

Trans(re)lation Convening @ The O'Neill Center January 16th – 19th, 2015

Friday, January 16, 2015

4:00 – 6:00pm: Intros

What is everyone working on?

- Buffalo - 3 works for children.
- Erwin – Some plays he is working on.
- Sam - a few Argentinian plays. None of them are super finished, it would be cool to hear. Two Monologues
- Hannah – would like to bring some dramaturgical translation conundrums. 3 Northern Ireland plays where I have specific questions.
- Penny – would like to be a part of dramaturgical conundrums conversation. Recently translated a lost Wedekind play. BISMARCK. Not a masterpiece
- Mazgorata – would like to be a part of dramaturgical conundrums conversation
- Neal - would like to be a part of dramaturgical conundrums conversation. Would also like time to talk to have a conversation
- Adam – has a translation he needs to hear. Either in full or in portions of a Chilean play. Large cast.
- Saskia - Jewish survivor s in Amsterdam. Would like to work with some women just to work on a scene with it.
- Sarah – has a play that is not translated. But its bilingual and a cultural translation and about Cairo.
- Daniel – has a play that is not translated, but is about cultural intersection. Incomprehension across cultural lines.
- Sara – a play that was performed in the UK, but I wasn't there.
- Amelia – has translated Allain's play about Martin Luther King and would love to hear some of it.
- Dan – an actor and director. Would like to offer up my services.
- Allain – would like 4 actors for his play.
- Gaetane – has a play about a young man who was raped. Written in French and would like someone to look at it.
- Rachel – doesn't have anything I am working on currently, but am happy to perform or be a director or conversation partner.
- Daniel – working on a new translation. First 5 pages. There are questions for the conundrum session.
- Ulrike – would like you to send me work in English and I translate into French and German. Send me some of your work and I will see what I can do.
- Doug – a floater
- Lisa – floater

Saturday, January 17, 2015

10 - 12pm: *Roundtable discussion: THEORY topics*

(Lazslo arrived. Was at Double Edged Theatre in Massachusetts)

Monologues

Doug got monologues in translation from FENCE members who are not here. We did a mini translation slam where multiple people translate into English from Spanish, French, German and Swedish. We discussed similarities and differences.

Also a discussion on THEORY:

- Translation vs. Adaptation
 - Literal vs. Literary translation
 - Page vs. stage translations (to be read vs. performed)
 - Political and Ethical implications of translation
 - Linguistic and cultural transposition (including specific theatrical modes)
 - Translator's responsibility (author, actor & audience)
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- Spanish (Beatriz Cabur)
 - Daniel
 - Adam
 - Sam
 - Swedish (Andres Drus)
 - Hannah -
 - Buffalo – took more liberty and put more little words in it. Good to do that, because the Swedish is written in a way that it would not be spoken at all. In English it would be 15% longer. Culturally it is much more compact. Shorter, staccato.
 - Sarah – put it through Google. Swedish to English to Arabic to Chinese to English – Hilarious. But kept the rhythm funnily enough.
 - Hungarian doesn't have short words.
 - French (Dumy Beronet)
 - Neil - hard to do, because he spells the words all wrong. Feels like a badly educated 15 year old girl. That suggests it is character.
 - Amelia –
 - Daniel K & Gaetane – thought the cave du commerce. Was a cave of commerce.
 - Dan – Put it through Google translate. Absurd Franglais.
 - German (Roland Shimmelfenung)
 - Neal - can we give a sense of what is going on first? And then read the pieces.
 - Penny – Reads
 - Ulrike & Lisa –

- The nature of his writing is that there is always someone else speaking in this style. Are they stage directions?
- Where does one go with the translation when something is written like this?
- Neil's was more staccato and Penny's was more fluid.
- Who is the speaker? Have they met before? In Romance languages, and Polish this is important. There is an informality and formality. And feminine and masculine. And neutral. Difficult to translate fragments, without knowing who the speaker is.

