

★★★ TRANSLATING EUROPE ★★★

Voices in Translation

Bridging Cultural
Divides



Edited by
Gunilla Anderman



Multilingual Matters

TRANSLATING EUROPE

Series Editors: Gunilla Anderman and Margaret Rogers
University of Surrey

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Gunilla Anderman
Guildford, October 2006

Note added in proof

The current volume – *Voices in Translation* – was generously dedicated to the memory of Bill Findlay, a pioneer in the field of dialect translation, by our friend and colleague Gunilla Anderman. Tragically, Gunilla herself did not live to see this rich edited collection of papers reach its final stages. As an accomplished translator of drama, as well as a distinguished scholar in Translation Studies, Gunilla would have delighted in the final publication of a volume that highlights and celebrates the role of the translator as a skilful and creative cultural mediator. Her own contribution to this volume illustrates this better than any further commentary. Let the volume be a fitting tribute to Gunilla's outstanding work in this field.

Margaret Rogers
Guildford, July 2007

Contributors: A Short Profile

Gunilla Anderman was Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Surrey, where she taught translation theory, translation of drama and translation of children's literature – fields in which she had published and lectured widely in the UK as well as internationally. She was also a professional translator, with translations of Scandinavian plays staged in the UK, USA and South Africa. Her most recent book was *Europe on Stage: Translation and Theatre* (2005).

Kirsten Nauja Andersen, MA, is Deputy Head of the Translation Centre, Copenhagen University. She also works as a subtitler, translator and lexicographer. In 1994 she was awarded Copenhagen University's gold medal for her thesis on the Danish translations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice*.

Martin Bowman was born and raised in Montreal of Scottish parentage and educated at McGill University and Université de Montréal where he gained his PhD. With Bill Findlay he co-translated into Scots eleven plays by four Quebec playwrights, and with Wajdi Mouawad he has co-translated two plays, *Trainspotting* and *Disco Pigs*, into French. Now retired from teaching, he is presently engaged in translating the work of Jeanne-Mance Delisle.

Niamh Chapelle gained her PhD from Dublin City University, entitled *The Translators' Tale: A Translator-Centred History of Seven English Translations (1823–1944) of the Grimms' Fairy Tale 'Sneewittchen'*. Before moving back to Ireland to work in the localisation industry, she was employed as an in-house translator in Germany. More recently, she has been working as a freelance translator. Her fascination with fairy tales and the history of translation continues.

John Corbett is Professor of Applied Language Studies in Glasgow University's Department of English Language. Among his publications on the use of Scots in literature are *Language and Scottish Literature* (1997) and *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots* (1999). He is also the editor of *Language and Intercultural Communication*.

Joseph Farrell is Professor of Italian Studies in the University of Strathclyde, in Glasgow. His main research interests are in the fields of Sicilian culture and Theatre History. He is the author of *Leonardo Sciascia* (1995), and

Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Harlequins of the Revolution. (2001). *The History of Italian Theatre*, which he co-edited with Paolo Puppa of Ca' Foscari University, is soon to be published. In addition, he has edited volumes on Carlo Goldoni, Dario Fo, Primo Levi and on the Mafia. His translations include novels by Sciascia, Consolo and Del Giudice, as well as plays by Fo, Baricco, De Filippo and Goldoni.

Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen, D.Phil, is Associate Professor of English at Copenhagen University. His research is in the field of Translation Studies and Literature. His recent book, *Ugly Ducklings? Studies in the English Translations of Hans Christian Andersen's Tales and Stories* (2004) is a monograph on English translations of Hans Christian Andersen's tales. He is editor of the 3rd and 4th editions of the *Vinterberg & Bodelsen Danish-English Dictionary* (1990 and 1998). His literary translations include novels by E.M. Forster and William Golding.

