistent and lax about it. Thus, for example, Ben-Avram (1921) uses the female for *dror*, and Ben-Eliezer uses female for both terms – *dror* and *zipor*. Maximon (1924), too, introduces both terms for the swallow, but uses them in the male form. Halpern (1923) uses the male *kne-suf* and the female *nizat-hasuf* for the reed.

As noted, in all 13 translations written in Israel (after statehood in 1948) – other than Orland's (1947) – the 'swallow' was translated as *snunit*, but only in three of these was the male gender preserved. To overcome the problem of the word *snunit* being in the female form, Elgad (1971) dropped the Hebrew femail suffix *-it* from the work, and added his own meta-text:

<sup>13</sup> In Hebrew, the suffix *-im* represents the plural, usually for male.

<sup>14</sup> A lady from the reeds' family

<sup>15</sup> Mister

One night a *snunit* flew over the town. Well, actually, it wasn't a *snunit* but rather a *snuni*, if we might say so without grievously transgressing in matters of grammar, because this *snunit* was male. Henceforth, when we say *snuni*, the reader will know what we mean.

Ben-Moshe (1999) follows in Elgad's footsteps without any explanation, while Adler (2008) chooses to add the lexeme *adon* ('Mister') to *snunit*, thus creating the term *adon snunit*. Adler is also unique in that she is the first to use the term *kanit* for 'reed'. It is noteworthy that two translators omitted the reed from the story altogether, and certainly made no mention of the courtship and relationship between the reed and the swallow. Maximon (1924) summarizes the affair in one sentence: "And he remained alone, lonely and forlorn, because his heart was broken with unrequited love." Yoram (1959) just ignores it all.<sup>16</sup>

For some five decades, 'sparrows' were translated as *ankorim*, and the preference for *drorim* came about in 1971. The exceptions are Ofek (1989), and Tarsi and Uriel who even in their later translations (1974 and 1979, respectively) remained faithful to *ankorim*, the choice each of them had made in 1954.

### **Description of the Jews in the Ghetto**

The Third Lateran Council (1179) decreed that Jews should be confined to their own living areas and their occupational possibilities limited. However, the Council did not act upon the idea of relocation (Melson 1992: 83-84). In 1516, the Venetian authorities designated a walled area, surrounded by canals, as the Jewish living space. The area was in the vicinity of the new foundry – *ghetto nouvo*, and the shortened name of the foundry became the name of the Jewish area, eventually turning into the name for all Jewish quarters in Europe (Gutman 1990: 'Ghetto'). In the eighteenth century, Jews began receiving equal rights in Western and Central Europe. This process culminated in the Emancipation of the nineteenth century, part of which was the gradual opening of the ghettos. The Rome ghetto was the last to be opened, in 1870, and its walls came down in 1885 (Lerner 2002). However, prejudices did not disappear with the walls, and the European attitude toward Jews, especially their perception as conniving and dishonest merchants prevailed. A clear indication of this attitude is the twelfth-century expression 'to jew down' – to bargain sharply and beat down in price (Costello 1992: 'jew').

Wilde's writings, too, contain stereotypical references to Jews (for a comprehensive survey of the Jew's image in the Victorian period and in Victorian literature see: Fox 1991; Valman 2001, 2003; Cheyette & Valman 2004: 1-26.) Thus, some view Wilde's depiction of Salome (in the play of the same title) as wanton and corrupt to be an expression of racism. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Wilde points out the fact that the doctor, who injects the blood of three lads to one of his patients, is Jewish.<sup>17</sup> *Dorian Gray* (1992) contains other specific negative references to Jews: "A hideous Jew (55); The horrid old Jew (59); Then we must get her out of the Jew's hands (62); The fat Jew manager... was beaming from ear to ear with an oily, tremulous smile (91); The Jew manager, who was standing at the back of the dress-circle, stamped and swore with rage" (95). However, the research literature does not tend to accuse Wilde of declared anti-Semitism, rather seeing him as a faithful product of his times (Nassaar 2003). Furthermore, while he was in college, Wilde befriended the Jewish Leonard Montefiore, who was the son of Nathaniel Montefiore and the nephew of the well-known Sir Moses (Moshe) Montefiore. At a later date Wilde heeded his mother's advice to improve his

<sup>16</sup> For more on gender vs. grammatical distinctions in translating proverbs see Schapira 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Wilde 1992: 120.

financial position by marriage (Ellmann 1987: 220), and proposed to Charlotte, Leonard's sister. When she rejected his proposal he wrote her, "Charlotte, I am so sorry about your decision. With your money and my brain we could have gone so far" (Ellmann 1987: 221).