SESSION (2:15 – 3:15)

- Erwin – Playwright quoted Harold Pinter (“Truth in drama is forever elusive...”)
 - What is the truth? Becomes clear
- Saskia –
 - Fuck was used quite a bit at the top. The Dutch use the ‘c’ word a lot too. So do the Dutch.
 - Are you able to translate devil as god? The same was that the Swedish devil. What is the equivalent? It's not just a different word; it's a very different notion.
 - The words in Scandinavia are religious based. In English they are all sexual.
 - In Holland, the English swear words are being used a lot.
 - Daniel J said she used a lot of goddamn in English, but the Mexican playwright was religious and didn't like it.
 - The enormous amount of American films are being translated. Fuck is being used a lot. And the word in Polish is really long. So, it's too much. There is a short word they use a lot, but now instead it is being replaced with the long word. But we should go back to the rhythm of the language.
 - The conversation devolved into translations of a bunch of swear words in various languages.
 - A lot of English is being used in tons of different cultures.
- Malzgorata – some new translations of Tennessee Williams. The characters are swearing a lot in those translations. The critics are excited by the new language.

Playwright vs. Adaptation

- Chekhov adaptations from a playwright that doesn't speak a word of Russian.
- It's not a literal translation.
- A literal translation is not a literary translation
- Hannah: It's about process as well. How do you come to the version that you are performing? Literal vs literary?
 - Theatrical translation vs literal translation
 - Sarah: Headlong did Spring Awakening. How do you make this story try to get back to some of what the original play was? Make it more relevant for young people today.

- Directorial question: How far was any of it the original? All of the following are a response to that original text.
 - Adam: We are talking about different points on a continuum. Worked on a Sabina Berman play, “The Agony of Ecstasy”. Being the first translator of the play, I had to be closer to the literal translation. And then the director can make decisions and turn it into a production. The translators should be in the room to help this translation/adaptation.
 - Dan: In order to honor the author’s story, you disobeyed the playwright’s orders. Like that.
 - Laszlo: Started by talking about literal translations, which I don’t think exist. Now we are talking about adapting plays to make people understand them more. Which I think is sad. I didn’t grow up in a kingdom, but I understand King Lear.
 - Hannah: I disagree. We did a production/translation of Dario Fo into English. It was too many words. The actors couldn’t play it.
 - Alain: I have written a play with Othello and Shylock on the same stage. The translator was the son of Victor Hugo at the end of the 19th century and made a translation of ‘dirty jew’ which Shakespeare could never have written because he wasn’t an anti-semite?
 - Adam: you are reading a translation on the page, but if it is a theatrical translation, you are thinking about it on the stage. So, it becomes an open text.
 - Hannah: You need to have a conversation with a living playwright.
 - Alain: A Jewish playwright asked him to write a play about Jews and blacks. Who is Othello and Shylock in each of their contexts? Othello didn’t know slavery at the time. Shylock knows more. When you put Othello and Shylock on stage, Othello says Tu and Shylock says Vouz. Not because of racism, but because of social/cultural situations. There needs to be context.
 - Buffalo: I won’t change Clybourne Park when I translate S
 - Laszlo: If I were doing Romeo and Juliet...I wouldn’t add mobile phones.

Other Notes

- Hannah: Translators, do you work?
 - Malzgorata: If I am a translator. Not one for just a production. The work has become so small and we know too much about people. However, there is one point: We know it and the audience knows it, but the audience hears it only once. If they haven’t heard it before and it requires additional information, we have to find a way to help them with a bit more context. And we have to be a bit wiser than the audience. I would refrain from changing things unless you really have to.
- Dan: I have a one person show and in this show the audience has to believe that the person speaking the truth has had these things happen to them. So it is being translated into German and it’s a fascinating exercise. Do I still put Daniel Bye on the program?
 - Buffalo: Give them the program after the show.

- Sarah: My director in Canada betrayed me by having integrity and sticking to the text and not wanting to adapt anything. It made it a weird play.
- Hannah's question?
- Ulrike: Cultural translation. I do not want to shape it to make it easier for audiences to understand.
- Gaetane: All of the plays coming from Europe to Guadalupe are about different stories, not adapted to reflect people from Guadalupe.
- When we talk about translation, we have to take Shakespeare off of the table.
- Laszlo: Does everyone know the Pinter text? It's from his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. When he was very sick.