David Johnston is Professor of Spanish and Head of the School of Languages, Literatures and Performing Arts at Queen's University Belfast. He has published on Spanish culture, theatre, and translation, including *Stages of Translation* (1996). He is currently completing *Translation and Performance: The Practice of Theatre*, to be published in 2007. An award-winning translator for the stage, his versions of plays by Valle-Inclán and Lorca have been produced by BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4, and in 2003–2004 his *The Dog in The Manger* by Lope de Vega was performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company. More recently he has also translated contemporary Mexican and Argentine plays for the Royal Court in London and for the Ohio International Theatre Festival respectively. A number of his own plays have been produced on stage including, in 1988, his version of *Don Quijote*.

Margaret Jull Costa has translated a number of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American writers including Eça de Queiroz, Fernando Pessoa, Javier Marías and José Régio. She was joint winner of the Portuguese Translation Prize in 1992 for the *Book of Disquiet* by Fernando Pessoa. More recently she has been noted for her work in translating the novels of José Saramago, her translation of *All the Names* winning the 2000 Weidenfeld Translation Prize. In 2006, she won the Premio Valle Inclán 2006 for her translation of Javier Marías's *Your Face Tomorrow: Fever and Spear* (2005).

Piotr Kuhiwczak, PhD, lectures in the Department for Translation and Comparative Cultures at Warwick University and is Deputy Chair of the advisory board of the British Centre for Literary Translation, and the Chair of the editorial board of *The Linguist*. With Dr Karin Littau of the University of Essex, he has recently completed an edited volume of essays, *A Companion to Translation Studies*, to appear in May 2007. His major research project is concerned with the study of the impact of translation on the recep-

tion of Holocaust memoirs and testimonies and the impact of censorship on writing and translation, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.

Helen Rappaport graduated in Russian Special Studies from Leeds University, after which she took up an acting career, as well as working as a Russian translator for the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Almeida and Donmar Warehouse theatres. Since 1976 she has worked with major British playwrights such as David Lan, Nick Wright, Kevin Elyot, Frank McGuinness, Trevor Griffiths and David Hare on new versions of plays by Chekhov, Ostrovsky and Gorky. She has translated all seven of Chekhov's extant plays, most notably for director Katie Mitchell. In addition to her work as a translator, she is increasingly concentrating on her writing career as a specialist in 19th-century women's history, as in her 2007 publication *No Place for Ladies: The Untold Story of Women in the Crimean War*.

Stefania Taviano who holds a PhD in Translation Studies from Warwick University, now lectures in English at the University of Messina, Italy. She is the author of *Staging Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Anglo-American Approaches to Political Theatre* (2005) and of a number of articles on Italian modern dramatists as well as Italian American theatre and performance art. She has also translated Italian contemporary playwrights, such as Spiro Scimone, and contributed to the translation of Dario Fo's *Johan Padan and the Discovery of the Americas*.

Jenny Williams, Associate Professor and Head of the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies at Dublin City University, has published in the fields of German and Translation Studies. Her most recent book (with Andrew Chesterman) is *The Map: A Guide to Doing Research in Translation Studies* (2002). Her translation works include a poetry anthology from German into English: Sabine Lange *The Fishermen Sleep*, with an introduction by Mary O'Donnell (2005).

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Introduction

GUNILLA ANDERMAN

This volume focuses on two problems that face the translator of European fiction: voices speaking across cultural borders and the difficulty of transferring the social, cultural and political milieu in which these speakers are rooted.

The volume opens with 'Voices in Translation' in which Gunilla Anderman discusses the importance of providing speakers of other nations and cultures with an authentic voice in translation. Following an exposé of the reasons why awareness of the importance of speakers communicating across cultural divides in voices of their own has been slow in coming, tribute is paid to the work of Bill Findlay in Scots dialect translation. Particular attention is given to his imaginative re-creation of Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, a milestone in the development of modern European drama, and *Bairns' Brothers*, his dialect version of *Enfantillages* by Raymond Cousse, a contemporary play written in standard French. Mention is also made of Findlay's work with co-translator Martin Bowman on the translation of the plays by Michel Tremblay, which have made the Quebec playwright the most frequently performed foreign-language playwright in Scotland for the past 16 years.

