



The Writing and Society Research Group
at the University of Western Sydney

presents

The Sydney Symposium on Literary Translation

Friday 1 October – Saturday 2 October 2010

The Hughenden Hotel, 14 Queen Street, Woollahra

In spite of globalisation, English-language publishing remains relatively impermeable to literature in translation. This is a common cause of complaint among translators. In recent years, however, a number of large-scale literary translation projects have been undertaken, new publishers for translations have appeared, some Australian publishers have commissioned translations locally, and the discipline of translation studies has continued to grow and diversify. What then are the issues which define literary translation now?

Program

Friday 1 October

- 9.30 am: Welcome**
- 10.00 am: Keynote lecture**
Esther Allen
'Snakebite: Flaubert and the Imprint of the Real'
- 11.00 am: Morning tea**
- 11.30 am: Panel One**
'The Classic in Translation'
Meredith McKinney, John Minford, Julie Rose
- 1.00 pm: Lunch**
- 2.00 pm: Keynote lecture**
Marcelo Cohen
'New Battles over the Propriety of the Language'
- 3.00 pm: Afternoon tea**
- 3.30 pm: Panel Two**
'Styles of Translation'
Chris Andrews,
Giuseppe Manuel Brescia,
Thon-That Quynh-Du
- 5.00 pm: End of session**

Saturday 2 October

- 9.30 am: Panel Three**
'Ideas of the literary'
Eric Abrahamsen, Brian Nelson,
Simon West
- 11.00 am: Morning tea**
- 11.30 am: Panel Four**
'The poetic in translation'
Peter Boyle, Stuart Cooke,
Simon Patton
- 1.00 pm: Lunch**
- 2.00 pm: Panel Five**
Future Directions in Literary
Translation
Harry Aveling, Olivia Sears
- 3.00 pm: End of symposium**

Participants

Keynote Speakers

Esther Allen

'Snakebite: Flaubert and the Imprint of the Real'

As the birth of photography made visual artists increasingly anxious about realism, Flaubert devised novels that claimed an impersonal, photographic, and near-scientific detachment from their subject matter, loftily asserting the supremacy of their sculptured prose over mere content. His vehement rejection of authorial self-expression and his insistence on the absolute importance of *le mot juste* and the painstaking and immutable construction of sentences altered Western ideas of what literature was, and had significant consequences on prevailing notions of the role and limitations of the translator. A closer look at Flaubert's complex anxieties about writing, as evinced in several of his attempts to do precisely what he felt an author must not do – write himself – shows how problematic some of those consequences for translation have been. And the question arises: can translation itself be considered a form of realism?

Esther Allen is a literary translator and translation scholar. Her translations from Spanish and French include José Manuel Prieto's *Rex*, Felisberto Hernández's *Lands of Memory*, Rodrigo Rey Rosa's *The Good Cripple*, Javier Marías' *Dark Back of Time*, Marie Darrieusecq's *My Phantom Husband* and Linda Lê's *Slander*. She edited the PEN report on literary translation and globalisation *To Be Translated or Not To Be* and contributed the lead essay in that collection. She has directed the work of the PEN Translation Fund since it was founded in 2003. In 2004, with Salman Rushdie and Michael Roberts, she co-founded PEN World Voices: the New York Festival of International Literature. Esther Allen teaches in the Department of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature at Baruch College in New York.

Marcelo Cohen

'New Battles for the Propriety of Language'

For almost two centuries, writers and intellectuals throughout Latin America have been engaged in an intermittent dispute with the centralist character and imperial heritage of Spanish as it is written and spoken on the Iberian peninsula. The conflict between the official paradigm of the language and local or peripheral usages is at once a struggle over the language as property and over linguistic propriety. At some point, every Latin American writer is haunted by the feeling that he or she belongs to a great tradition in a displaced and inappropriate way, and is shifting between that great tradition and a local one. My thesis is that this tension gave rise to the major renovations of the Spanish language produced in various Latin American nations by writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Lezama Lima, García Márquez, and so on down to Lemebel or Aira. Having gone into exile shortly before the coup in Argentina in 1976, I worked in Spain as a translator for almost twenty years. The difficulties translating for a market based on the language of the centre when the mind speaks a peripheral language variety prompted a wide range of political, literary, cultural and identity-related reflections, which were subject to a process of continual metamorphosis. This address aims, by relating concrete experiences, to show how the reflections occasioned by verbal problems, combined with others of a more general nature, led me to the conclusion that the defence of identity is futile and exile a spurious problem.

