

IWL 2019

Colloquium 11: Translation and World Literature II

Final report

Week 1: 5 July 2019 Friday

2 presentations:

-Maria Dasca Batalla: “The Translations of Camilo José Cela’s *La familia de Pascual Duarte* into Portuguese, Catalan, Galician and Basque” (Respondent: Byron Taylor)

-Viviana Pezullo: “From *Gomorra* to *L’amica geniale*: Neapolitan Dialect on Screen” (Respondent: Vasilije Ivanovic)

In her contribution, Maria Dasca Batalla analyzed the phenomenon of the translation of Spanish literature into Catalan, focusing on the narrative work of the Galician writer Camilo José Cela. She considered this type of translation as a type of vertical translation to the extent that the relationship established between one culture and another during Franco’s dictatorship does not take place under equal conditions but under conditions that imply that one literature (considered to be hegemonic) occupies a dominant position over the other. Given this situation, translating from Spanish to Catalan meant, on the one hand, consolidating the hegemonic position of Spanish literature in the Catalan system, and, on the other, contributing to the canonization of a work that would enjoy considerable success at the beginning of the 1950s and would be the subject of successive editions and translations.

Viviana Pezullo presented her paper “From *Gomorra* to *L’amica geniale*: Neapolitan Dialect on Screen”. She explained how the Neapolitan dialect is rendered on screen, analyzing the audiovisual translation into Italian and English of the TV series *Gomorra La Serie* and *L’amica geniale*. Viviana explained that the concept “dialect” was perceived as a colloquial and uneducated register, a misconception that relegates it to the status of “minor language.” When it comes to the translation of dialect, the generally accepted approach – influenced by the common disdain in which it is held – tends to discourage attempts to translate into a dialect in the target language, preferring instead a translation into the standard language. This attitude to dialect may pose challenges in the translation of many literary works, such as those taken into account, in which dialect plays an essential role. Most of her presentation explored the strategies and limits of the subtitling of the TV series *Gomorra La Serie* and *L’amica geniale* discussing the fruition of multilingual products, which deal with the Neapolitan dialect as well as specific idiolects.

Week 2: 11 July 2019 Thursday

3 presentations:

-Byron Taylor: “*Stimmung, Pravda, Saudade*: Transcending the Untranslatable”
(Respondent: Caragh Barry)

-Joseph Boisvere: “Translation as First Philosophy: An Epistemology of Ethics”
(Respondent: Viviana Pezullo)

-Vasilije Ivanovic: “Vicarious Colonialism – Imagined Confrontations with the Oriental Other in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* and *Harakiri*”. (Respondent: Maria Dasca Batalla)

Taking up both Apter and Cassin’s work on the ‘untranslatable’, Byron Taylor’s presentation tried to ask a more systematic question: can we use words assumed ‘untranslatable’ in one language as our conceptual vehicle in our reading of texts from another? His project used a triangular comparative model: *Stimmung* in German (mood, atmosphere, presence); *pravda* in Russian (the changeable, negotiable version of the truth); and *saudade* in Portuguese (a longing for something or someone distant in space or time) - all terms without direct equivalents in English. Each part of Byron’s thesis opened with an etymological and philological unpacking of each term, and an exposition of its potential theoretical properties before applying it to a text from the next national literature, in a triangular sequence.

Joseph Boisvere’s presentation stated that, by positing ethics as the founding notion of an epistemology of translation, translation itself can begin to take its place as an epistemic field that precedes hermeneutical ideas of its practice and the relationships between agents, identities, and texts in translation can begin to be articulated in a new light. Joseph’s approach was based on linguistic turn, epitomized in the work of Roman Jakobson in the middle of the twentieth century, which pitted against the post-colonial work on translation theory of Gayatri Spivak.

Vasilije Ivanovic’s research focused on a 2010 new version of Fritz Lang’s cinema classic *Metropolis* (1927), which includes a cut footage that been discovered in Argentina two years prior. These new, unseen scenes include a section of the film that takes place at the “Yoshiwara” –a nightclub named after Tokyo’s notorious red-light district of old. Vasilije analyzed its imagery of a technological megacity crossed with Japanese entertainment industry, which has since become a familiar sight in futuristic imaginations of urban life. Through analysis of Lang’s interpellations of the other as a representation of a “Weimar Orientalism”, he demonstrated a way in which cultural production in interbellum

Germany seeks to negotiate its colonialist anxieties, creating imagined encounters with the Oriental that remained unrealized realities –but nonetheless constituted a powerful colonialist moment of confrontation with the other.