In *The Happy Prince* the Jewish issue reappears. This short story (about 3500 words) takes place in an unidentified town northern European country. Despite the paucity of descriptions of the town, Wilde does not skip mentioning the Jewish ghetto and its inhabitants as seen by the bird flying overhead: "He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales." This sentence received various treatments in translation (see Table 2).

<b>Wilde, 1888</b>	<b>Ghetto</b>	<b>...and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales.</b>
Ben-Avram, 1921	-----	-----
Halpern, 1923	the market	...and he saw the merchants negotiating amongst themselves and weighing the gold with copper scales.
Ben-Eliezer, 1924	ghetto, that is, the Jews' street	...and she heard two old Jews discussing matters with each other.
Maximon, 1924	the Jews' street	...and he saw old Jews buying and selling, and earning a living off each other.
Orland, 1947	ghetto	...and saw the old Jews trading with each other and weighing money on scales.
Skulsky, 1949	ghetto	...and she saw the old Jews standing and blessing the moon.
Uriel, 1954, 1979	-----	-----
Tarsi, 1954, 1974	Ghetto	...and there she saw Jews, well stricken in age, bargaining with each other and weighing silver coins on copper scales.
Yoram, 1959	-----	-----
Elgad, 1971	Ghetto	...and he saw the old Jews trading with each other and weighing gold bullions on scales made of copper.
Bason, 1984	Ghetto	...and she saw the old Jews bargaining with each other and weighing coins on copper scales.
Bar, 1988	Ghetto	...and she saw the old Jews bargaining with one another and weighing money on copper scales.
Ofek, 1989	Ghetto	...and she saw the old Jews trading with each other and weighing gold coins on copper scales.
Ben-Moshe	Ghetto	...and he saw old Jews who were negotiating with each other, and weighing money on copper scales.
Adler, 2008	Ghetto	...and he saw elderly Jews bargaining with each other and weighing merchandise on copper scales.

*Table 2 Descriptions of the Jews in the Ghetto*

The findings reveal that this sentence clearly discomfited translators into Hebrew who were not native Israelis. However, quite possibly the reason is not related entirely to the geography of the translation, but also to Zionist negativism toward the Diaspora and the Jews of the Diaspora, and to a certain degree of tolerance of anti-Semitism in world literature (Weissbrod, 2007). In addition, until recently children's literature was especially dominated



by a protective approach, and to this day stories with an anti-Semitic tone are not published in Israel (Weissbrod 2005).<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, some of the translators (Ben-Avram, 1921; Uriel, 1954, 1979; Yoram, 1959) preferred to omit this sentence altogether and those who kept it found ways to cushion it (Table 3, Translations strategies: Description of the Jews in the Ghetto).

Strategy	Wilde, 1888	Ghetto	The old Jews	Bargaining with each other and weighing out money in copper scales.
Avoidance	Ben-Avram 1921	-----	-----	-----
	Uriel 1954, 1979	-----	-----	-----
	Yoram 1959	-----	-----	-----
Evasion	Halpern 1923	the market		negotiating amongst themselves and weighing the gold on copper scales.
	Ben-Eliezer 1924	ghetto, that is, the Jews' street	two old Jews	discussing matters with each other.
	Maximon 1924	the Jews' street	old Jews	buying and selling, and earning a living off each other.
	Skulsky 1949	ghetto	the old Jews	standing in prayer and blessing the moon.
	Adler 2008	ghetto	elderly Jews	bargaining with each other and weighing merchandise on copper scales.
Faithfulness to source	Orland 1947	ghetto	the old Jews	trading with each other and weighing money on scales.
	Tarsi 1954, 1974	ghetto	Jews, well stricken in age	bargaining and weighing for each other silver coins on copper scales.
	Elgad 1971	ghetto	the old Jews	trading with each other and weighing gold bullions on scales made of copper.
	Bason 1984	ghetto	the old Jews	bargaining with each other and weighing coins on copper scales.
	Bar 1988	ghetto	the old Jews	bargaining with one another and weighing coins on copper scales.
	Ofek 1989	ghetto	the old Jews	trading with each other and weighing gold coins on copper scales.
	Ben-Moshe 1999	ghetto	old Jews	negotiating with each other, and weighing money on copper scales.

