'Little Wolf' and the Alphabet: Nationality and its Spaces

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Abstract

This article intends to investigate the conjuncture between the birth of an alphabet, the notion of space, the migration of people, the function of belief and religion and the formation of identities. It employs Ulfilas' biblical translation and his missioning attitude to comment on the project of Gothic conversion to Christianity and its attendant controversies, particularly that of Arianism. The article explores how spaces become cultural geographies and imbue geo-histories, specifically in the moment of Biblical translations and the travel of people. It also argues that language and spaces cannot escape the cultural-politics of nationality. At the end, it concludes by commenting of the contemporary relevance of the conjuncture above-mentioned.

Keywords: Arianism, Identity, Spatiality, Gothic, Alphabet

1. Introduction

In 376 CE when Valens was still Roman Emperor, some 90,000 Goths, arrived at the Danube, expecting to cross to make a settlement. They were fleeing from the Huns who had attacked their homesteads and savaged their lands. The Goths sent an ''embassy'' (Heather, 1986, p. 300) to Valens in order to negotiate safe passage to and temporary residence in the lower Danube (Sivan, 1996, p. 375). Warriors, women, and children comprised this

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great migration. They were led by the so-called barbarian heroes, Fritigern and Allavivus, of Thervings and Alatheus and Saphrax, of the Greuthungi (Heather, 2007a, p. 152). They were accompanied by Bishop Ulfilas who travelled with them to enable the Danube crossing (Sivan, 1996, p. 376). The Emperor imposed severe conditions for the crossing and kept the tribesmen divided. He offered better deals to the one and enforced strictures on the other. For the Thervings he gave them Thrace and ferried them over while the Greuthungi, he blocked, forcing them to push their way in. However, all agreed to pledge their allegiances to the Emperor and become supporting militia for his wars. Valens insisted that the Goths hand in their iconic short swords and round shields to the Roman legions before they crossed (Heather, 2007, p. 152). The Roman soldiers did ferry the Goths across on boats, enabled their settlements and supervised their security. But they were also corrupt legions as they extorted bribes for Gothic arms and ammunition, traded slaves for food and safety and were tardy and lax with the more militant Goths. Some Goths settled in the Lower Danube, in Moesia; others, maybe to the west. In this settlement, they got themselves the gothic alphabet, distinct from Greek and Latin, created in the moment of Biblical translation, and formed by Bishop Ulfilas—whose name literally translated in ancient gothic as "Little Wolf". "Little Wolf" was known to be a writer of "alphabets, (Thompson, 1962, p. 798), "a great embassy", (Sivan, 1996, p. 375), a political genius and a reputed scholar. He was anti-Nicene, an Arian, with profoundly dissident views of the Nicene oligarchy of the Roman church. He converted the Goths, and negotiated truce with Emperor Valens (Sivan, 1996, p. 374). The Goths found themselves a nationality, a homeland beyond exile, an identity in the new faith. They were soon to overrun the Roman empire (Thompson, 1962) and build a great kingdom based on notions of "nation-ness" (Anderson, 1983/2006, p. 3).[1]

In the rest of the article, I wish to explore the conjuncture between the birth of a language, the migration of a warring tribe, the role of a religion, and the contemporary relevance of such a complex conjuncture. Indeed, this cultural convergence demands investigation into the function of the Gothic script, the implications of settlerdom, the role of Biblical translations, the development of religious controversies, and the project of nationality. This

exploration argues that such historical conjunctures have contemporary relevance and that the spatiality of both culture and history constitute identities that mark varied nationalities.

2. Some preliminary conceptual frames

2.1 Space vs. Place

At the outset, I invoke some conceptual frames which then could form interpretative structures for further analysis. The important one is the idea of *space*. There are at least four major markers that constitute *space as distinct from place*. They are a) memory (history and time), b) religion (myth and belief), c) language (signs and referents), and d) settlerdom (migration and destiny).*Place* as both literal and symbolic, as idea and experience, is a "palimpsest" (Ashcroft, et al., 1995, p. 392), a "parchment" (p. 392) on which meanings are inscribed (p. 392). An atlas or a map that describes places is not just landscape or geography that fixes or defines a region for its routes, its weather and its natural conditions. In fact, I argue that *places* are a-priori to geography, to an atlas, or even to a simple map. By contrast, *spaces* are named (Carter, 1995, p. 403), and invested with both natural and cultural descriptions. In other words, the conversion of place into space is principally determined by language. This naming, this apparently seamless writing and rewriting of the so-called "parchment", (Ashcroft et al 1995, p. 392) invokes a sense of time. This sense of time is further ordered by memory, a sense of the past and a revisiting of experience that provides meanings for the present. In fact, "time" as a "metaphor of history"—i.e. time standing in for periodisation of people's pasts (Thapar, 1996)—employs language by which knowledge of places as spaces are uncovered. Therefore, spaces are born in the intersection between language and history.

