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The Institute for
World Literature

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Director's Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the electronic pages of the inaugural issue of the IWL Newsletter. This newsletter represents the latest stage in the unfolding work of the Institute, and is intended to increase the impact and cyber-outreach of our sessions held in earthly space and time.

In these pages, you'll find Susan Bassnett's wonderfully acute and engaging keynote speech from our 2013 session at Harvard, in which she traces the growth of translation studies over the past several decades and the increasing interlinking of the long separate fields of translation studies and comparative literature, brought together with new seriousness in our globalizing era. In addition, we have a very informative interview conducted by our Assistant Director Delia Ungureanu with Ellen Elias-Bursac, a leading independent literary translator and a participant in last summer's session. Also included are reports from two of the sessions Affinity Groups and overall reactions to the session from one of our seminar leaders, Djelal Kadir, and from several of our participants. Taken together, these items give a vivid series of snapshots – illustrated with actual snapshots as well – of the session's work.

Both Susan Bassnett's talk and the interview with Ellen Elias-Bursac

should give much food for thought on key issues of translation today, both in its disciplinary academic form and in the circulation of works from “minor literatures” for a general readership. In order to further the conversation, we invite you to contribute comments and thoughts to our blog post for this issue, under the heading Globalizing Translation; you'll find this posting at our link at:

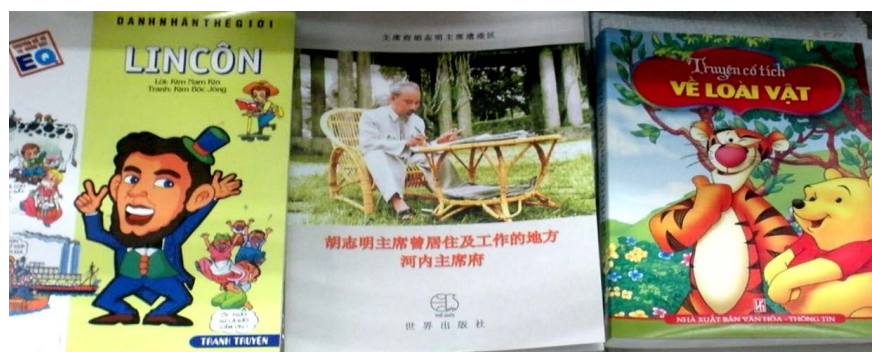
<http://iwl.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k91181&pageid=icb.page651372>

As a bridge between the newsletter's translation items and our blogspot, here is a visual image that can pick up on Ellen Elias-Bursac's point in her interview that we need to think hard today about “the tensions between writing defined as being part of a national literature and writing that is able to uncouple itself from its national context to appeal to readers from many different communities.” What



mix of national and transnational appeal is being made by the following juxtaposition of books, which I encountered not long ago in the gift shop of the Ho Chi Minh Residence in Hanoi?

Here a Chinese-language guide to the Residence is sandwiched in between two seemingly discordant volumes: a cartoon life of Abraham Lincoln and a glossy paperback boasting a leering Tigger and a roly-poly Pooh, taken from the Disney film. The Disneyfication of the globe is not exactly the goal of world literary studies today. Yet a closer attention to this image from the perspective of translation



studies can help us gain a better picture of what was going on in Ho's gift shop.

Far from representing a suppression of local content, the Disney image of Tigger and Pooh is the cover for a collection of Vietnamese folktales; it is simply being used to draw young Vietnamese readers into a collection of their own culture's productions.

The biography of Lincoln is appropriate in its own way, in a more directly political sense. Ho Chi Minh was an admirer of America's struggles for freedom from British colonial domination, and during the Vietnam War, various North Vietnamese commentators compared their north-south conflict to the American Civil War; the American example aided them in resisting French imperialism and then the incursions of America itself. Moreover, the Lincoln bio-comic isn't an American product at all, but instead illustrates the translational circulation of literature throughout East Asia: it is a Vietnamese translation of a Korean life of Lincoln, composed in the form of a Japanese manga. Ho Chi Minh's presence at the center of this grouping is a logical outcome of the globalizing literary processes in which he participated during his lifetime. The central book is a guide for Chinese visitors to the site; its cover shows Ho writing away, not

working indoors in his austere office but sitting in a bamboo chair out in his garden, much as a classical Chinese poet might have done. He might, indeed, have been writing a poem at that very moment. Living on the cusp of a shift from the older East Asian literary world to the new global stage of his revolutionary activism, Ho composed poetry in classical Chinese when he wasn't writing speeches in Vietnamese for local consumption and essays in French for dissemination in the anti-imperial struggle in Europe. Appropriately, this book was published by the Gioi Xuat Ban Xa, the "World Publishing House." Both world literature and translation studies have much to learn from richly complex cultural circulation and transformations such as we see here.

I hope you will enjoy the global connections explored in our newsletter and in person at our sessions. I look forward to your comments on our blog and to seeing you at sessions of the IWL in future.

— David Damrosch



Our 2013 Participants' Opinions



Ellen Elias-Bursac
independent scholar

I am a literary translator and occasionally teach courses in translation studies so the IWL was a clear choice. I was glad to see that there were quite a few professionals such as myself involved. I found the mix of graduate students, post-docs and professionals refreshing. There are not too many settings in which one can spend a month discussing a subject in depth with such a broad range of participants. That the seminars were excellent goes without saying - the professors running them are all stars. But I also was particularly appreciative of the late afternoon panels which included both seminar leaders and professional participants discussing topics such as publishing, job searches, and pedagogy.

Gabriel García Ochoa
PhD Candidate
Monash University

The IWL fostered an open environment that encouraged participants to interact both socially and academically. This allowed me to expand my professional network and enjoy myself at the same time. During dinners and outings I received as much feedback on my research as I did during our seminars. And of course, it goes without saying: the Program's faculty is exceptional. It is a rare honor and a pleasure to be taught by scholars like Professor Damrosch.



Nefise Kahraman
Centre for Comparative Literature,
University of Toronto

The time I spent at the Institute is an incredibly pleasant memory for me. Thanks to the seminars and affinity groups that I attended, I had the opportunity to join a host of discussions on topics such as the World Literature as a discipline and research field or the most recent orientations in literary criticism. At the end of four engaging weeks, I returned home with fresh ideas and questions, which have already found their way into my research. Also, despite Boston's harsh summer, the organizing committee did a great job in creating several occasions for the participants to make the most of their time at Harvard. I wholeheartedly recommend the Institute, especially to those with an eye for collaborative academic engagement.



Shalini R. Jain

PhD Candidate, National University of Singapore

The IWL experience was enriching not only for the thought-provoking discussions we had with professors, critics, students, performers, and artists on topics related to our chosen seminars, but also for the myriad ways these dialogues, arguments, and points of view stimulated reflection on our own

current projects. One of the most rewarding aspects of the program was certainly engaging with the sheer multiplicity and variety of perspectives of a highly erudite international participant group, perspectives that were clearly honed by years of academic scholarship and a uniquely creative bent of mind. And of course, these conversations continued from classes to cafés, from trekking to canoeing on the Charles, from museums to pubs, from concerts to dorms, from

Harvard Square and beyond, as we continue talking, and collaborating, across space and disciplines.