In Chapter 2, 'From Rouyn to Lerwick: The Vernacular Journey of Jeanne-Mance Delisle's *The Reel of the Hanged Man*', Martin Bowman tells of another Quebec playwright whose work he and Findlay brought to the stage. The play's first production proved to be a difficult ride, due to a large extent to the sensitivity of the subject – Delisle deals with the topic of incest. In this chapter the author introduces us to the Quebec playwright as well as to her play, pointing to the importance of vernacular theatre beyond its original culture.

John Corbett's contribution, 'Speaking the World: Drama in Scots Translation' pays tribute to Bill Findlay, drawing on the experience of co-editing with him the anthology *Serving Twa Maisters: Five Plays in Scots Translation*. While the non-standard urban argot of Scots has been linked to the conditions of class oppression (as in the writing of Irvine Welsh and James Kelman), this chapter sets out to redress the balance by exploring the uses of Scots in English plays translated over the second half of the 20th century.

Chapter 4, Stefania Taviano's contribution, also has a strong Scottish link. The Italian stagings discussed in 'Staging Italian Theatre: A Resistant Approach' include a joint production of *The Odyssey* by the Italian theatre group Stalker and the Glasgow-based Working Party, a project funded by the Scottish Arts Council that formed part of a month-long season of theatre, and literary events in Glasgow between October and November 2002. Taviano argues that the use of non-standard language and the commitment of theatre collectives to physical acting form the central elements of a *resistant* approach that distinguishes itself by its challenging interpretation of foreign theatre. She suggests that a resistant approach to the staging of the work of foreign playwrights subverts strategies centred on the 'exotic' nature of foreign plays by focusing instead on their political role.

In 'The Style of Translation: Dialogue with the Author', the contribution from Joseph Farrell, Italy and Scotland similarly figure prominently. 'The words may belong to language but the voice belongs to the artist', Farrell observes, and proceeds to discuss the style of Sicilian writer Vincenzo Consolo. In the context of the discussion of how to convey in translation the impact created by the distinctive style of a writer, Farrell approaches the issue of dialect translation. He also broaches the issue of the function and status of dialects in different languages, notably Scots and Italian.

While Farrell is adamant on the point of withholding the role of 'second creator' from the translator, an increasingly popular way of attracting the interest of British theatre-goers is attempting to bridge the cultural divide between source and target language and culture by 'domesticating' the foreign text. In Chapter 6, 'Chekhov in the Theatre: The Role of the Translator in New Versions', Helen Rappaport discusses the emergence over the last few decades of new versions or adaptations of European plays by contemporary British playwrights, in particular the four major plays by Anton Chekhov. Following a discussion of strengths and weaknesses inherent in the writing of new 'versions' of Chekhov by playwrights who are not speakers of the source language and possess limited knowledge of 19th century rural Russia, Rappaport asks the legitimate question: Whose work is it anyway? Is it the star dramatist who often leaves his signature on the work produced by the literary translator, or the foreign playwright?

According to David Johnston in 'The Cultural Engagements of Stage Translation: Federico García Lorca in Performance', in order to bridge the cultural divide between the receiving culture and Lorca's systemic patterns of imagery, with their characteristically powerful interplay between animate and inanimate elements drawn from the everyday world of rural Spain of the past, the translator may employ the same tactics normally used to transfer culture-specific items. It is important, however, Johnston argues, that the translator does not allow Lorca's encyclopedia of reference to push the translation process towards a merely linguistic exercise. The aim of

Lorca's theatre is to reframe experience, which means that the translation of culture-specific items in his writing is governed by rhetorical and stylistic considerations as much as by any external referencing. The author concludes that to translate Lorca for performance requires a clear-sighted view of how to provide him with a voice on stage, how to write towards his plays' potential in order to engage an audience and charge the air in the theatre.