Marcelo Cohen is an Argentinean writer, translator and critic. His recent books include the novels *Casa de Otro* (*Otro's Place*) and *Donde yo no estaba* (*Where I Was Not*), the collection of stories *La Solucion parcial* (*The Partial Solution*) and *¡Realmente fantástico! y otros ensayos* (*Really Fantastic! and Other Essays*). He has translated more than sixty books into Spanish from English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Catalan, including Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the *Notebooks* of Henry James, Philip Larkin's *High Windows*, Alasdair Gray's *Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, and Alice Munro's *Hateship, Loveship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*. He was the general editor of the Shakespeare por escritores (Shakespeare by writers) project, a translation of the complete dramatic works of Shakespeare by 42 Hispanic writers from eleven different countries (published by Norma). With Graciela Speranza, he edits the journal *Otra Parte*.

Panelists

Panel 1: The Classic in Translation

Meredith McKinney

'Making Classics New'

I will discuss issues concerning the re-translation of classics, with particular reference to four Japanese classics I've translated for Penguin, including *The Pillow Book* (10th century) and *Kokoro* and *Kusamakura* (early 20th century).

After twenty years living and teaching in Japan, Meredith McKinney is now a Visiting Fellow in the Japan Centre at the Australian National University. Her translations for Penguin Classics are *The Pillow Book* (10th century), and *Kokoro* and *Kusamakura* (early 20th century). She has also translated a number of contemporary Japanese novels and short story collections, including Furui Yoshikichi's *Ravine and Other Stories*, which won the 2000 Japan-US Friendship Commission Translation Award. She is currently working on new translations of *Essays in Idleness* (13th century) and *Hojoki* (12th century) for Penguin Classics.

John Minford

'Working with the I Ching'

Some notes on my work-in-progress (since 2000) on a new *I Ching* for Penguin Classics. This ancient text lies at the heart (some would claim the dark heart) of the entire Chinese tradition. Richard Wilhelm's extraordinary version has stood unchallenged for 80 years. Is there any good cause to produce a new one?

John Minford has translated for Penguin Classics the Last Forty Chapters of the novel *The Story of the Stone*, Sunzi's *The Art of War*, and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales*, and is currently engaged on new versions of the *I Ching*, and the *Daodejing*. He is Professor of Chinese at the ANU.

Julie Rose

'Whose Hugo?'

I'll be talking generally about idiom in *Les Misérables*, as well as related features that mark the tension between realism and romanticism in that particular classic.

Julie Rose's translations include Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, André Gorz's *Letter to D.*, Racine's *Phèdre*, many books and essays by Paul Virilio, as well as works by Jacques Rancière, Chantal Thomas, and others. Her most recent translation is André Schwarz-Bart's *The Morning Star*, published recently by Overlook Press in New York. She is based in Sydney.

Panel 2: Styles of Translation

Chris Andrews

'Translation, Style and Nonsense'

What happens to meaning in the translation of literary texts that deliberately flout Paul Grice's 'cooperative principle' and approach the conditions of nonsense and non-text? If Shoshana Blum-Kulka is right to hypothesize that translations tend to be more explicit and redundant than their originals, we might expect to find them also making sense of nonsense, or taking nonsense 'too seriously'. Are there circumstances in which translation does the opposite? Are these shifts (from nonsense to sense and from sense to nonsense) always unfortunate? How are they related to processes of composition? A reading of César Aira's book on Edward Lear suggests some answers to these questions.

Chris Andrews teaches at the University of Western Sydney. He has translated books of fiction by Latin American authors, including Roberto Bolaño's *The Return* (New Directions, 2010) and César Aira's *Ghosts* (New Directions, 2009).

Giuseppe Manuel Brescia

'Varieties in translation: dialects, sociolects and idiolects'

Drawing on my experience as a literary translator, I will address the issues related to translating dialects, sociolects, idiolects and foreign accents. I will start with an overview of the challenges involved, and then focus on the strategies a translator can use in order to effectively overcome these problems and minimise losses in the translation process. I will also briefly point to the relevant theoretical implications, from a practitioner's point of view.

