

Seminar H –Translation Games Meets Enemies

Dr Ricarda Vidal talked about the idea behind Translation Games: that language is not just confined to words. She explained the principle of taking a piece of writing and translating it across mediums such as film, design, choreography, even scent, the idea being that a piece of an art can have an essence which can be grasped and translated across other, different art forms. Ricarda used this to consider questions around translation such as its meaning in an artistic context.

Poet SJ Fowler then talked about the Enemies project, which explores poetry in collaboration, and brings European poets to other European cities, allowing them to reach new audiences and form relationships with other artists. Steven is monolingual and is therefore reluctant to talk with too much authority about 'translation' but has been working on the Translation Games project with Ricarda.

They both discussed the idea that it is impossible to be completely faithful when translating, so you must be free, and emphasised the avant-gardism and freedom of Translation Games. Steven added that he felt that Ricarda's background in translation made her emphasise faithfulness and the responsibility of translation more, while he encourages the idea of drawing inspiration for new art from existing art.

The seminar group was then split into smaller groups and talked about the concept of translation. Topics of conversation included:

- the difference between translators and interpreters
- the idea that people with backgrounds in different media would see different things in a text (using 'text' in the loosest sense), and the idea that every single new reading of a text is a new performance
- one translator new to translation felt that she didn't want translations to sound so English that you lost a sense of the original voice, that she wanted it to sound like it had been translated so people would not think it was another English voice
- the true meaning of faithfulness to a text and whether it does indeed have an integral quality. One translator expressed wariness at the idea of art having an 'essence' as it can inspire several different interpretations, all of which are valid
- the amount that a translator's own presence can be felt in their translations; some felt that this was inevitable, as you cannot leave your own personality and culture out of this work, while others felt it was something translators should strive to avoid
- whether as a translator your ultimate responsibility is to a writer or an audience or both

Ricarda and Steven then screened a film that had been produced as part of Translation Games, itself a translation of a poem, and the delegates again worked in small groups to produce a translation of this film. One group of German-English

translators were also given a version of the poem that Ricarda had translated into German, and worked on turning it back into English.

At the end of the session, the groups shared their very different responses with the other delegates, showing different interpretations and translations not only of the text but of the challenge itself:

- One group had done a fairly straight translation and nominated a single person to read it aloud, trying to capture the language evoked by the (wordless) film
- One group had worked on a kind of soundscape collaborative piece, trying to capture the mood and sound of the film through language
- One group fed back to the others on their impressions of the film, what they had taken from it and why they had struggled to agree on producing a translation
- The final group read aloud their translation from the German.

Ricarda felt, and it was generally agreed, that in each response there were certain shared elements and moods relating to each other, to the film and to the original poem, which Steven concluded the session by reading aloud.