Jiang Zhuyu

PhD Candidate in Comparative Literature
City University of Hong Kong

IWL was a great experience. It made one realize that the world is more than one is familiar with. The convergences we found during IWL among different literatures and cultures render every corner of the world connected and connectable. Panels on topics like publication and the job market were really helpful in clarifying many issues for someone engaged in an academic career.



Héctor Hoyos

Assistant Professor of Latin American Literature and Culture
Stanford University

After just a few years of activities, the Institute for World Literature has become the premier site for the institutional study of literature on a world scale. It combines the vibrancy of a recent intellectual initiative with the experience and acumen of its organizers. My experience there was both productive and thoroughly enjoyable.



Evgeniya Koroleva

Graduate Center, CUNY
PhD candidate in Comparative
Literature

IWL was one of the most intellectually and socially rewarding experiences of my academic life. It provided a stimulating and supportive environment that encouraged new ways of reading and thinking about literature.

Emily Modick

Graduate student, Johannes
Gutenberg-University, Mainz

The IWL 2013 at Harvard University allowed me to connect with colleagues from all over the world, experience seminar discussions among an eclectic group of people (from graduate students to full professors), and sharpen my awareness for the plenitude of approaches towards the idea of world literature. Although the IWL is an academic program, the setting, the time of year, and the enthusiasm about being part of this unique experience made for a relaxed, informal atmosphere. I think back to the truly wonderful friends I made at the IWL just as fondly as to the lectures and seminars.



Gábor Mezei

Assistant research fellow, Hungarian
Academy of Sciences
Eötvös Loránd University

Meeting people from so many different places all interested in the very same thing, was a marvelous experience. For me, IWL was about understanding new perspectives while reshaping my own point of view.





Rachida Yassine, PhD

Professor of English and Cultural Studies
Ibn Zohr University Morocco

Attending the IWL Program was, for me, a very instructive and inspiring experience.

The atmosphere was both academic and convivial. The program was rich and varied, there was a brilliant selection of seminars, lectures, and panels. I learned a lot from the informative and stimulating discussions with scholars and young researchers from nearly all over the world, which gave me a strong impetus to make progress in my research and my other academic pursuits.

Dr. Mu Fangfang

Junior researcher, Foreign Literature Research Institute
Beijing Foreign Studies University

I just started my career as a scholar in English literature. Though my main area is not comparative literature, this experience has come at the perfect moment with great benefits for my future development. Meeting with such a great variety of scholars from around the world yet with similar intellectual interests has been very eye-opening and invigorating to me. Especially the seminars and affinity group experience have stimulated my interest in teaching and studying world literature, and they also made me reflect on my own country's literary traditions. I feel most lucky and encouraged to be in this academic community we have been building with intellectual generosity that I sincerely hope will make the world a little better.



Susan Bassnett: The Figure of the Translator

Professor of Comparative Literature

Warwick University, UK

In the summer 2013 issue of the *Journal for Literary Translators*, *In Other Words*, the editor Daniel Hahn started his editorial with the statement that: “it does feel to me as though things have changed significantly for the literary translation profession in the last few years.” He was, of course, referring to the British context, and things certainly DID need to change in our increasingly monoglot society. The British government under Tony Blair abolished compulsory foreign language learning in English schools in 2004, with predictably dire consequences, and the present coalition government is belatedly trying to repair the damage. (Note, of course, *English* schools: thankfully there is a bilingual policy in Wales and increasing recognition in Scotland also of both Scots and Gaelic.) But I agree with Daniel Hahn – we are seeing more prizes for literary translators, more workshops and book fairs featuring translation, a gradual acknowledgement by reviewers that the name of a translator deserves a mention when a book by a non-English speaking writer is being discussed, more small publishers venturing boldly to publish translations and, probably most significant of all, a growing body of readers who buy translations. Ted Hughes’ version of

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* made the British best seller lists, as did Seamus Heaney’s *Beowulf* in 1997 and 1999 respectively, a totally unexpected phenomenon.

Within academia, interest in translation has been growing apace, with a proliferation of journals, books, conf and taught courses, linked of course to the growth of the relatively new subject, Translation Studies. When I wrote my book, *Translation Studies* in 1980, there was no sense of the field being even in existence. I had to convince Terry Hawkes, editor of the *New Accents* series in which the book appeared to take a risk that there might be some interest in studying translation systematically, and he then had to convince the publishers. Yet that book sells more copies today than any of us ever imagined, and the 4th expanded edition has just been published this year, 2014.

It is worth noting at this juncture that there was considerable resistance in the 1970s to all kinds of new fields especially if they were interdisciplinary: film, media, theatre, women and gender, postcolonial studies were all, like translation studies, regarded by some established disciplines with suspicion. I well remember one Faculty meeting at the University of Warwick where I attempted to introduce an MA course in translation and was publicly



accused of “trying to destroy *genuine* comparative literature”! (my italics).

Why, then is there such interest in translation today? How can we start to explain it? Translation has been around for millennia, moving between languages is by no means a new concept. Let’s imagine a class in 50 years’ time sitting here, looking at the seeming global rise in interest in translation, both literal and metaphorical and think about what they might be seeing. For a start, they would probably note that the movement of peoples around the planet since 1980s was significant. The Berlin Wall came down in 1989, the same year as the Tiananmen Square massacre in China, so after 1989, they would note the collapse of the Soviet bloc, China opening up to the world, apartheid ending in South Africa – all huge political events, to which can be added other factors determining movement, some terrible, such as famine, war, political repression,

some commercial, for example, international trade agreements, such as the expansion of the European Union, along with cheaper international travel and burgeoning tourism to cater for the new markets, for the millions now able to acquire a passport. Nor will our students of the future forget the rise of globalized merchandising and, of course, the advent of the world wide web, so they might conclude that as so many more people came to be moving around, one result was an increase in intercultural experiences, and a stronger impulse to learn more about cultural difference.

Those future students might also note that the world in the twenty-first century was becoming increasingly unstable, with nuclear proliferation, global warming, great changes in the balance of global power, with the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa now sites of major conflicts. Emily Apter's splendid book, *The Translation Zone* deals beautifully with the ambiguities and gaps that opened up in the West after 9/11, gaps exacerbated by linguistic and cultural ignorance.

Major political events have epistemological consequences. We need only think of the American and French Revolutions in relation to the movement we term Romanticism to have a prime example of this, or we can think of Turkey, and the Kemal

Ataturk revolution of the 1920s that propelled the country towards Europe, employing a strategic cultural translation strategy. For whatever happens in the world, there are consequences and connections. As Matthew Arnold put it, in his 1857 Inaugural lecture in Oxford: "Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures."

Arnold was writing in the mid-nineteenth century, when railway lines were only starting to creep across the planet, but he could well have been writing that today. Connections are endlessly made, from the profound to the trivial. Whoever would have imagined that a Korean popular musician with a song and dance routine satirizing conspicuous consumption in a particular social group in Seoul in 2012 would have such become a global phenomenon that I recently watched my 3-year-old grand-daughter at a dance class in Yorkshire performing her own version of Gangnam style!