Spaces also offer the prospect of "re-territorialisation" (Huggan, 1995, p. 408). That is, they have constructed boundaries, often mediated by the migration of people. These are further interwoven with arrivals and departures of human communities into specific spaces. Indeed, they are organised by settlerdom, that is both imperial and syncretic (Bhabha, 1994, p. 7), a conquest and an assimilation at once. Therefore, I argue that the underlying "formation" (Williams, 1977, p. 117) eventually structuring the

notion and experience of space is the semiotic of homeland; and homeland-spaces are identitarian, invested with character and subjectivity. In simpler terms, spaces are named places that languages mark as settlements for human communities. Hence, spatiality as the inevitable cultural turn privileges imagined and real geographies (Soja, 1996, p. 1426) over history. It formulates historiographies that include descriptions of place that transform into highly layered cultural geographies. The Gothic settlement in the Lower Danube with heavily armed warriors on horseback, tired women ferried across the Danube, chests and other luggage being lugged over—all depict *spatiality*, otherwise silenced by an exclusive historiography that omitted depictions of space. Thus spatiality itself becomes the way for historicising pasts. These imagings of space produce new geo-histories and cultural geographies.

The writing or representation of spatiality is about culture. Hence "reconfiguring" and "restructuring" spaces in order to represent culture include museumising architecture and spatial planning. (Soja, 2010a, p. 372). Spatial knowledge then becomes cultural history. Indeed, if one studies Gothic church architecture, one cannot escape references to European antiquity. Gothic architecture was a challenging prelude in the Middle Ages to the revolutionary Renaissance and Reformation in Europe. The cathedrals that carried such architecture were identified as grotesque, at best recalling the so-called barbaric nature of the Goths that overran the Roman Empire and established Germanic supremacy all over Europe. For instance, the gargoyles of the churches that sprouted rainwater recalled an infamous Greek legend integral to the spread of Catholic-Christianity there. The gargoyle was an evil creature shaped like a dragon with the head of a lion, sprouting fire, and feeding on human flesh. The people appeased this creature every year. They sent prisoners as human sacrifice. It was a saint who captured the gargoyle, by both prayer and deceit and in the bargain, conquered evil (Benton, 1997)[2]. The figurines at the churches served as warning to evil and a reminder of the faith that redeemed them. The Goths did not belong to the Middle Ages typically; neither was the gargoyle a creature they worshipped. Indeed, then, the Gothic in architecture had nothing to do with the so-called barbarian Goths themselves. Instead they were reminders

of the violent nature of the Goths. The meaning was hence only *symbolic*: it signified the terrorising force that savaged and conquered the Southern Danube, fighting Valens to his ignominious death and once and for all re-writing the fate of the Empire. Thus the Gothic churches today only serve as fear-inspiring, horror-generating symbols of Christian power, an oddity in architectural aesthetics and perhaps the exploratory beginnings of horror-art. Thus Gothic tropology symbolises the terror of alternative Christianity. In this manner, writing spatiality writes history: spatiality historicises the past but problematises more than authenticates it. While history and space intersect, an alternative episteme of reading emerges, wherein spatiality becomes crucial. Consequently, two highly volatile ideological frames emerge, namely the story of belief and the formation of religion. They shape spatiality and determine the historicity of space and the production of nationality. Hence the exploration below.