*Table 3 Translations strategies: Description of the Jews in the Ghetto*

<sup>18</sup> More on coping of Hebrew translations with racist or anti-Semitic references see: Ben-Ari 1992, 2000; Bassok 1995; Gordon 2002; Regev 2003; Muchnik 2005.

Thus, we find three distinct ways in which translators dealt with this sentence (Table 3): (1) Avoidance – total omission; (2) Evasion – faithfulness to the original in the beginning of the sentence and changing the end, and vice versa; (3) Faithfulness to source. The methods of tackling this issue were:

\* Calling the ghetto "the market" or "the Jews' street" (Halpern, 1923; Ben-Eliezer, 1924; Maximon, 1924);

\* Avoiding any reference of the ethnic origin of the ghetto's residents, rather than treating them as a nation or a people: "merchants" (Halpern, 1923);

\* Minimizing the description by referring to two individuals only: "two old Jews" (Ben-Eliezer, 1924);

\* Describing the Jews as just talking, or using words that soften the racist connotation of Wilde's text: "discussing with each other" (Ben-Eliezer, 1924), "buying and selling and earning a living off of each other" (Maximon, 1924); "weighing merchandise on copper scales" (Adler, 2008);

\* "Converting" the text while introducing a Jewish ritual element that did not appear in the original: "The old Jews standing in prayer and blessing the moon" (Skulsky, 1949).

Furthermore, the translators who were careful to preserve the ghetto's original identity as the Jews' residence always used the word *zkenim* to translate the word 'old' when referring to 'old Jews'. Only two translators did not follow suit – Tarsi (in both translations) chooses the Biblical locution *ba bayamim* translated in Table 2 as 'well stricken in age'. Adler preferred the Aramaic *kshishim*, the Hebrew plural of *kashish* – a word used regularly in Modern Hebrew as an unbiased word for 'old' – as opposed to its original meaning 'older than'. Almagor-Ramon says (2007) that in Modern Hebrew "*kashish*, too, is a person of age. However, for some reason the old person, the *zaken*, has lost his glory in our everyday Hebrew, and instead of *zkenim* we began saying *kshishim*." (For an expanded discussion on *zaken* as a taboo word in Israeli Hebrew: See Kantor, 1997)

## Conclusion

In this article we focused on the various ways translators dealt with Wilde's attitude toward social minorities (homosexuals and Jews), examining the translators' work against their historical period, personal background, and the linguistic communities they inhabited and in which they worked. A summary of the findings reveals a high correlation between the type of bird chosen and the historical time of the translation and the place it was done. The *dror* appeared in the five early translations (published in 1921-1947), of which four appeared in Europe or the United States. This choice could be indicative of some of the translators' considerations, such as a preference for Biblical names, issues of *kasrut*, mixed terminology, or folkloric connotations. However, in translations written after Israeli statehood (1948), it is always the *snunit* who is the protagonist. It was also found that in the description of the Jews in the ghetto, just about half of the translations (8 out of 17, 47%) remained faithful to the source, despite the racist slur. This finding can be indicative both of changes that have taken place in translation norms as well as of rejection of the Diaspora and the exclusion of Diaspora Jews from a Zionist affiliation and the image of "the new Jew."

Conversely, only about one third (six translations, 35%) maintained the bird's male grammatical gender, reflecting a lower degree of tolerance when dealing with the homosexual subtext. It should be noted that in two translations, done consecutively in the last decade, the original male gender was kept. This could illustrate openness and social change in public discourse on issues of sexual identity, changes which have also found their way into the world of literature.

This article is part of a broad study in progress which encompasses all 17 Hebrew translations of Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince". The research will continue to examine the linguistic, education, religious, and social aspects of the story, as they are manifested in the work of the various translators who wrote for a specific target audience over the last 90 years – Hebrew-speaking Jewish children.