And our students in 50 years' time will most certainly be making more connections, seeing things we perhaps still cannot see because we are living enmeshed in those webs. But I think one of the strands that will become clear in the future is the disintegration of the artificially

constructed disciplinary boundaries, so often linked to nationalist rhetoric that has led us to work within intellectual enclaves. Terry Eagleton has suggested that the carnage of the First World war can be seen as an explanation for the rise within British universities of the study of English literature: "Eng lit," he says, "rode to power on the back of wartime nationalism," but we could also say that across Europe in the nineteenth century, including within the British context, literary histories were being written to enshrine national perceptions. Writing in 1992, André Lefevere noted that: "Literary histories as they have been written until recently, have had little or no time for translations, since for the literary historian translation had to do with 'language' only, not with literature – another outgrowth of the 'monolingualization' of literary history by Romantic historiographers intent on creating 'national' literatures preferably as uncontaminated as possible from foreign influence."

Lefevere called for translation to be relabelled 'rewriting', of which more anon, and in his book *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* he looks at the multitude of social, economic and political factors that govern the production and reception of translations. What he identified was a notion of translation as 'undesirable' as 'contamination' from outside, translation as immigrant, since establishing the

‘aboriginal’ credentials of a particular literature, certainly within the European context, was directly linked to the creation of a strong national identity. The literary historians he castigates were part of that process, seeking to establish the ‘roots’ of a culture. Interestingly, that organic notion of ‘roots’ that go deep into the earth means that having roots is then seen, metaphorically, as desirable. “Where are you from?” presupposes an answer that will reinforce rootedness: the answer will be that “I come from x or y,” identifying a place, a space from which we can say we originate.

Or not, of course. Personally, I cannot answer “where are you from?” without an explanation, and there are millions like me whose histories are not based on rootedness anywhere but on movement between places. Belonging, and belonging to a nation state, or to a language has acquired enormous significance, even in a world where so many people are in motion. And so many times the desirability of demonstrating belonging has had noxious effects. We can see this process at its crudest in discriminatory language policy, whether it is the banning of Welsh, Gaelic and Irish in British schools until well into the twentieth century, or of Spanish in the USA, as so many Chicano writers have recorded, or of Catalan, Basque and Galician in Franco’s Spain, languages that are

only now reviving and beginning to flourish not only orally but as literary languages, or of Slovene in Italy, as recorded by the extraordinary Slovene writer, 100 years old in 2013, Boris Pahor, whose book *Necropolis* has been described by Claudio Magris as comparable to the work of Primo Levi.

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o has written eloquently about his own search for rootedness in language, about being caught between Gikuyu and English, and about his personal journey from spoken Gikuyo to written English in his school years, then a rejection of English as a political statement, followed by a return to English via translation as he translates his written Gikuyu into English himself.

Ngugi’s essay is very brief but very important, in that he is approaching translation from several different perspectives. Here is a boy who grew up learning the colonial language in order to further his education, a language in which he became able to exercise his prolific talents, a language he then fought against, seeing it as an instrument of oppression, but could then reconcile himself within a new context once it became the language INTO which he could translate his fiction. Translation here offered a means of moving between, of resolving the age-old dilemma inherent in

translating between original and translation, source and target. What our future students may well note is the increased number of writers in the twenty-first century, who also move around in between, some like Ngugi crossing backwards and forwards, some changing language to reinvent themselves in another language altogether, some who are maybe at second or third generation level, reinterpreting and questioning what *is* a mother-tongue, what does it mean to ‘belong’ to a culture, a society, a place?

What our students are unlikely to do, though, is to attribute today’s interest in translation to the emergence of translation studies as a discipline. Academic disciplines do not initiate anything, they follow on: physicists, poets, musicians, etc. are the people who initiate, and then others study what they have created, so our future students will see translation studies as yet another manifestation of the growing interest in translation, not as the cause. And indeed, translation studies today is becoming so diversified that there are now specialists working on aspects of translation so different from one another that they are not immediately mutually comprehensible. So, for example, there is some fascinating research being done into eye-tracking and interpreting, but this is light years away from considerations of the problems of

translating a poem. Diversification of research is, of course, what happens when subjects start to grow, but to date so few people outside translation studies have even heard of the subject, that it can hardly be credited with changing very much. No, our students 50 years down the line will probably see today's interest in translation as a reflection of global uneasiness with ideas about definitions that seeks to pigeon-hole the huge, unstable, swirling mass of questions around belonging, identity, and canonicity.

What our future students may well see, though, is something I think is discernible now, and that is the greater visibility of the translator him/herself, the translator as one of the key agents in the process of intertextual transmission. We have Larry Venuti to thank for highlighting the complex ideological implications of the translator's invisibility, and though we would probably all agree that translators are only just starting to become visible (I think of *Star Trek* and that instant of glittering particles when Captain Kirk and his team materialize somewhere or other on the way to becoming embodied) as suggested by my opening remarks, we do seem to be heading in that direction. What will undoubtedly become clearer in the future is how many writers who are not necessarily translators themselves are using translation or the figure of

the translator in their fiction. Javier Marias' enigmatic protagonist in *Un corazon tan blanco* is an interpreter, and here, not for the first time, can we see a parallel between the task of the translator in unravelling a mystery and that of the detective, searching for clues. Our future students will doubtless also be commenting on the global rise of detective fiction in the late C20th and early C21st, another phenomenon worthy of a lot more discussion. But let's now take a closer look at another novel, aptly entitled *The Translator* by John Crowley.

The novel is set in the Cold War period, at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, when fears of a nuclear war started by the Russians were very real in the United States. The central characters are an exiled Russian poet, Falin, teaching at an American college and an aspiring student writer, Christa. A relationship develops between them, centred on poetry and language: Falin is cut off from his own language, while Christa tries to learn Russian in order to read his poetry but neither feels competent in the other's language. As she struggles to translate his work, he recognizes the impossibility of the task: "A language," he said. "It is a world. My poems are written for the people of a world I have lost. To read them I think you must have lived in my world – my language – since childhood, and grown up in it."

The poet and the student fall in love, but it ends unhappily when he disappears. Years later, Christa, now a well-known writer herself, is invited to Moscow to a celebration of Falin's life (since *glasnost* he has been reinstated *in absentia*) because she has published some of the poems they worked on together: "Translations without originals" she had called them; poems neither his nor hers, or both his and hers; poems written in a language that she couldn't read, and surviving only in a language he couldn't write.

Crowley's novel highlights the paradox at the heart of translation: the intention behind translation is to bring a text not available to those who do not understand the language in which it is written into their world, to make it meaningful, to give it new life in a new language. Yet so much is left behind in any translation, because it simply cannot be fully transferred into another context. Christa cannot ever enter fully into Falin's linguistic universe, nor can he ever realise his Russian creativity in her language. The compromise is a text that is neither his, nor hers, that in some way belongs to both of them while belonging to neither. Christa's only option is to become Falin's rewriter, using the tools she has at her disposal and bringing her own creativity to her reading of his poems.

The Translator invites us to see translation as a collaboration, as a relationship between two people, one of whom wrote a text in one time and place, another who encountered that text and reconfigured it anew somewhere else. It also raises the basic question that has preoccupied poets and critics for generations, that is what exactly is the relationship between so-called original and so-called translation. Octavio Paz sees what he terms translation and creation as “twin processes.” In the one process, the poet chooses words and constructs a poem, which he defines as “a verbal object made of irreplaceable and immovable characters.” The translator takes that object, dismantles the linguistic signs, and then composes anew in his or her own language, producing another poem. Paz uses significant figurative language here: he sees the task of the translator as an act of liberation, for the translator’s task is “freeing the signs into circulation, then returning them to language.” The creativity of poet and translator are parallel activities, the only distinction between them being that the poet starts with a blank sheet of paper while the translator starts with the traces of someone else’s poem already written.