2.2 Mythos vs logos: The problem of religion

Most thinkers in the contemporary context define belief by differentiating between *mythos and logos* (Armstrong, 2009). Karen Armstrong calls mythos an imaginative way of perceiving the world, producing profound "insights" into the more "elusive" experiences of human destiny. Mythos carries heroic stories of liberation and redemption, absurd sometimes nevertheless projecting and valorising humane and humanist values. By contrast, logos is materialist, with exact explications corresponding "accurately to external realities". Logos sharpens judgement and enables a *rational* way of life. Mythos is the basis of "religious truth", but not of institutionalised religion. Mythos propagates a "transformative way of life" based on unselfishness, generosity and justice for the entire world. Religious truth must not be confused with doctrines as true belief is a "summons to action"[3] not to ritual. Thus as some thinkers argue "the mythos/logos distinction" is not "synonymous" with the religion vs. science debate. What mythos/logos nevertheless "inhabit" are two divergent realms (Richards, 2011, p. 11). As Armstrong shows, "belief" in and "acceptance" of doctrines do not inspire truth, or an emancipatory and generous way of life[3]. It merely makes one a literalist. As the psychologist, Grahams so rightly argues

> When politics focusses on matters of economics, social cohesion, public health, controlling crime and defence against external threat…it is in the service of logos. But when rulers come to believe a mythos is all they require, that, for example, as instruments of God's will their success is guaranteed and logos-based practical expertise irrelevant, the consequences are … usually disastrous. (quoted in Richards, 2011, p. 10)

Grahams further argues that a highly esoteric view of mythos as the ultimate destiny of common purpose causes bigotry, no doubt, but so does an uncritical subordination to logo-centrism. If mythos is over-emphasised, believers would become fundamentalists causing much hatred, violence and pain for all. By contrast, if scientific thought becomes everything and a sense of imagination is lost, an undesirable culture of complaint would produce a reverse bigotry. But the worst danger would be to replace the one with the other. Hence both religious fundamentalism and arid scientificism carry the potential of violence and hatred and do not necessarily guarantee social harmony. Hence the institution that ritualises belief and logicises mythos is the surest recipe for a fascist doctrinaire way of life. Thus the institution of religion is ultimately an entrenchment of dogma, a doctrinaire rule-book that does not enhance either faith or logic. Instead, it hegemonises people into terrorising reprisals and competitive religiosities that wound and destroy the "dialogic aspect" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273) of differing spiritualities. Therefore, the institution of religion, unlike the profundity of religious truth, fosters suspicion, attacks plurality and resents secularism. Thus myth and logic need to temper each other in order to enhance emancipatory faith and restrict fundamentalist religiosities.

Yet, religions consolidate people and create identities that are radical and alternative as well. These are empowered by the mythos of resistance and liberation. Such was the case of the Arian controversy and the mass-conversion of the Goths. The Nicene faith by early 300's after much debate, many purges and severe punishments, had established the Trinitarian view that the Father, Son and the Spirit were simultaneous and co-eternal. This simply

meant that all three were same and to the early Christian, faithful constituted a Godhead that was confusing. That, in many different ways, went against the monotheism of the Hebrew Faith—underpinned by an equally confused polytheism—while subtly adopting the Roman and Greek paganisms of its time. This assimilation caused much animosity among the church Fathers themselves. If the notion of the three-figured Godhead were imported as model for monarchical politics and church hierarchy, it implied disastrous consequences for the common folk. It was the surest gateway to tyrannies, absolutisms and despotisms in the state and the church alike. Since the kingdoms and empires emerging after Christianity sought to re-enact this model, they split the communities three ways. There were the Kings/Queens aligned with Church hierarchies; then there were the nobles and warriors and every clansman and woman; and then came the common folk, the labouring masses, bringing up the rear. Any society, fashioned on this tropology of power recognised the monarch as the divine representative of God on earth, a petty deity whose word, whim and fancy was law; he/she also remained the patriarch/matriarch of the realm he/she ruled. Throw into this mix, the clergy and you have what Gramsci would later call hegemonic "ecclesiastics"—representing Almighty God (Gramsci, 1971, p. 137). The nobility was considered as the second rung, powerful and feudal, either supporting the monarch or destroying the peace in civil strife. These indeed were the petty kings who enforced their power over all, invoking the inheritance (sonship) of God and characterised in the spirit of God demanded loyalty and commitment. But as with all politics, none of this carried through to either liberating possibilities or egalitarian hope. It created new manipulations of power, newer sovereignties of authority and fresh forms of cruelty. Hence, the transformation of the Nicene faith into secular life simply entrenched tyranny. Thus, there emerged a resistance as early as the late 300 C.E to right this wrong and to establish a slightly more humane society. This resistance was both philosophical and material and it was the Arian controversy.