Writing about rural Spain, Lorca would frequently draw on flower symbolism; the Spanish writer is not, however, the only writer to employ this form of imagery; flora as well as fauna are used as symbols in many languages. At the end of Act 2 of Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*, it is through flowers that Asta says a last farewell to her brother Alfred. The flowers are water lilies, their beauty suggesting purity; through the symbolism of their use, Alfred's obsession is shown as something more than just a weakness, something beautiful in its own way, but a beauty that, like the water lily, has reached the surface from the deep bottom.

As symbols, the languages that flowers speak are many and varied. At the time of Strindberg, hyacinths were associated with death and funerals in Sweden, as illustrated by the ailing girl in the Hyacinth Room in *The Ghost Sonata*. Lilacs, on the other hand, in Sweden stand for light and early summer, as in *Miss Julie*, where they preside prominently on the kitchen table when Julie and Jean meet, but in Italy they reportedly represent envy. And in some English villages, a lilac branch may also signify a broken engagement, potentially applicable to the situation of the protagonist of *Miss Julie*. Flower images figure prominently in Strindberg's writing, and the choice of flower is rarely random. The selection of the flower image is often sensitive to the fabric of the individual play, as discussed by Gunilla Anderman in Chapter 8, 'To Be or Not to Be (Untranslatable): Strindberg in Swedish and English'.

In Strindberg's *Easter*, the daffodil represents the coming of light after a winter of physical and spiritual darkness. If replaced by a lily, as has often been the case in English-speaking productions of the play, the change in flower also means a change in the language it speaks: a white lily with its associations of funerals speaks a language different from that of a sun-soaked daffodil. According to Anderman, aspects such as flower and bird symbolism need to be left intact in translation even if what they stand for is 'untranslatable'. Other aspects of the Swedish playwright's work may also present obstacles, Anderman argues, but these problems need not defy translation if the translator or creator of 'new versions' makes sure to dig beneath the surface.

For a professional translator of fiction, on the other hand, a solution always has to be found to what might at first sight appear untranslatable. In 'Mind the Gap: Translating the Untranslatable', Margaret Jull Costa, a

literary translator from Spanish and Portuguese, acknowledges that she cannot afford to believe in the 'untranslatable'. It is the translator's job to translate everything, knowing that there might be some loss in translation but, as Jull Costa points out, there might also be some gain. Among the problems she has had to solve in attempting to bridge the cultural divide between the world inhabited by the writers whose books she has translated and the English-speaking world, Jull Costa chooses to discuss first the words used to name phenomena in the physical world, then linguistic obstacles such as puns, idioms and proverbs, and, in conclusion, historical, geographical and cultural references. As an example of a translation problem belonging to the first category, she discusses the translation of *queijadas*, tartlets filled with a mixture of sugar, cinnamon, egg and fresh cheese, a unique speciality of Sintra, the fashionable summer retreat just outside Lisbon. As 'cheese cakes' conjure up the wrong associations, Jull Costa, who is still working on the translation as this volume goes to press, is choosing between 'cheese tartlets' and 'cheese pastries'. In the case of the translation of puns, she acknowledges that they are too, in a sense, untranslatable but others may be created to replace them as long as they are in keeping with the tone and the tenor of the original. The last problem with which Jull Costa is concerned is the rendering of geographical and historical references. Not favoured by publishers of foreign fiction, footnotes do not figure prominently in her translations, although she acknowledges that, in her translation of Luís Cardoso's *The Crossing: A Story of East Timor*, the unfamiliarity to the reader of place names, personal names and terminology made it necessary to include a glossary.

References to food similarly constitute a problem for the translator of Lewis Carroll into Danish, as discussed in 'Alice in Denmark'. In this chapter, Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen and Kirsten Nauja Andersen compare Danish translations of *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) which originate at different points in time, spanning the period from 1875 to 2000. Among stumbling blocks for the translator such as style, related linguistic problems and allusions, the untranslatability of culinary references figure prominently. For example, Alice compares the taste of one of her magic potions to '... custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy and buttered toast', but at the time of the early translations some of these well-known English delicacies were unknown in Denmark – even 'turkey', the functional equivalent of which, according to the authors, is likely to have been *andesteg* ('roast duck'). In conclusion, the translations examined in this chapter are declared to be failing to live up to the original, in part because of the unwillingness of the translators to take on the challenge of cultural adaptation. In order to succeed, it is argued, the translations would have had to depart more from the source text, substituting Danish jokes and word play. But then, as the

authors admit, the story might not have been about Alice, but about Marie, a different girl, a strategy attempted by only one of the translators.