Paz is one of many poets who re-evaluated the importance of translation and presented translators as creative artists in their own right. The Greek poet Nasos Vayenas has

composed “Eight Positions on the Translation of Poetry,” which has been translated by Paschalis Nikolau. Vayenas’ first position takes up the ideas of Walter Benjamin, set forth in his essay “The Task of the Translator,” wherein he formulates the idea, that has since become so influential for translators and translation historians, that translation ensures the survival of a text by granting it an existence in another linguistic world (Benjamin, 1992). Vayenas asserts that in poetry, the word cannot be separated from its meaning, nor can signifier be separated from signified. This means that poetic language is an absolute language, which can be defined as “the *non-translatable language*.” He goes on to gloss this in his second position, where he proposes that translation should not be seen as a process of reconstruction of an original, since reconstruction implies using identical materials, but should rather be seen as a re-creation using new materials, those which are available to the translator in his or her language. In this respect, he is taking up a position almost identical to that of Octavio Paz. His third and fourth positions consist of just two sentences:

3. If translation of poetry is impossible, then the translation of poetry is a genuine art.

4. In translating poetry, the original is the experience, and the process of translation is the poetic act.

His remaining four positions highlight the significance of translation as a source of renewal for a literature, translation as a meticulous way of reading and the essential role played by translation in literary history. In his seventh position, he declares that some of the best Greek poems are translations while some translations are among the best Greek poems. His eighth position makes the crucial point that all literary systems contain translations, and this should be recognized: “A history of literature that excludes translations is an incomplete history. An anthology of poetry that does not include translations is an incomplete anthology.”

I imagine Matthew Arnold entertaining Vayenas to dinner in college at Oxford, (though he studied at Balliol, he became a Fellow at Oriel, for those of you who want nitty-gritty detail) discussing Vayenas’ proposition that translations *must* be included in any history of literature as fundamental texts in the development of that literature, along with Arnold’s insistence on the inevitability of universal connections. They would probably have conversed in Greek, in Ancient Greek, of course, and it is just possible, that as the evening wore on and the claret flowed, that

Arnold might have been persuaded to quote a few apposite lines from “Dover Beach,” his moving poem about the sound of the sea by night, calling to mind the same existential doubts and fears that have troubled men and women through time:

*Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.*

Arnold is renowned as a critic, a poet, and also as a translator. He is also remembered for the bitter exchange of ideas about translating ancient Greek poetry with Francis Newman, his less eminent contemporary.

Newman’s translation of *The Iliad* came out in 1856, with a preface in which he set out his ideas about Homer’s style. Newman argued that Homer was a polymath and that his work was not always “at the same high pitch of poetry.” Homer’s style was “direct, popular, forcible, quaint, flowing garrulous ... similar to the old English ballad.” Arnold was appalled by this. In his “On Translating Homer” (1861) he savaged Newman’s ideas and Newman’s translation. Poor Newman who was, after all, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, published a reply “Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice” in 1861, protesting at Arnold’s accusations, but Arnold

trumped him with “Last Words on Translating Homer” in 1862, where he says that Newman is “perplexed by his knowledge of the philological aspect of Homer’s language, encumbered by his own learning, Mr Newman, I say, misses the poetical aspect ... terrible learning, I cannot help in my turn exclaiming, terrible learning, which discovers so much!”

The debate between the two has been much discussed, but what matters here is that we have two opposing attitudes to translation, not so much domesticating versus foreignizing but rather a debate about readings of Homer. Newman acknowledged Homer’s genius but saw him as so varied stylistically that the solution was to try and find an English poetic metre that would be, like Homer’s “fundamentally musical and popular.” Moreover, given that Homer’s language was archaic, Newman tried to produce an archaic effect, using the popular Victorian device of mock-medieval English (‘thee’ and ‘thou,’ ‘prithee,’ ‘verily,’ ‘I trow,’ etc.). Nonsense, said Arnold, not only does that sort of English sound terrible, it is absurd to try and reproduce how Homer may have been heard by his original audiences, because we can never know that. What matters is to produce a translation that reads as poetry for contemporary readers (contemporary reader with some acquaintance with the classics, of

course) using plain, simple, intelligible and elegant language.

Of course seen with hindsight, the Arnold-Newman debate may appear like a rather inconsequential spat between two pompous Oxford men of letters, because neither sought to experiment with Homer and both were motivated by a spirit of respect and adulation. Nevertheless, where it remains important is that Arnold was objecting to what he saw as the downplaying of Homer as a poet. It is a view taken up in a different way by Ezra Pound, who famously remarked that a great age of literature is always a great age of translations. In his *ABC of Reading* Pound declares that nobody can get an idea of Greek from reading translations, because there simply are no satisfactory translations. In his essay on “Early Translators of Homer” (1920) he proposes translations that could be sung or chanted, and in his typically trenchant manner calls for “more sense and less syntax” from Ancient Greek translators.

I use Pound a lot in my thinking about poetry and translation, for several reasons. He saw translation as a form of criticism, in that he highlighted the importance of reading as a vital first stage in translating anything. Also, he refused to be constrained by ‘faithfulness,’ claiming that what he terms an ‘honest’ translation is the

transparency of that translation which allows the reader to “see through TO the original.” And he was undeterred by criticism of the extent of his scholarly knowledge of the language from which he translated. I often lecture on Pound’s *Cathay* and several times questions from an audience concern the extent to which Pound was ‘unfaithful’ to the Chinese and whether I condone such unfaithfulness. The answer I always give is that a) faithfulness is a criterion that fluctuates according to dominant stylistic norms and readerly expectations and b) what he produced was beautiful as poetry in English. Every year, serving as judge for the Stephen Spender Times poetry in translation prize, we judges are criticized for overstepping what some see as a frontier of unfaithfulness. But what we try to judge is the dialectic between the source poem and the translation, that is, does the poem work in English and how does that poem relate to the poem it purports to be bringing across from its original language? We judge both the product and the process as materialised in that product, though of course we are privileged in that we are able to make a comparison. Readers who have no knowledge of any other language have to depend solely on the translation, so if a poem does not work as a poem, even if it can be seen as a close rendering of the original, then it fails. We have all read translations

of poets who are regarded with awe in their own language but who come across in another language as weak, banal, wordy or unintelligible.

Which is the fault of the translator! Eliot Weinberger has put the case rather well. He quotes Mother Ann Lee of the Shakers who declared that “Every force evolves a form.” The force, or what Weinberger calls the “living matter” of a poem “functions somewhat like DNA, spinning out individual translations which are relatives, not clones, of the original. The relationship between original and translation is parent-child. And there are, inescapably, some translations that are overly attached to their originals, and others that are constantly rebelling.”

This is a good way to think of creative translation: as rebellion of a kind, at its extreme a form of patricide (or matricide) as Haraldo de Campos has playfully suggested about some of his translation work, but most productively, perhaps, as a challenge to established authority. Such a challenge can be highly creative as it takes from the source and recreates, that is, rewrites that source in another context. We could, of course, say that this is what translators have always been trying to do, but we would then have to acknowledge that all too often respect for the source takes such precedence that the translation becomes inevitably a derivative.

The secret skill is to produce a translation that can hold its own as a poem, while at the same time acknowledging in some way the presence of a source elsewhere, no matter how remote that source has become. It is important to note, obviously that if there is no source, then there can be no translation. Though I leave it open to debate as to whether there can be any text that is not, in some way, linked to a source somewhere else...