The Arians were a community of religious Christian leaders who argued that the three-figured God-head was logically begotten of only one source, namely God. That is, God was first, the Son begotten as he was, came after and was subordinate to the Father,

while the Spirit was subordinate to all. This notion was born from debates in the church between Platonists and Aristotelians. While the Platonist transposed logos on to the divinity of both God and Son, the Aristotelians found it impossible to accept that transposition. Among them was a rather unusual, "blameless presbyter" called Arius, a pupil of the great dissident critic Lucian of Antioch (Gwatkin, 1908, p. 5). Arius' question was how could God and the Son of man be one. Such an interrogation implied the transcendence and divinity of God and rejected the paganism of the Greco-Roman tradition which conflated God and man/woman into one through the mythos of incarnation. On this count, much acrimonious debates, many banishments, and persecutions were endured. Indeed, Arianism chose to deify Jesus—from man to deity—, in ways that deserve, no doubt, our worship and our every honour but he simply was not equal to God. Instead, he was only next to God, not one with him (Ignat, 2012, p. 126). While the value and validity of such an argument and its spread was large yet short-lived, its secular importation was against the divinising of satrapy, despotism and absolutism. No local monarch could be divinised and excused for tyrannies in the name of God's divine design for the Universe. This dissidence was to perhaps inspire Martin Luther much later to prepare the Renaissance and herald the Enlightenment.

3. Translation, language and nationality

But for Bishop Ulfilas and his Goths, who accepted a mass conversion to Christianity and a more dissident Arian one, it was all political. This cultural politics beckoned the notion of nationality, not nationalism and shaped the trajectory and destiny of the Goths. Nationality, I argue, foregrounds a certain cultural experience, the impress of ethnicity and the spatiality of language, marking as it were, the continuities and disjunctures of cultural rootedness. The national, meaning a specific legal and political relation with the nation-state and a problematic association with religious nationalism, remains different from nationality. Nationality carries a sense of origin and migration simultaneously and combines ethos and ethnos to mark ethnicity. While quite often mixed up between race and racism, ethnicity is not always about

ethnic cleansing and sub-cultural xenophobia (Miller 1986 p.120-139). It is about a peculiar form of belonging. Sometimes, large tribal communities travel to settle down and all they have is their language and the religion they believe in.

The way by which religion and language came together among the Goths was through a conflicted Christianity and a new alphabet. Arianism and the Gothic script constituted ethnicity markers and were mediated by Bible translation. Therefore, Ulfilas' task of sharing biblical knowledge was circumscribed because the Goths had an oral language system but no written alphabet. Biblical translation gave birth to the Gothic alphabet. Thus the scripting of the language and its fullness thereof provided the Goths with a new sense of purpose. They no longer perceived themselves as a pagan or barbarian community. Instead, they created a more civilised selfhood for themselves. They migrated in fear, no doubt, but they were proud they had found a language and a belief that through "russification" (Anderson, 1983/2006, p. 87) could construct an empowering self.   They travelled the Lower Danube. Soon they occupied the frontiers and despite differences, became a dissenting Christian community with ambitions for conquest. They had a language that could bring warring tribes together and challenge the more traditional Nicene faith of Rome. What then is the back-story that exemplifies the new resurgence among the Goths? That is analysed below.

4. Settlerdom: The tale of two bridges

Settler imperialism is a peculiar phenomenon, simply because settlement which forms the basis of settlerdom is often caused by violence. In other words, most settlers that flee a native cultural context suffer an invasion or some specific form of ethnic cleansing. The case of the Jewish communities is revealing in this respect. People depart for safety, survival and sometimes to hope. By contrast, there is another kind of settlement which is often about intrusion, forced forms of imperialising land, a take-over of spaces and an investing of new identities. In current times, there are the cases of Australia, the Americas, Asia and Africa, in which foreign communities arrived in these continents to people the so-called "myth of the empty lands" (McClintock, 1995, p. 17). These

migrations have produced colonialisms, penal colonies and above all dominating insertions. These have also produced settler-aggression and large scale conquests. There is yet another kind, which transports huge populations by force and deliberately insert them in already extant native communities usually for cheap or slave labour. These slave-communities rarely desire to leave their places of origin and feel displaced always. Hence settlerdom is a complex, untidy and traumatising world of contrasts and oppositions. The first kind above is called diasporic, the second, imperial and the third, slave-centric.