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## Appendix – Table 4

Table 4 lists basic biographical information about the various translators. Despite all attempts, the life stories of Haim Tarsi, Raphael Elgad (Chachik), and Adina Bason have failed. Full references to the texts listed here appear in the references section. The Sources of the references are:

1. Ben-Avram Haim Shalom: Brener, 1908; Kressel, 1965-1967, vol. I:260-261; Volpovsky, 1972; Govrin, 1978.
2. Halpern (Halperin) Falk: Kressel, 1965-1967, I: 615-616; Ofek, 1984; Dafdaf, 2007.
3. Ben-Eliezer (Glembotzky) Moshe: Kressel, 1965-1967, I: 263-264; Ofek, 1984.
4. Maximon (Maximovsky) Shalom Ber: Brener, 1908; Kressel, 1965-1967, II: 414-415.
5. Skulsky Shlomo: Kressel, 1965-1967, II: 536-537; Ofek, 1984.
6. Orland Yaacov: Kressel, 1965-1967, vol. I:53; Ofek, 1984.
7. Uriel Gila (Stamm Olga): Kressel, 1965-1967, I: 51; Literatura, 2007; Zomet Sfarim, 2007.
8. Yoram (Weinstein) Shlomo: Kressel, 1965-1967, II: 72; Ofek, 1984.
9. Bar Aharon: Felix, 2006.
10. Ofek Uriel: Kressel, 1965-1967, I: 48; Dafdaf, 2007.
11. Ben-Moshe Ben-Zion: Evron, 1990; Cohen-Gross, 2007a.
12. Adler Sigal: Cohen-Gross, 2007b.

Translator	Place of birth	Education	Place translated	Year	Immigrated to Israel in
Ben-Avram Haim Shalom, 1893-1965	Russia	Son of famous Zionist preacher Aba-Reuben Abramson; traditional and national-Zionist education	Warsaw	1921	1936
Halpern (Halperin) Falk, 1896-1945	Byelorussia	Religious ( <i>heder</i> and <i>yeshiva</i> ) and general	Warsaw	1923	1937
Ben-Eliezer (Glembotzky) Moshe, 1882-1944	Lithuania	Religious ( <i>yeshiva</i> ); son of Rabbi Eliezer Glembotzky ( <i>Haparush</i> )	Frankfurt	1924	1925
Maximon (Maximovsky) Shalom Ber, 1881-1933	Ukraine	Descendant of the Baal Shem Tov; personal secretary of Ahad HaAm (founder of "Spiritual Zionism")	New York	1924	-----
Orland Yaacov, 1914-2002	Ukraine	Religious-traditional (Takhkemoni School, Jerusalem) and general	Jerusalem	1947	1921
Skulsky Shlomo, 1912-1982	Ukraine	General; Revisionist-Beitar	Tel Aviv	1949	1941
Tarsi Haim, NA	NA	NA	Tel Aviv	1954, 1974	NA
Uriel Gila (Stamm Olga), 1913-2007	Poland	Secular; Herzlia Hebrew Gymnasium	Tel Aviv	1954, 1979	1923
Yoram (Weinstein) Shlomo, 1893-1968	Ukraine	Religious ( <i>heder</i> ) and general (self-taught)	Tel Aviv	1959	1925
Elgad (Chachik) Raphael, NA	NA	Son of the publisher Joshua Chachik	Tel Aviv	1971	NA
Bason Adina, NA	NA	NA	Tel Aviv	1984	NA
Bar Aharon, 1939-	Kfar Yehoshua, Israel	General	Ben Shemen, Israel	1988	Israeli born
Ofek Uriel, 1926-1987	Givatayim, Israel	General, Herzlia Hebrew Gymnasium	Tel Aviv	1989	Israeli born
Ben-Moshe Ben-Zion, 1944-	Rehovot, Israel	Religious and secular (in Be'ere – a kibbutz)	Kfar Saba, Israel	1999	Israeli born
Adler Sigal, 1961-	Beer Sheba, Israel	General; Herzlia Hebrew Gymnasium	Tel Aviv	2008	Israeli born

Table 4 Biographical Information

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