Week 3: 18 July 2019 Thursday

- Caragh Barry: “On Rabih Alameddine’s *An Unnecessary Woman* and Andrés Neuman’s *Traveler of the Century*”. (Respondent: Zhao Meiou)
- Ma Huanhuan: “The “Visible” Translator: On the English Translation of *Folding Beijing* from Steiner’s Hermeneutic Motion” (Respondent: Amir Irani-Tehrani)

Following Rebecca Walkowitz’s *Born Translated* book, Caragh Barry states that the contemporary novel is written conscious of the fact that its publication will insert it into a network of world literature, a network that is very aware of the role that translation has in getting those works onto the global market. With the translator more visible than ever in literature, Caragh’s presentation sought to analyze the ways in which translator characters conceive of or exemplify some of the prominent theories on translation, and what kind of conclusions or analyses can be drawn by the reader of these works. By thinking about translation metaphorically, she examined Rabih Alameddine’s *An Unnecessary Woman* and Andrés Neuman’s *Traveler of the Century* to see how both novels’ main characters think about translation, and whether or not their positionality and identity affect their work.

Ma Huanhuan’s presentation discussed the visibility of translator in Ken Liu’s translation from Steiner’s Hermeneutic motion: trust, aggression, incorporation and compensation. As a Chinese writer, Hao Jingfang whose science fiction *Folding Beijing* was translated by Ken Liu, won the 2016 Hugo Award for Best Novelette. This fiction has caused a sensation in recent years. Ma states that the translation can’t be so successful without Ken Liu’s high quality of translation. Her paper provided insights for translators who aspire to bring more excellent Chinese literature to the world, especially to the English-speaking countries.

Week 4: 23 July 2019 Tuesday

-Amir Irani-Tehran: “*Divan*: Platen’s *Ghazal* as an Internal Campaign in the German Wars of Liberation” (Respondent: Ma Huanhuan)

-Zhao Meiou: “Eco-translation of Classical Chinese Poetry and Its Path to World Literature” (Respondent: Caragh Barry)

Amir Irani-Tehran’s research focused on the poet-translator August, Graf von Platen, who translated Persian poetry into German. He would experience an intensely productive phase in 1821, which would eventually lead to the publication of four cycles of poetry—his first—as well as the introduction of the ghazal as a German poetic form. Following Jürgen Link, Amir explained how Platen found the oscillating images and the rhymeseries, the two factors highlighted by the pioneering Hafez translator, Hammer, as well as Goethe, as foreign to the Western tradition, in the Anacreontic tradition from the Byzantine and Alexandrine permutations of it to the post-renaissance Romance examples and Rococo German. His presentation argued that the form of expression that the Hafezian ghazal afforded Platen was of far more existential use for him and went beyond a mere intellectual exercise in World Literature as a response to Goethe’s initial call. He also demonstrated how the Hafezian ghazal provided Platen a productive way to express his deeply conflicted relationship to love, fraught by the dominant views on homosexuality during his time.

Zhao Meiou’s study focused on the English translation of classical Chinese poetry from an ecocritical perspective. It intended to answer these three questions: What kind of ecopoetics does classical Chinese poetry have? How is classical Chinese poetry interpreted ecopoetically in English? What’s the meaning of bringing ecocriticism to translation study? Zhao demonstrated that classical Chinese poetry is at heart a “mountains-and-rivers” (landscape) tradition, an ecopoetic tradition in every sense. From Ezra Pound, Kenneth Rexroth, to David Hinton, many western poet-translators found and appreciated this classical Chinese ecopoetics and translated it into English. Her study examined these translations from the ecocritical perspective.

General comments

Students carefully prepared their presentations and power-points. They got involved in the discussions and their comments created a positive and rich atmosphere. They were careful to fully understand their colleagues' analysis of the material before offering guidance and would provide specific constructive feedback. It has been a great and challenging intellectual experience!

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