Settlerdom however endures the great crisis of the "middle passage" (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 392); for the diasporic, it is about loss and longing; for the imperial, it is about scrambling for resources, the challenge of new climates, the mutiny on ships and the control of their opposition; and for the enslaved, it amounts to loss and fear, anger and despair, a deep sense of being unfree.

Most thinkers interpret the nature of the just prior to the settlement or conquest as always akin to the middle passage but truth be told in the case of imperialism and enslavement, it is distinctly not about loss or longing. It is about hegemony, rule by "consent of the governed"(Gramsci, p. 354), a decisive moment "in the war of position" (Gramsci, p. 311). The discourse of radical transformation often operates as the bedrock of this hegemony. Hence every dynast, despot and ruler claims that they go to war on behalf of the people.

So also, was it with Constantine I in his opposition to his co-emperor and bitter rival, Maxentius in 312 CE. Constantine seemingly had a vision in the sky and a voice tell him to fight under the Standard of the Cross (Odahl, 2004, p. 1). This vision became culturally imperialising as a new God would enable the conquest and consolidation of human power. Constantine, in invoking a persecuted religion and its God, was also to win the support of both the masses and their minorities, consolidating power in the moment of his personal conversion.

The space that marked this so-called shift was a bridge over Tiber which connected the east with the west of what was to become the Holy Roman Empire. The meaning of that crossing was dauntingly

immense as was Caesar's and the Rubicon. Constantine's troops set out with the Christian Standard and won what is now called the "Battle of Mulvian Bridge" (Odhal, 2004, p. 1)[4]. He also became the unchallenged Roman Emperor. Soon Constantine was to consolidate unparalleled power, defeating his rivals or subordinating them, as the first "Most Holy" Roman Emperor (p. 11). With the Edict of Milan (p. 102) declaring complete tolerance, even approval of the Christian faith, Constantine could bring together every possible contrariness in the Europe of his time—and promote a powerful Christian kingdom that would dominate the world, centuries into the future. Constantine himself would die soon but Constantinople would become the space of power as against the Rome of earlier times. In all that, the position of the Milvian Bridge would remain the signifying space when the cultural and political shift from a pagan world to a newly empowering Christian ethos emerged.

During his time, Constantine would build many bridges symbolically and literally while also crushing revolt and uprising across his empire. Among them was the famous Constantine Bridge built or renovated in 328 CE across the Danube which became a signifying space for the Gothic movements all over Europe. In the time of Emperor Valens, the Goths, despite converting to Christianity, continued their so-called barbaric and war-like ways. Valens was constantly at odds with them although he offered peace many times. In 369 CE, Valens crossed the Danube to meet the Goths before the first Gothic war. He made a bridge of boats as Constantine Bridge was broken and dilapidated. There, he advised a truce, won it and permitted the 376 crossing. Valens' peace with the Goths was short-lived and small armed Gothic battalions were to wipe out the Roman Emperor once and for all at Adriana-polis. What remained however was how the Goths, after the crossing, remained Christian despite their pagan ethnicities.

What characterises the bridges themselves are literal and symbolic crossings to new worlds; the Goths arriving at the Danube, Valens approaching them, peace treaty on the rivers and all its attendant constitute a space that memorialises an earlier bridge-crossing namely, the victory at Milvian Bridge. The conversion of

Constantine was not only crucial to the Christianisation of Europe but also implied the absorption of a persecuted religion into ahegemony of authority and privilege. Thus the tale of these two bridges beheld a spatial shift to the grandeur of a conquering Christianity. That Valens was defeated, altered Roman nationality no doubt, but the Goths' belief in a new faith, founded a new one, repeating Constantinople. Christianity, despite Gothic implications, continued occupying spatial power all over Europe.

These perspectives propose inter-connectedness between spaces, languages and nationalities. Biblical translations textualised this experience. The Goths were absorbed into Christian identity; they employed settled foreign spaces and created in the bargain their own new language. In the rest of the article, I wish to demonstrate how this conjuncture unfolded in the periods of the Great Holy Roman Empire.