Giuseppe Manuel Brescia was born in Savona, Italy, and studied Translation in Genoa. He is an established literary translator (English to Italian) and holds two-way NAATI accreditation. He runs the blog *Smuggled Words* where he writes about translation. He is an experienced teacher of Italian. He currently lives and works in Brisbane.

Panelists (continued)

Thon-That Quynh-Du

'Reflections on translation, style and the translator's personal taste'

In this presentation I wish to discuss the connections between the translator's personal taste and the style of his or her translation. In my case at least, in the selection stage, the translator is drawn towards certain kinds of authors or works, guided by what can loosely be called personal taste. In turn, the style and substance of the original works, finding deep empathic understanding in the translator, tend to be malleable to re-expression in the new language in a style harmonious with its former self.

Ton-that Quynh-Du was born in in Quang Tri, Vietnam, and grew up in the old imperial city of Hue. In 1972 he received a Colombo Plan scholarship to study in Australia. He has worked as a translator, court interpreter, and as an academic for fourteen years at Deakin University, Monash University and the Australian National University. He now lives in Canberra with his family. His translation of Pham Thi Hoai's novel *Crystal Messenger* won the 2000 Victorian Premier's Award in the literary translation category; his translation of *Sunday Menu*, a collection of short stories by Pham Thi Hoai, won the 2007 ACT Book of The Year Award.

Panel 3: Ideas of the Literary

Eric Abrahamsen

'Harder Nuts to Crack'

Chinese literature has had an undistinguished few decades in terms of literary style, but more interesting voices are beginning to emerge. Translators should be careful what they wish for, however: there are unique challenges in translating unique literary voices.

Eric Abrahamsen is a literary translator and publishing consultant living in Beijing, China. He has translated short stories, essays and novel excerpts from writers such as Yu Hua, Wang Xiaobo and Sheng Keyi, published in literary magazines and newspapers in the US, UK, Australia and Asia. He is currently translating Wang Xiaofang's novel *Notes of a Civil Servant*. He is one of the founders and principal contributors to Paper Republic, a website dedicated to the promotion of Chinese literature abroad, and in this capacity he is a regular presence at book fairs and literary festivals around the world.

Brian Nelson

‘Translation and world literature’

This paper will discuss the role of translation in the academy (but also in the world) with special reference to the future of literary studies and the notion of ‘world literature’.

Brian Nelson is Professor Emeritus of French Studies and Translation Studies at Monash University, President of the Australian Association for Literary Translation (AALITRA), and editor of *The AALITRA Review*. He has published a number of translations and editions of novels by Emile Zola in the Oxford World’s Classics series.

Simon West

‘Some Thoughts on the Place of Translation in Contemporary Australian Poetry’

This paper will discuss my experience of translating Guido Cavalcanti, and make some observations on recent publications of poetry in translation in Australia, in order to consider the following questions: what role does translation have in the literary spaces (to adopt the description of Pascale Casanova) of contemporary Australian poetry? and how is the act of translation being conceived?

Simon West is a poet, translator and Italianist, author of *First Names* (Puncher and Wattmann) and *The Selected Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti* (Troubadour).

Panel 4: The Poetic in Translation

Peter Boyle

‘From poem to poem: translating certain poems by Federico García Lorca, Pierre Reverdy, Eugenio Montejó and José Kozér’

This paper explores what translation can mean to a poet both as a contribution to the service of poetry and as a renewed apprenticeship. In particular, for a poet involved in translation, the desire to create a new poem that works as a fully-alive poem in English is matched by the attempt to uncover what is unique and outside of English-language poetry in the original. In this model of poetic translation the focus is on uncovering a new poetics, a new sense of how a poem might be, even more than transferring surface meaning across languages. I will focus on my translations of Lorca’s ‘Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías’, Reverdy’s ‘Voyage’, Montejó’s ‘Los Árboles’ and ‘El Rezagado’, and Kozér’s Anima ‘Sube a Yoshino, sube’.