Sunday, January 18

10:00 am & 2:00 – 3:00PM: Roundtable discussion: PRACTICE topics

- o Translation as dramaturgical practice
- o The playwright's role in the translation process
- o Translating the hidden meaning beyond language (physical/spatial/tonal)
- o Variations of the source language (e.g. British, American, Canadian, Australian, etc)
- o Expressing regional dialects from source to target language
- o Working in teams of two (and three) – playwright, translator, dramaturg
- o Long distance translation

Translating Practices All Over the World

- In the German, Polish, Hungarian world jumbling characters and words around is normal. The translator is guardian of the text; you have to defend the text and the author from the theatre in that way...They don't negotiate with translator. The author is somewhere over there, nobody will see or hear what they've done with the text. These are not for staged readings but full performances.
- In Holland they never shopped or read the text to hear it out loud. It was immediately made into a performance. It's changed now a little. When it's about a scratch night it would be very weird to me to change the text just for the sake of the reading.
- If it's okay to steal a piece of dough but it's not okay steal a loaf of bread, for me it's the same. You can't come into the bakery and snatch a glob of dough.
- There's a clause in writer's contracts in the UK that says you are not allowed to change a single word of text without asking the permission of the writer. It's standard.
- In Germany they generally have this thing that the premiere should stick to the original.
- Beckett and Albee examples- they do not allow changes in their texts.
- Sure the director can interpret the work in whichever way they like because the playwright gives that to the director.

- There's a million ways to work. It's important to know what the expectations are and what the basis of collaboration is. If you're working in a relationship in which the writer will not feel comfortable unless they have complete control over every single word they have then that's the basis upon which you are going to be working together. Likewise if the expectation of everybody is that you can mess around with everything and that everybody is an equal partner in the collaborative process towards staging something then that's the basis in which you are going to work.
- If you are in control would you want them to do it the way you've written it every word, because built within the culture is there just an assumption that the writer's stuff is that you get to do what you want to do. Would there be a fear of saying that if I don't let them muck about my stuff, would I get produced?
- If you are doing your work in the other way of working who holds the dramaturgical idea for the production? Does it come from the director? It depends on how it's laid out from the start.
 - Theatrical process- if a playwright works with a director, or there is this triangle (playwright, director, dramaturg) working together the result is completely different than if it was a playwright writing a play offering it to a theater or having it printed, which does happen.
- We talk about ownership and dominance, and I think it is dead. We are all in the same boat and if there is no trust between the owner of the text and the owner of the production which is most of the time not the same person, we are all doomed. We talk about text, words, sentences, but you can stick to the words but still betray the play. I think it's about establishing good communication.
- As a translator you serve two masters (the director and the author), the more important master is the playwright. Whatever I can offer to the author is to represent him/her, the ideas, be as faithful on a literal level but also on the imaginative level in a different culture/language.
- We don't translate a text; we translate the theatre inside the mind of the author.

Monday, January 19

2:00 – 3:30pm: Roundtable discussion: PRODUCTION topics

- Getting translations to production and publication
- Getting play translated without production
- Incorporating translation into the performance itself
- Directors/dramaturgs involvement and rights of interpretation

Notes from Adam:

- The main thing that seemed to come out of our work in both CT and NYC is the importance of inspiring an interest in international work amongst today's students who will be tomorrow's theatre artists and audiences. Perhaps we should focus our energies on getting international work into colleges and universities, rather than banging our heads against the door of artistic directors and theatres that don't see the necessity for international work.
- Two other major points that came out of CT and NY:
 - A desire for some sort of guidelines for best practices for translators and playwrights, translators and theatres. We might look at the Guidelines brought by the Playwrights Guild of Canada by Robin in NY, at the contract guidelines created by Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, and at the Dramatist's Guild contracts, as well as others for this.
 - Neil Blackadder and Doug Howe are both interested in creating a database of available translations.
- Possible action items: create some taskforces in TINT, one to focus on the college and university angle, another on best practices language, and a third to work on the construction of the database. As part of the first taskforce's work, or as a separate initiative, could be the development of and application for a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar or Institute. Neil Blackadder, Jean Graham-Jones and I had batted this possibility around a bit. As we all already have commitments for this summer, we'd be looking at the summer of 2016. These programs can run anywhere from two-five weeks, and would be an excellent way of orienting teachers and grad students to international work in translation.