5. Translation and its cultural politics

Let me pause here to explain the varied nature of translation and the epistemes they underpin. Translation is also a way of seeing the world, an epistemological project that invites transactions not just between languages but also between cultures and societies. For instance, the birth of the "Septuagint" was mired in great legend. The stories of Ptolemy II's letters to Jerusalem scholars, the emergent translations remaining same word for word, this process being divinely ordained—all of which, current scholars argue, are inauthentic as the letters were forged, the translation styles, local-Alexandrine and the divine intervention, merely myth. In fact, Ptolemy's project was secular, aimed at mollifying conquered communities after their conquest. Thus Ptolemy merely made political adjustments with minorities but by accident produced a new way of seeing the world too. (Metzer, 1977, p. 37)

Another rationale for translation is identitarian. As Goethe would argue, in post-enlightenment Europe, translations were transactions between nations. They brought people together and provided value to them. However what Goethe (Goethe in Gearey 1986, p. 227) did not factor in were the huge possibilities of russification where one dominant language would rule over the

others (Anderson 1983/2006 p.87). In the context of imperialism, the dominant master-language totalised into linguistic hegemony, mono-lingualising the society. For instance, between 300 and 600 CE, Latin was the official language, although the Empire spoke many others, including Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic. Hence linguistic hegemony emerged out of the politics of imperialism, despite translations intending to liberate texts from their own protocols, or even nations. Despite contentious differences, Latin shaped the identity of both nation and church congregations simultaneously (Semple, 1966). Consequently, Latinising faith congregations would produce cultural hegemony. Although some scholars like St. Jerome differed in their approaches, that is, he sought to disseminate Biblical knowledge only through the lingua franca of the people. But Emperors only sought to unify people into a singular identity rather than the valorous interest of sharing knowledge (Semple, 1966).

The third reason for translation is ideological. For instance, the first revisions between Luke's Beatitudes and Mathew's created a shift in the signifying system with far-reaching consequences for perhaps the most transformative teaching of Jesus. Often called "Mathew's gloss" (Crossan, 1992, p. 270), the evangelist replaced the meaning of the utterly destitute with marginal penury. Jesus' implication of utter poverty was made more inclusive by Mathew's addition of "in spirit" (NRSV). Mathew possibly was inviting a larger populace to the liberation that was preached, thus, encoding an alternative explanation to the words of Jesus. While these additions were seemingly inclusive, even innocuous, the underlying meanings changed and withdrew the radical punch of the Beatitudes. Hence such additions not only provided a differing consciousness but also altered a meaning-system.

Lastly, translations are also progressive enterprises. Translations habitually release meaning beyond every possible protocol. They mitigate what otherwise remains constrained with the texts of origins (Spivak, 1999, p. 63). For instance, without translation, the Biblical stories would have remained encumbered within Jewish traditions and completely unavailable to different populations of the world. Besides, some translations attempted to set right what seemed clearly false or half-true in the biblical scholarship. These

were perceived as Lollard-dissent but they nevertheless liberated meaning instead of constraining it.

By and large what translation produces, be it religious or secular, is a cultural politics in which ideology, identity, meaning and episteme are brought together. In their conjunction, one finds multiple interpretative tendencies that are both about the text and the context. Hence, I discuss the cultural-politics of Ulfilas' translation below.

6. The Biblical translations and the birth of the alphabet

Nobody knows whether Bishop Ulfilas was always an Arian. In fact, there is much controversy surrounding it. There are at least three different notions of his religious orientation but they remain suspect since they all belonged to already prejudiced biographical epistemes. Some say he was Nicene first and converted to Arianism later; others argue he was never Nicene at all (Sivan, 1996). A third assumes that his conversion was political and was hardy about belief. That might not matter but what does is the nature of *his* Biblical translations, which would bear witness to the meaning-system he employed for the purpose (Pakis, 2008). Ulfilas' knowledge of the languages was well-known. He appeared to be master of Greek and Latin. He suffered Roman persecution; he also mollified pagan Emperors but sought to provide a new way of thinking about Christianity (Pakis, 2008). It was the more logical and a less mythical view of the three-figured Godhead that drew him to the schism which he finally encoded into his translation.