The contemporary Oxford classicist, Stephen Harrison, is particularly interested in the ways in which poets today are rewriting ancient texts. Bear in mind that in Arnold’s day, all students (who were all men and all obliged to sign up to the 39 Articles of the Church of England) studied Latin and Greek at Oxford, while today very few schools teach both Latin and Greek, which has meant that Classics has had to reinvent itself for the twenty-first century. There are wonderful courses around these days on the body in the Ancient World, on sexuality, art and architecture, social history – my son even studied Egyptian Middle Kingdom novels, which I never even knew existed! Stephen Harrison is interested in exploring how contemporary poets use ancient material, particularly since he too has noted the proliferation of writing and performance in many languages that draws upon classical Greek and

Roman texts. Our students of the future will also have views on why so many European writers and artists have turned back to their ancient foundation texts in this postcolonial age. In a recent essay entitled “The Return of the Classics” Harrison notes how writers such as Ted Hughes and Joseph Brodsky returned to Ovid, how the figure of Electra recurs in Sylvia Plath’s poetry, how Homer and Virgil recur in the work of contemporary Irish poets, and he adds that since 1960 some of the “most striking engagement with classical texts has come from writers outside the ‘traditional’ English metropolitan cultural world, writers like Derek Walcott or Wole Soyinka or Margaret Atwood.” Harrison puts the case like this:

Contemporary poets now turn to ancient material not so much in a spirit of homage as in a spirit of appropriation. The modern ‘deconsecration’ of great poetic figures such as Homer and Virgil, in the sense of removing their cultural centrality as canonical and immutable texts generally known and read in their original languages, allows contemporary poets such as Derek Walcott or Seamus Heaney to create new classic works using classical material and a sophisticated intertextual approach, just as Virgil and Horace created great Latin works through the substantial and subtle reuse of Greek models in a Roman context. Poets can now safely appropriate what they need for their own work and their own contemporary concerns.

Lefevre would have used the term ‘rewriting’ instead of appropriating, but the idea is the same. What Harrison also points out is that Virgil and Horace were effectively translators in their own time, for Roman classical literature, like classical sculpture, ‘translated’ Greek models. Harrison refers to “substantial and subtle reuse,” a good way of describing what happens in translation, given that complete equivalence is, as the poet and translator James Holmes put it some 40 odd years ago, ‘perverse.’ Holmes made that comment in an essay where he drew attention to the impossibility of there being correspondence between the work of individual translators. He proposed giving 5 people a text, then giving each of those 5 texts to 5 more people and asking them to back-translate. His point was that you always have textual variations with such an experiment, so there can be no single ‘correct’ version.

Today we would say, well, yes, that’s obvious, isn’t it? Each individual brings their own individual reading to any text, a reading produced by their education, gender, language, nationality, religion, life experience generally. Let us digress for a moment to demonstrate this: Bob Cobbing, the late British performance poet created a piece called “ABC in Sound” where, as he puts it in a note, much of the creative work must be done by the reader. The section on the letter M consists of 35 names, starting with McAllister and ending with McTaggart. As one of my students

said, “this is just a list of names from a phone directory,” and of course it could be, though likely to have been a Scottish one given that every name is Mc something. But working in class with this text, no two students have the same reaction because someone will have an association with a particular name, or someone will have no associations at all but be struck by the spelling Mc in some cases and Mac in others, while if there is a Scot in the class they will correct pronunciation (McGrath is pronounced McGraw, for example) and so what seems to be a banal list transforms into a creative event simply on account of the diversity of readings brought to the text by different individuals.

Could such a text be translated into another language or is it totally culture-specific? The only way would be to play with the concept of a list of names that might mean different things to different people, in short, the only way to translate a text like this is to follow the strategy proposed by the German translation experts, Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss (*skopos* or objective theory) and to rewrite the text in accordance with its function. Though initially *skopos* theory was seen as relevant to non-literary texts (legal documents, instruction manuals, menus, etc.) that distinction breaks down once we stop considering literary translators as somehow more ‘bound’ to the structures and language of the original.

A good example of *skopos* applied to literary texts is Adriana Hunter's translation of Frederic Beighbeder's novel satirizing consumerism in the world of French yuppies, *99 francs*. What Hunter did was to transpose all the Parisian references to trendy shops, restaurants, designer labels and so forth to London. She also adjusted the title of the novel, which appeared in English as *£9.99*. This is an extreme, but clever example of domestication in translation, though since everywhere there is connection and cultural change cannot be halted, the coming of the Euro meant the disappearance of the franc, hence the novel had to be retitled *14.99 euros*.

But there is another way to think about the world-wide interest in translation. It is just possible that in 50 years' time the question will not be why was there so much interest in translation in the late C20th/early C21st, but rather: why was translation relegated to a secondary position in the literary hierarchy for so long, given its fundamental importance in the transmission of texts across cultures? Our future students may well see what is happening now not as some extraordinary new development, but simply as a return to a position where translation is recognised as a significant textual activity, recognition that has come with the challenges to canonization and to the advent of transnational literary

historiography. Umberto Eco, a few years ago, wrote about "the new Middle Ages," a provocative idea that challenged the dominance of positivism and progressivism that has held sway since the Enlightenment. And indeed if we so much as glance at the Middle Ages, we find a constant flow of texts in and out of different languages, as writers borrowed forms, ideas, themes: Dante made his guide through the afterlife the Roman poet Virgil, Shakespeare took ideas for plays and poems from a whole range of source. So when Harrison talks about the new spirit of 'deconsecration' that writers today bring to their engagement with earlier writers, he is describing a healthy shift of perception that acknowledges that texts are not 'immutable' but infinitely varied.

The Irish poet Michael Longley describes himself as "Homer-haunted for 50 years." One of Longley's best-known poems is a sonnet, entitled "Ceasefire." This poem was published in the *Irish Times* the day after the declaration of a ceasefire by the IRA on 31st August 1994. Writing about the effect of this poem, Longley quotes another Irish poet, Nuala Ni Dhombnaill who said that the effect of this poem "rippled through the community, both North and South."

Yet Longley's poem is not overtly about contemporary Ireland at all, it is a translation of part of Book 24 of

Homer's *Iliad*, most notably the moment when old King Priam of Troy goes to the Greek camp, to ask Achilles, the Greek hero who has slain his son Hector in battle, for the body of the dead man. Achilles is moved by the old man, and agrees to the request and the two men eat together, in a temporary cessation of hostilities before Priam sets off back to Troy with Hector's body. Longley explains that he had been reading Book 24 and had the idea of compressing the 200 hundred lines of the scene into a short lyric poem as "my minuscule contribution to the peace process." He recounts how he played around with the sequence of events, in particular moving the moment when Priam kisses Achilles' hand, which happens at the start of their meeting in Homer, to the end of his poem. With that shift, he "inadvertently created a rhyming couplet," and then wrote the twelve lines that precede it. It is that couplet which still has the power to shock and which, read in the context of an end to the decades of violence in Northern Ireland acquired such power. The words are voiced by King Priam himself: "I get down on my knees and do what must be done./And kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son."

Longley is quite clear that the source of his inspiration was the ancient Greek poet: "It was Homer who spoke to us across the millennia.