The difference in approach favoured by translators is also discussed by Niamh Chapelle and Jenny Williams, who examine the use of different strategies adopted by two translators for bridging the same cultural divide. In Chapter 11, 'Little Snowdrop and the Magic Mirror: Two Approaches to Creating a "Suitable" Translation in Nineteenth-century England', they examine two translations of the same 1857 edition of the Grimms' fairy tale *Sneewittchen* (*Snow White*), which appeared within no more than 11 years of each other. Both translators were translating for young people, and in the prefaces they were at pains to explain that they had tried to ensure that the translations were suitable for their audience in terms of style and content. Still, the resulting translations turned out to be very different. The reasons for the difference between *Little Snowdrop* (1863) and *The Magic Mirror* (1871–4), the authors conclude, is to be found in the translators' radically different definitions of 'suitability' and their attitude toward the target audience.

In the concluding contribution to the volume, Piotr Kuhiwczak points to yet another factor that bears on translation: the political and economic life of a nation may affect the relationship between original and translated literature. In his contribution, 'From Dissidents to Best Sellers: Polish Literature in English Translation After the End of the Cold War', Kuhiwczak discusses the role played by politics prior to the 'velvet revolutions' when the process of selection of literature to be published in the Eastern Bloc was controlled by the state apparatus – the Marxist-Leninist regime considered literature an important part of dogma. Using Poland as the country of exemplification, Kuhiwczak shows how poetry, previously in a dominant position, was replaced by other new genres of literature, introduced through a steady growth of translation from English into Polish. Outside Poland a similar change made itself known: UK publishers began to apply to Polish literature the same criteria as they did to the literatures of other countries. In particular a new interest began to develop in Polish writing concerned with the ethnic and political dilemmas of Poland's past.

For writers from this part of Europe it took turbulence and political change to help bridge the cultural divide and provide them with a voice in translation.

Chapter 1

Voices in Translation

GUNILLA ANDERMAN

Introduction

An enlarged European Union, the rapid growth of electronic communication and the emergence of English as the lingua franca of Europe are now providing Europeans with easy access to the cultural and literary heritage of a multitude of other nations. But while the citizens of Europe are beginning to experience different cultures at first hand, many social and cultural concepts that they are now encountering will remain unknown outside national borders and, as a result, lack lexical designation in other languages. How, for example, does a translator render in another language the information that speakers convey when they engage in a dialogue, the way in which English dialect and sociolect interact to make language a unique indicator of class and education? As Bernard Shaw famously remarked 'it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him.' Although different factors may come into play in other languages spoken in other countries, speakers still have a voice of their own for which writers have a finely attuned ear. And when the work of the writer reaches the translator responsible for transferring it into another language, a voice has to be found in the new language that closely resembles that of the original. It is equally difficult for the translator to find appropriate means of expression in another language for what speakers may engage in dialogue about: flora and fauna and cultural customs, as well as the social and political conventions that are little known to anyone outside the country in which they form part of everyday life.

This volume focuses on two problems that face the translator of European fiction: voices speaking across cultural borders, and the means of expression to convey the social and cultural milieu in which the speakers are rooted. In particular, attention is given to the work of Bill Findlay – to whom this collection of essays is dedicated.