Bishop Ulfilas' translation was clearly Arian and was so until the Gothic translations remained extant. Like other translators of his time, Ulfilas selected from the Bible what he would or would not translate, judging from his experience of his Gothic audience. He did not translate the Book of Kings, claiming that if the Goths became familiar with it, they would become more rebellious and violent (Dowley, 1990). This selection was clearly ideological, some moral coda indeed that monitored recipients about the texts they read. Choice-making is actually editing out what otherwise would be consequential. The ideological interest might be moral but the exclusions never the less exposed conditions of discursivity that

constitute the "assemblage" (Foucault, 1989a) of "governmentality" (Foucault 2007b).

This governmentality initially lived in the Nicene ideology and the Trinitarian Christian view. The Arians and Homoians dissented but only desired the restoration of logical polytheism while not contesting the idea of the Trinity. Clarity seemed essential: there was one supreme God, maker and creator and then there were the lesser Gods, perhaps ancestor-gods, who through the worldly everyday and its vicissitudes, inspired, sacrificed, taught and intuited. From this standpoint, Arians rejected the Nicene-Trinitarian view of the same "substance" (Dunn, 2012) for God and the Son.

Ulfilas inserted three major Homoianist tendencies in his Biblical translation. The first was found in Paul's letter to the Philippians, where the divinity of Jesus is represented as "in the form of God" (NRSV Phil. 2.6). Ulfilas translated verse as "similar to God"(Pakis, 2008). This ideological gloss, though deliberate, fitted well because it humanised Jesus, established the divinity of the Father and maintained the abstractness of the Spirit. This substitution offered the rest of the verse, particularly "who did not regard equality with God" (Phil. 2.6) a completely different meaning; it suggested an "equal to" but not same as (Pakis, 2008) notion for Jesus in relation to God. That belied the "subordinationist view' of Jesus (Dunn, 2012) reconstructing an alternate polytheism, contesting both the Hebraic and Western notions of monotheism.

The second interpolation in Ulfilas' translation related to the Lukan genealogy of Jesus. Two gospel writers carried genealogical patterns for Jesus in an effort to transform memory into history. Mathew provided a diachronic saga, *beginning at the beginning* and ending with Jesus. Luke, by contrast, reversed this trend working synchronically from the present to the past. He placed this genealogy between baptism and temptation to show Jesus is the son of God (NRSV Luke 3:23-380). Some scholars suspect that Luke proposed an ambiguous subordinationism, while Mathew established Jesus as the transcendental hero of history (Pakis, 2008). That apart, in Gothic however, the notion of being in "filial obedience" to Joseph was emphasised (Pakis, 2008). As is pointed out by scholars (Pakis, 2008), the Goths heard both ideas, those of

being "under the charge" of his father, Joseph and "beginning" to be "recognised" as the son of God (p. 296). The final clincher follows:

> …the Gothic translator has exposed a Christological bias… the peculiar rendering underscores the subordinate relationship of Jesus to Joseph and, by genealogical extension, to God. Because the subordination of the Son to the Father in Homoian theology is essentially an abstraction of the biological and cultural relationship between fathers and sons - God the Father begot the Son from His will - we may regard any deliberate emphasis of the obedience, subordination, or submission of Jesus to a father figure as an effort to corroborate this doctrine. (Pakis, 2008, p. 296)

The superiority and anteriority of God the Father, as we have seen, is evident enough in the title Father itself (Pakis, 2008).

In interpreting this text differently, Ulfilas positioned a meaning-system, a signifying authority to the translation providing an alternate episteme which doubtlessly was Arian. Thus epistemological orientation conjoined with ideology to appease local Gothic expectations. That the Goths resonated with polytheism more than Hebraic monotheism, was the rationale underlying the translation; for the Ulfilas' missioning activity was ultimately to serve the emerging Gothic identity as a member and eventually, the ruler of the emergent Germanic empires

The third interpolation is the introduction of the word "son" (sunaus), which in the Gothic version meant both son and "descendant" (p. 299-300). Hence the conflation sought to explain away the lineage as both real and symbolic. For instance, Isaac is the son of Abraham in the literal sense but Adam is the son of God, only symbolically. This distinction emanated from the idea of and relation between descendant and ancestor. Jesus then was son-descendant in the symbolic sense.

The Gothic people accepted such ancestor deification because of its presence in their own animisms. They identified with it. Ulfilas undertook the politics of affiliation, i.e. to structure Biblical

translation in symmetrical conformity with pagan-animistic traditions. To be Christian in the Arian sense is being no less Gothic. Besides, it meant being included within the Roman order. This seemed like co-option but was represented as re-invention. Thus, Ulfilas' strategic re-visioning of the Bible agentialised a new identitarian system for the Gothic society.