I was only his mouthpiece.” Homer also spoke to the Australian writer, David Malouf, whose novel, *Ransom* is also a retelling of Book 24, only now in another context, that of the global war on terror. Malouf relates in a postscript to the novel how he first encountered the story of the Trojan War when he was a boy, in the 1940s, in another time of war, the war in the Pacific. It is significant that these two contemporary writers chose to return to Homer as a way of writing about armed conflict in their own time.

A purist would say that neither Malouf nor Longley have produced faithful translations. Malouf has written a novel, added a new character, the peasant who accompanied Priam to the Greek camp and who is not in Homer at all, while Longley has reduced over 200 lines to 14 and reversed the order of events. I would disagree with that purist: a translation is always a rewriting of a text, and in their very different ways both Longley and Malouf touch on what underpins Homer’s epic poem, the pity and the terror of war. The task of the translator, as Walter Benjamin proposed in his seminal essay on the task of the translator, is to give new life to a work in another time and place. Translation is so much more than the transfer of a text written in one language in to another, it is about recreation, regeneration, renewal, and this is

why translation has always played such a key role in literary history.

We cannot conceive of World Literature without translation. In her book, Bella Brodzki argues that translation “underwrites all cultural transactions, from the most benign to the most venal” and that just as we can no longer ignore the significance of gender, so we should not ignore the significance of translation. I add my voice to hers and propose that:

Translation is important because it compels us to reflect on what we understand by ‘origin’ and ‘originality.’

Translation is important because it reminds us of the infinite multiplicity of possible readings.

Translation is important because it forces us to think dialectically, because there is *always* a relationship between source and target readings and rewritings.

Translation is important because it reminds us of the transitory, shifting nature of aesthetic criteria, as what is deemed great in one age is so often dismissed in another.

Translation is important because it exposes the absurdity of the idea of a definitive interpretation of any text. (Borges comes to

mind here, commenting wryly that the idea of the definitive text belongs only to religion or exhaustion!)

Translation is important because it runs through discourses of intertextuality, global influence flows, transnational movement, canon formation and canon deconstruction, difference and *différance*.

Let me end with a little story. Revisiting Cape Cod after a dozen or so years, I was amazed to see warning signs about great white sharks on the Atlantic beaches near Truro where I had swum happily with my children. I asked for an explanation and was told that seals had moved in (and indeed, I saw several) possibly as a result of global warming, hence the sharks followed and there had been a couple of attacks, thankfully nothing fatal. That brought to mind something a marine scientist had once told me, which is that if we knew how many dangers lurked beneath the surface of the sea, we would probably never set foot in the water again. We choose to under-rate the dangers, choose to ignore what we cannot immediately see.

Which is what we have done with translation. We have under-rated the skills required to translate, underestimated the power of translation in intercultural communication, disregarded the vital role of the translator in bringing before us texts

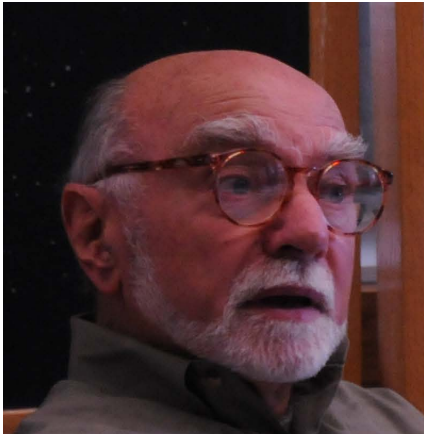
that we could not otherwise read at all, and, perhaps most significantly, overlooked the way in which translations have been a shaping force in literary and cultural history all over the world.

I would like to see the equivalent of those Cape Cod shark warning signs attached to all literature programmes, in World Literature, Comparative Literature and individual literatures and my warning sign would read: **Be aware! Here be translations.**

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From a World Literature Seminar Conductor



Conducting an IWL seminar is much like conducting an orchestra whose players come from many different musical traditions and whose talents as performers are trained to play in as many different musical idioms and on very diverse musical instruments. World literature in an IWL seminar is not just in the texts the participants read for each session. World literature is the participants themselves, individually and collectively. The challenge for the seminar leader is to read this diverse readership reading a diversity of texts from around the world and across human history, texts that are no less diverse than the participants themselves: twenty readers around the table from a dozen different linguistic and literary traditions engaged in conversation through the English language that necessarily ceases to be a national idiom and multiplies into as many critical idiolects and analytical modus operandi trained on translating translations and mistranslations into cogent and

common comprehension. The tempo, the polyphony, the modulation, the phrasing, the articulation, and the varied registers of mutual understanding emerge as an experience of simultaneous interpretation of texts, of texters, and inter-text of allusive and denotative recognition. An IWL seminar is a live experience of inter-cultural, inter-literary, inter-personal, and consummately interesting exercise in translation of highly figurative texts encountered in real time. The challenge for this seminar conductor, whether conducting at an IWL session on the Golden Horn in Istanbul or just off Harvard Yard in Cambridge, is to harmonize the profuse range and multitude of responses elicited by the texts across the table and across oceans and continents of human experiences that converge for the occasion. And while the literary texts take on the corresponding profusion of possibilities, the literary texts, like the seminar conductor, becomes a commons through which this multiplicity flows, interacts, refracts, and recombines into cogent conversation. Not surprisingly, translation itself in all its possibilities, and impossibilities, emerges as an enactment, a performative event even more than as a pedagogical subject or theoretical object. As with any musical score, literature and its worlds encounter a worldly occasion that transforms all the players, and no less so the seminar conductor. Any given IWL session, whether in Beijing, Istanbul,

Cambridge, or Lisbon, is a consummate world experience that transfigures many worlds in, of, and through the cross-section of literatures from around the world. For this seminar conductor, at any rate, IWL morphs as acronym that spells “I Would Love” nothing more. World literature, as seminar especially, occasions a celebration, a conversation that brings worlds to light and light literatures—worlds we did not know existed before, and literatures previously illegible to us.

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Pennsylvania State University

Interview with independent translator Ellen Elias-Bursac

One of our 2013 participants

As a professional translator for twenty years, and a recipient of two important prizes in the field of translation [the AATSEEL Award in 1998, for best translation from a Slavic or Eastern European language and the National Translation Award by the American Literary Translation Association in 2006], what brought you to IWL this past summer?

I heard about the IWL when it started up a few years ago in Istanbul and was immediately intrigued. I work every day, after all, on translations that are potential fodder for world literature. When I heard that the site this year would be Cambridge, where I live, I began to think about applying; the opportunity to attend a seminar run by Susan Bassnett or Lawrence Venuti clinched it.

The month-long session included a mix of seminars, guest lectures and panels, during which a central theme of discussion and debate was the increasing importance of translation studies within the theory and practice of world literature. What is your own view on the role translation studies should play in world literature and in what way has the IWL experience reshaped it?

The importance of translation to the study of world literature isn't just

that all the reading assignments are themselves translations, but that by reading from culture to culture one places oneself in a sort of translation position. We came together this summer from all over the world and created a shared space of reading and discussion that was translational at so many levels.

The central issue, for me, of the IWL experience was thinking about the tensions between writing defined as being part of a national literature and writing that is able to uncouple itself from its national context to appeal to readers from many different communities. Translators start by working out of national traditions - we study languages in the context of these traditions and develop complicated relationships of allegiance and/or defiance in terms of them. Then sometimes one of our translations begins to be taught at universities in subjects other than the niche of that country's national literature. As we choose what to translate we're always looking for work that will be able to do that but it isn't always obvious which works will develop that kind of autonomy.