Panelists (continued)

Peter Boyle lives in Sydney. His collections of poetry *Coming home from the world*, *The Blue Cloud of Crying*, *What the painter saw in our faces* and *Museum of Space* have received literary awards, including the New South Wales Premier's Award and the South Australian Festival Award. His most recent book *Apocrypha* (2009) won the Queensland Premier's Judith Wright Award for poetry. He is also a translator of French and Spanish poetry, whose translations have appeared in such reviews as *American Poetry Review*, *Jubilat*, *Shearsman* and *HEAT*. In 2004 a collection of his translations *The Trees: Selected Poems 1967 – 2004* by *Eugenio Montejó* was published by Salt (UK). His translation of the book *Anima* by Cuban poet José Kozer is forthcoming with *Shearsman* (UK) in 2011.

Stuart Cooke

'Bursting (Back) to Life: some thoughts about the translation of Aboriginal songpoetry'

Following on from work by Jerome Rothenberg, Paul Carter, Stephen Muecke and others, I want to revise some of the assumptions made by Western literary criticism about the Aboriginal songpoem, and propose a new method for its translation. I focus on songs by two songmen from the Western Kimberley, the late Butcher Joe Nangan and George Dyunggayan. A primary task for a critical discussion of their poetry is not to view the translations as static representations of some kind of ideal performance from a distant time and place, but as performances *in themselves*. Each transcription of a songpoem is a nexus of Aboriginal and colonial knowledges, and our critical lens can be widened or narrowed in order to view these knowledges with greater or lesser complexity. I'll conclude by tentatively proposing an alternative translation of one of Dyunggayan's songpoems.

Stuart Cooke is completing a PhD thesis on Indigenous Australian and Chilean poetics at Macquarie University. His poetry, essays and translations have been published widely in Australia, as well as in the UK and USA. In 2007 his translation of Juan Garrido Salgado's *Once Poemas, Septiembre 1973* was published by Picaro Press.

Simon Patton

'Mute / Mutilation / Mutated / Mutiny'

In this presentation I try to talk about the poetics of translation and the kind of writing proper to it.

Simon Patton's interest in language began when he started learning Armenian from his local milk-bar owner as a teenager. He began studying Chinese in 1981 and now teaches Chinese>English translation, at the University of Queensland. With Tao Naikan, he translated a selection of Yi Sha's poetry for Bloodaxe in 2008. He has also loves trying to write his own poetry, an act of hazardous/dubious self-translation.

Panel 5: Future Directions in Literary Translation

Harry Aveling

‘Translation as Rewriting: Faking the Pumpkin?’

In *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Eugene Nida and Charles Taber suggested that, ‘Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, firstly in terms of meaning, and secondly in terms of style’. Margaret Amman, on the other hand, has written: ‘We can talk of ‘translation’ when a source text (of oral or written nature) has, for a particular purpose, been used as the model for the production of a text in the target culture’ (cited in Basil Hatim’s *Teaching and Researching Translation*). Amman’s radical definition makes no mention of different languages. My paper will examine the problems of ‘co-translation’ and ‘rewriting’ as ways of shaping new poetry from languages that we do not know.

Harry Aveling has a PhD from the National University of Singapore and a DCA from the University of Technology Sydney. He holds an adjunct appointment as Professor of Translation and Interpreting Studies at Monash University. He has translated extensively from Indonesian and Malay, less extensively from French and Medieval Latin, and helped produce texts from Hindi and Vietnamese.

Olivia E. Sears

‘Cyclops Wearing Flip-Flops: Meeting the Translators, Poets, and Readers of the Future’

In the United States, over 30% of the population speaks a language at home other than English, and some 25% of school children are English language learners. For more than ten years, the Center for the Art of Translation’s in-school program Poetry Inside Out has been trying to meet the needs of a linguistically and ethnically diverse student population with a challenging language arts curriculum; in those classrooms we also meet the future’s young poets and translators – many of whom are already interpreters at home – and create future audiences for international literature in translation.

Olivia E. Sears is founder of the Center for the Art of Translation, a San Francisco-based non-profit organisation that promotes world literature through the TWO LINES World Library; the Two Voices reading series; and Poetry Inside Out, which brings poetry translation into schools. She is founding editor of the annual anthology *TWO LINES: World Writing in Translation* and a translator of Italian poetry (most recently Patrizia Cavalli, Antonio Porta, Tiziano Rossi, Ardengo Soffici, and Vittoria Colonna).

The Sydney Symposium on Literary Translation
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