For this radical translation, Ulfilas constructed a new alphabet, a derivative of Greek with Runic and Latin letters as well. It was an oral language initially, spoken freely among the Visigoths or the lower Goths. Giving this oral system, a script and a graphology and providing grammar and semantics was a cultural *coup de grace*. The first Gothic Biblical translation occasioned the writing of the Gothic language for the first time and produced a new sensibility, and identity. Consequently, it marked difference; it divested them of the barbarian-tag. They became Christians and resonated with all their people. Soon their settler politics would destroy Valens and germanise Europe, east and south of the Danube.

Ulfilas' Arianism set it all up; the bridges, the "Danube frontier" (Dunn, 2012), the Gothic alphabet and Biblical translations—all combined to construct a nationality that lasted two centuries more. The Goths won victories over both land and knowledge and established their own identity.

7. Conclusion

The above exegesis attempts to demonstrate how nationality is inescapable. The sense of nationality is carried by a sense of identity that real-time spaces were not always located in. Often these spaces were imagined. The Goths, chased from their land, carried both purpose and spirit, only to formulate and reformulate their own selfhoods in their encounter with settler lands or foreign spaces. For this re-construction of identity, they needed language, which Ulfilas created; a marking discourse, which was the Arianised Bible and a place to call homeland, which was the "Danube frontier" (Dunn, 2012, p. 9). These men perceived themselves as exilic because of marauding Huns like them doubtlessly, but different in race and orientation. Goths culturally totalised both for settlements and for cultural and religious

difference. Danube remained their signifying space and the translated Bible continued to construct their cultural discourse.

The limits of such explorations arise from the complexities of settlerdom. The fugitive and exile become the conqueror and invader, intruding upon already native societies. The Goths in settling around the Danube dispelled people from there. They fought and killed, often taking over already occupied lands with impunity. Thus, one noticed a shift from *ethno-genesis*, the nativeness of birth and origin, even of heterogeneous people, like the many Gothic tribes, to *ethno-poesis*, i.e. the making of origins, the creation of new ethnicities (O'Donnell, 2004, p. 207). For the Goths then, it was about producing new ethnicities created by settlement and all that accompanied or determined it. The key irony in this context remained: those that were exiled by the violence of war were to become the perpetrators of violence after settlerdom.

The contemporary incident one recalls is the infamous Boer trek (Voortrekk). The Cape settlers in early 1830's of good Dutch Reformed stock were an unsatisfied lot. They found themselves hemmed in by natives and colonialists alike. Believing in the 'empty lands' myth, they began the long arduous migration into the hinterland, first across the Organje River, through Natal and into the Transvaal. They were merciless no doubt, killing and rampaging the local African tribes, including the Ndebele and the Zulus. However, they were also opposed to the British colonialist; they counted themselves as a struggling race, putting together a new language, called Afrikaans and establishing their identity as Afrikaner. This trek was to end in what is now commonly called the Anglo-Boer War but what it left behind was apartheid South Africa[5].

The similarity between the Voortrekkers and the Goths is striking. The Boers searched after spaces they could call homelands; they crossed rivers and waded through marshlands; they believed in their covenant with God; they created a new language, namely Afrikaans and developed their Afrikaner nationality around it. Even in the post-enlightenment context, the cultural-politics of nationality entailed migration and travel, the quest for homeland

and settlerdom, language and identity and religion and text (Petzold 2007 p.115-31 & Hofmeyr 1988 p.521-35)

Little Wolf and his alphabet then were but exemplar heralds of the contemporary cultural politics of spaces and nationalities

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End Notes

[1] I have drawn this history from a variety of sources, whose references are listed in-text.

[2] Many Gargoyle legends are available but see J. R. Benton's (1997) *Holy Terrors: Gargoyles on Medieval Buildings*.

[3] No page nos. available to this article, See K. Armstrong's Metaphysical mistake.

[4] Odhal uses Mulvian instead of the more Milvian Bridge; I return to the latter after my quote, see Odhal's (2004), *Constantine and the Christian empire.* London/NY: Routledge.

[5] This history is popular but I used the following, See Petzold, Johchen (2007).