You have mainly translated novels, stories, and nonfiction from Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. How do these small, peripheral literatures from Central and Eastern Europe play out through trans-



lation on a world market after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the West's discovery of a whole new arena of literary production?

In my case the war in the countries of the former Yugoslavia motivated publishers to look for compelling work, and it also pushed writers to mature in ways they otherwise might not have, giving us translators a lot to do.

This is also a question of political patronage. During the Cold War certain writers were encouraged and published, US Slavic departments received government subsidies. Now all that is gone, but the EU is rising as a new source of patronage. It remains to be seen what impact this has on what is translated and, more importantly, what is read. And it also remains to be seen what will happen to the literatures of the countries I work with that are not in the EU, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro.

Theo D'haen raised a key question at the IWL about the inclusion of small literatures, such as the literature of Belgium, in the anthologies that will form the basis for teaching world literature. This is a serious issue. I liked the idea that was floated this summer that there could be an on-line repository to offer teachers a greater selection of translated literary works than a printed anthology can provide. That would allow for more flexibility, inclusivity, and breadth.

IWL offered two seminars in translation, one by Susan Bassnett and another by Lawrence Venuti. Obviously there is an increase in the interest of professional translators in training in world literature issues. But how prepared is the translation market to absorb this reality, and what are the emerging opportunities for independent translators on a globalized world market?

English-language publishing is changing, and the long-term implications of this are still difficult to gauge. As I was able to show in my talk on the publication panel, there is a growing number of on-line journals and small publishers—many of them non-profit organizations funded by grants, Kickstarter campaigns, charitable contributions—with a strong interest in publishing literary translations. It remains to be seen how

many of these will still be around in ten years, but the enthusiasm is real and they are seriously changing the publishing landscape.

The proliferation of new journals and publishers would seem to allow more access points for translators. But what we don't know is whether these new ventures are effective ways to publish our work for the readers we would like to reach. Furthermore, many of the recent journals and publishers are unable to provide compensation for the author or the translator. So there would seem to be more opportunities to publish but fewer opportunities to support oneself as a literary translator.

As a professional translator, you are also part of the editorial and market mechanisms that make literature travel. How much has the role of the translator changed during the past decade, and how has world literature as a renewed discipline contributed to this change?

Translators don't just translate. We review potential book projects for publishers and talk with the editors of on-line journals who want to find out which (translated) writers and poets they might include in their publications. This sort of consultation is hardly new.

A more recent development is that of the translation afterword.

Publishers have begun accepting, and even encouraging, the inclusion of an afterword to contextualize the work of literature and raise salient translation issues. It is interesting to note that, this year, the juries for two major literary-translation awards specifically mentioned the importance of the translator's afterword for their decision to select the translation they chose to honor (the two awards were the National Translation Award to Philip Boehm for Herta Müller's *The Hunger Angel* and the Lucien Stryk Prize to Lucas Klein for Xi Chuan's *Notes on the Mosquito*).

Another factor that has recently shaped the role of the translator in the United States has been the enthusiasm and creativity of a generation of translators who have gone through Masters' of Fine Arts degrees in literary translation. They have brought with them a fresh commitment, vitality, and breadth of vision. Many have started up their own literary magazines and have actively encouraged a bold diversification and exploration of what translations can mean.

Affinity Group Report: Originality and Imitation

Originality is a modern criterion of great art which many tend to see as natural, while on the other hand imitation often becomes synonymous with artistic inferiority. However, contempt for imitation and consecration of originality and authenticity are not universal aesthetic judgments, but evaluations of a modern Western coinage which tend to alienate not only many non-Western but also classical and early modern understandings of imitation. In the last decade or so, studies in world literature have become increasingly interested in the importance of imitation both as a strategy and as a genuine poetics in the working of literary systems.

The papers presented at the Originality and Imitation affinity group were very diverse in their approach to the topic of imitation, which is not surprising given the many ways we can think of imitation and literature. While the majority of papers dealt with textual and artistic imitation, a small but significant number focused on imitation as a cultural phenomenon. Thus **RJ Boutelle** focused on cultural assimilation as imitation in his discussion of Julia Alvarez' *How the Alvarez Girls Lost Their Accent*, whereas **Molly Martin** explored the (very) different appropriations of Taoism found in American popular culture from Benjamin Hoff's bestseller *The Tao of Pooh* to African American amalgams of Kung fu and hip hop. **Suk Joo Sohn** on the other hand discussed mimicry as a postcolonial literary strategy with Arundati Roi as his example in focus.

Other papers discussed how works of the Western canon have been recycled

and critically reworked in world literature. **Caroline Egans** analyzed how Octavio Paz transformed Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* (originating from an ancient Indian tale and recirculated many times before Paz) into a play about exile and loss, relating it to the Spanish Civil War; **Micah Donahue** discussed José Martí's critical identification of American Transcendentalism and geopolitical expansionism; and **Christian Dahl** explored the notion of tragedy found in South African adaptations of Greek tragedy. **Thirtankar Chakraborty** surveyed the theatrical reception of Samuel Beckett in India, while **Ella Elbaz-Nir** discussed two television plays by Beckett as meditations on Ovidian metamorphosis. **Annette Vilslev Thorsen's** paper compared the Japanese novelist Natsume Soseki's use of stream-of-consciousness and argued that it is closer to William James than Joyce, whereas **Zhuyu Jiang** compared T.S. Eliot's notion of the classic (which also involves an element of imitation) to Chinese literary criticism.

While most papers thus approached the concept of originality indirectly via the uses of imitation, only two papers focused on questions of origin: **Wisam Khalaila's** paper about homelessness and emigration in Dreisler and Scott-Fitzgerald (a theme also brought up by **Caroline Egans** in her discussion of Paz' reflections on exile) and **Zeynep Seviner's** discussion of how literary criticism is still haunted by the Kemalist language reforms which alienated modern Turkish literature



from its origin. Finally **Andres Amitai Wilson** discussed Dante's uses of imitation and allusion in his references to the Hebrew Bible.

Though the topics discussed were very diverse, all group meetings were held in an atmosphere of inspiration and receptivity which often brought our discussion beyond the general topic. Some members of the group presented papers grounded in long research or extracted from almost finished articles while other members would use the group as a forum for bringing new research projects or ideas to discussion. Most of us enjoyed to have a small, but inclusive forum for discussion: here all participants contributed actively with papers and comments, also those who were reluctant to speak in the seminars. Mimetic desire or desire for real imitation even drove a fraction of the group to the *Shakespeare in Boston Common* where we enjoyed the performance of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Christian Dahl, PhD
Associate Professor
University of Copenhagen

Affinity Group Report: Universality and Particularity

Twelve graduate students and faculty affiliated with institutions in Australia, China, Cyprus, Germany, Israel, Macau, Spain, and the United States shared their research interests in the course of six meetings held by the Universality and Particularity Affinity Group at the Harvard IWL seminar this summer. The sessions provided a dynamic atmosphere for the exposure of current research work and future points of contact and collaboration. Following an online introduction of topics of discussion prior to the beginning of the seminar, the first meeting was dedicated to a more elaborate account of individual research projects on the basis of which participants expressed their interest in responding to specific presentations.