Speaking across Cultural Borders

For a playwright aware of the importance of the uniqueness of the voice of each character on stage, recognising the problems facing the translator is

but a short step, as evidenced by Ibsen's comments in relation to the translation of *The Wild Duck*:

[...] consistently every character in the play has their particular, individual way of expressing themselves, through which the degree of their culture and education is manifested. When for example Gina speaks we should hear immediately that she never learnt any grammar and that she was born into a lower, social class. And the same applies to all the other characters. The task of the translator is, in other words, not an easy one.¹ (Ibsen, 1891)

Equally attuned to the different voices of his characters is the Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca. While attending a performance of *Doda Rosita the Spinster*, Lorca's cousin Mercedes Delgado García immediately recognised that the protagonist's speech derived from Asquerosa, Lorca's home town (Gibson, 1989: 406). In Brecht's play about the ravages of the Thirty Year War, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, the protagonist speaks in a language strongly coloured by her Bavarian dialect. And in his commentary to his translation of *The Cherry Orchard* by the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, Michael Frayn points out that each of the characters speaks in their own distinctive voice, revealing their education (or lack thereof), place of birth and social class (Frayn, 1995: xxxix–xi). Failure to capture the difference in the speech of the Chekhov characters through simply translating their language into Standard English has resulted, as famously remarked, in creating the impression that all his Russian peasants live in the vicinity of Sloane Square.

Giving each character a voice of his or her own requires, however, that the translator first has an awareness of where the characters live, their social position and their own, personal idiosyncrasies in the source culture, and also the ability to find the lexical and grammatical means of matching expressions in the target language. Dialect in translation, however, is more frequently than not rendered into the standard variety, often as a result of the way translation used to serve as a means of language teaching and learning. Although the last few decades of Modern Language teaching have embraced the so-called communicative approach, pedagogy has long been influenced by the methodology favoured in the instruction of the classical languages.

Spoken Versus Written Language

In the instruction of Greek and Latin, translation was used as a means of ensuring that new vocabulary had been acquired: often students were worried that too creative an effort would be penalised with a bad mark and would settle for as close to a word-for-word translation as possible. In

similar fashion, many translators would also simply replace one word in the foreign language with the equivalent written word in the target language. And with spoken varieties of the classical languages no longer in existence, limited attention was given to difference in genre and the fact that people rarely speak the way they write.

The lack of knowledge about the spoken mode of language was, however, not of crucial importance in the theatre, as the speech of ordinary people was not considered to be appropriate language for use on stage. When, in 1914, Shaw's *Pygmalion* first opened at *His Majesty's Theatre* in London with Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Professor Higgins and Mrs Patrick Campbell as Eliza Doolittle, the *Daily Express* took a Charing Cross flower girl, Eliza Keefe, along to the *Haymarket*, loftily reporting her reactions to the amusement of its readers: 'Well, I've never 'ad such a night in all me natural ...'. What offended the papers was not the social inequity but the use of bad language on stage, especially 'not bloody likely', spoken in Act 3. Indignantly the *Daily Sketch* headline pronounced: 'Mrs Patrick Campbell swears on stage and cultured London roars with laughter' (Butler, 2001).

As Bernard Shaw's passion with reforming English society grew, so did his interest in reforming language. In the early 1880s he had met Henry Sweet (1845–1912) whose interest in spoken language resulted in the publication of *A Handbook of Phonetics* in 1877. Adapted in 1890 as *A Primer of Spoken English*, it became the first scientifically-based description of educated London speech or Received Pronunciation (RP). In the preface to *Pygmalion*, which in the character of Professor Higgins contains obvious touches of Sweet, Shaw refers to Sweet's 'satanic contempt for all academic dignitaries and persons in general who thought more of Greek than phonetics' (Butler, 2001). The study of speech sounds was further advanced by Daniel Jones (1881–1967) who, in 1921, became the first professor of Phonetics at London University. Influential in spreading the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) throughout the world, his efforts provided the mechanism for the use of transcription of speech sounds. By the time of his retirement in 1949 Daniel Jones had created a department with a worldwide reputation.

With the interest in the written mode long pre-dating the study of spoken language, it is hardly surprising that, in the teaching of foreign languages, translation paid scant attention to linguistic variation and that texts were routinely translated into the standard variety of the target language. As a result, in the transfer from source to target language, the specific characteristics of the individual voices disappeared and a new blander text emerged, devoid of the force and colour of the original.