The relationship between universality and particularity was addressed from multiple perspectives through the examination of literary works produced from the medieval times to the present. The projects dealt with a wide range of aspects of the literary phenomena: writers' response to existing notions of universalism; the representation of infinity through the figure of the reader; ways of reading a localized text from a global perspective; circulation of literary genres and reconceptualization of the universal; collective authorship and the notion of particularity and universality; images of the foreign as a mirror of the universal; literary

figures and the problem of transnational gender prototypes; literature, criticism and ideology; universality and the cultural politics of translation.

World authors and lesser-known writers from western and non-western literary milieus were at the center of the group discussions. Thus, for instance, in her research, **Meegan Hasted** (University of Sydney) took Keats's *Hyperion* poems and his preoccupation with contemporary nineteenth-century astronomy, (especially the challenges this posed to traditional ideas about permanence and immutability in the cosmos), and attempted to chart the emergence of a conception of the stellar universe that was, for the first time in Western history, in flux. This discussion forms part of a broader project dedicated to Keats's singular response to the scientific and literary universalism of the period and the influx of 'conflicting' cosmologies in Britain from the colonies. **Gabriel Carlos García Ochoa** (Monash University), whose current research focuses on the figure of the Reader in Jorge Luis Borges' works, proposed the idea of a "tripartite Reader" in Borges' oeuvre, that is, a reader who is at once both the reader and writer of the texts he/she engages with, and a fictional character too. The presentation also discussed how Borges uses techniques of

mise en abyme to represent infinity through the figure of the Reader, and the ontology of the Reader as outlined in Borges' works.

Questions about the international circulation of literary works, authorship and genre were brought up in several presentations. **Niels Penke** (University of Göttingen) examines examples of corporative production in twentieth-century fiction: *Der Roman der Zwölf* (*The Novel of the Twelve*), the thriller-decalogue of Swedish writers Sjöwall/Wahlöö, *Das Gästehaus* (*The Guesthouse*) aiming to define several forms of collective authorship with practical examples and their theoretical implications against the background of philosophy and cultural history. **Virginia Ramos** (Stanford University) explores issues of genre in her research project "The Contemporary Lyrical Novel: Lyricism as Social Critic and Active Emotion." **Philip Mead** (University of Western Australia) is working on the reterritorialisation of the northern hemisphere epic, for example, the antipodean adaptation of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *The Divine Comedy* for contemporary purposes. His presentation focused on the problems of reading the localized literary text from a global perspective. **Myria Ioannou** (University of Cyprus) presented

on her comparative analysis of the literary figure of Don Juan, and the problems involved in looking at non-western Don Juan equivalents. She also shared some of the questions related to a broader project on Don Juan as a figure of western ideology and as a prototype for western masculinity. **Gabriel Page** (University of California, Berkeley) is working on postcolonial crime fiction. He is interested in the ways that certain writers in the Caribbean and Africa have mobilized the genre to investigate colonialism and its legacy as well as to reach wider audiences both at home and abroad. His presentation, "Crime Fiction, Universality, and World Literature" takes Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *Solibo Magnifique* to think about the dialectic of the universal and the particular and what literary genres that circulate internationally might suggest for a reconceptualization of the universal as such.

Writing about alterity was a topic of discussion for some of the participants. **Azucena González Blanco** (University of Granada) is currently part of a research group project, "La alteridad religiosa y étnica en los escritos de viajes: judíos, cristianos y musulmanes de Siria-Palestina (siglos XII-XVII)," working on the idea of movement as a main focus for approaching alterity following mainly Ottmar

Ette's considerations: "this is about function modes of perception of cultural alterity" (*Literature on the Move*). The study deals with Benjamin of Tudela's travel writing, in which the author examines cultural otherness, literary, scientific and perception-specific. The study also develops Ottmar Ette's thesis beyond modern travel literature, which is an epistemology of writing/reading.

Dora Maria Nunez Gago (Macau University) is at work with a project about representations of Brazil, China, United States and Spain in the works of Portuguese writers (Ferreira de Castro, Jorge de Sena, Miguel Torga, Vitorino Nemésio, Rodrigues Miguéis and Maria Ondina Braga). The study focuses on mechanisms of processing images within the historical and cultural context from which they emerge; defining the outlines of the social imaginary confrontation with the Portuguese in a foreign reality; and understanding the essential aspects of the national reality (social, political, historical and literary) through the confrontation with the foreign element.

The relationship between ethics and aesthetics in the universalization of literature was addressed by three participants. **Lior Libman** (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) examines representation(s) of the

kibbutz in Israel between 1948 and 1954. The major points of interest are how the kibbutz was constructed as an image, a form of knowledge and a discursive site by the mediation mechanism of the 'publicist' (op-ed) and prose literature produced in kibbutz circles, given the major structural, political and social changes caused by foundation of the State of Israel. The presentation dealt with the novel *Land without Shade* (1950), a major example of the Kibbutz-Literature of the time written by the couple Yonat and Alexander Sened. **Fangfang Mu** (Beijing Foreign Studies University) is working on a critical review of the reception and criticism of Harold Pinter in China. The projects intends to make a review of this development as a case study of how literary criticism negotiates its discourse under the influence of powerful political discourses, especially when it comes to the tension between the universal and the particular represented and then translated in different literatures. The presentation focused on the reception and criticism of the "Theatre of the Absurd" in China from 1960s to 1990 and how that relates to Pinter criticism in China. **Gabriela Capraro** (University of La Verne) is working on a study, "Hispanic Writers and the Cold War," about the participation of four Spanish and Latin American

-- Rafael Alberti, María Teresa León, Miguel Ángel Asturias, and Pablo Neruda -- in a Romanian translation project during their years of left-wing militancy. The study offers a view of on translation beyond its immediate purpose of introducing new texts to the Spanish and Latin American readers, and stresses the role of translation as a critical approach in the study of the history of relations between Hispanic and Romanian modernism.

Gabriela Capraroiu
Associate Professor of Spanish
University of La Verne

Selected comments from participants

Gabriel Carlos García Ochoa
(Monash University):

“The affinity group sessions were one of the most rewarding components of the IWL Program. The group fostered an atmosphere of respectful and constructive criticism, in my opinion, the ideal space to evaluate and nurture one’s ideas.”

Myria Ioannou (University of Cyprus):

“The affinity group has been very useful in terms of my research, because the topic was very relevant to my work, and I received feedback which has given me inspiration as to possible thoughts to pursue.”

Philip Mead (University of Western Australia):

“Our affinity group sessions were excellent, although I was only there for the second half of the institute. They were well organized in terms of paper and response, everyone got to make the points they wished to and the most important thing, the standard of the papers was very high I thought. An interesting and diverse group who addressed our topic in specific ways.”

Fangfang Mu (Beijing Foreign Studies University):

“All of us had different projects or thesis to share, but there were a lot of overlapping interests and topics. After each presentation, there were most genuine and helpful comments and questions and suggestions by other members of the group. I was so thrilled to be able to be part of our

group and sincerely hope that we will meet again sometime in the future.”

Gabriel Page (University of California, Berkeley):

“We had a terrific group dynamic and I benefited a lot from discussing the work of other group members and having the opportunity to present my own.”

Lior Libman

(The Hebrew University of Jerusalem):

“The Universality and Particularity affinity group was a well-organized forum in which I feel I had the privilege to be exposed to very intriguing and significant work of colleagues from all around the world.”

