



## SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

### TRADUTTORE TRADITORE? RECOGNIZING AND PROMOTING THE CRITICAL ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN A GLOBAL CULTURE

Session 461

February 20-26, 2009



#### SESSION SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In February 2009, the Salzburg Global Seminar convened a conference at Schloss Leopoldskron entitled “**Traduttore Traditore? Recognizing and Promoting the Critical Role of Translation in a Global Culture.**” As an organization committed to seeking solutions to issues of global concern and to promoting dialogue among cultures for more than sixty years, the Salzburg Global Seminar felt this was an issue particularly deserving of greater focus and attention. To this end, and with the generous support of The Edward T. Cone Foundation, the Seminar brought together more than seventy literary translators and writers, agents, publishers, critics, scholars, cultural authorities, and translation advocates from around the world to shed new light on the unsung art of literary translation and on the vital role translators play in making literature accessible to international audiences.

The five-day residential programme comprised a number of plenary elements – a keynote lecture, seven panel discussions, whose subjects ranged from broad context to individual case-studies (Taking Stock: Translation in a Globalised World; What Can Translators and Their Associations Do to Promote Translation?; How Can International Organisations and the Public Sector Be Advocates?; The Publishing World, Friend and/or Foe?; Building an Audience for Translation; NGOs, Philanthropists and Translation Centres as Activists; and The Role of the Academy in Promoting Translation) as well as a number of other more informal presentations and roundtables.

In addition to the plenary programme, four working groups met over the course of the week to focus attention and expertise on four specific questions, and taking into account the discussions in the plenary proceedings, to produce a series of concrete recommendations to be put to stakeholders at the end of the Seminar. The four working topics, and the headings under which the recommendations fall, are:

- **How is it possible to influence the publishing world?**
- **How can we make the case for public and private sector funding?**
- **What is the role of literary translation in the educational process?**
- **What can translators and their associations do to promote literary translation?**

Some of the main themes that emerged over the course of the week included ways to create greater demand for translation through various audience-building efforts driven by book fairs, libraries, schools, prizes, the media, and the web; the importance of English as a “platform language” to dramatically increase the chances of a book being translated into other, less common languages; how to counter the “invisibility” of the translator, often working in isolation, and empower him/her to be a visible advocate for literature in translation; how to use the new media as a tool for marketing, making translations more available, and reaching new audiences; and, finally, how to influence the Academy (at all educational levels) to include translation as a critical component in

curricula, including better translation training, global reading lists, and a change in the widely held view that translation is an activity inferior to original scholarly research.

The recommendations developed by the working groups and resulting from multiple days of debate and discussion are summarized below. A full report on the translation program (Session 461), held February 20-26, 2009 in Salzburg, Austria, providing additional context and a more complete description of key points will be widely disseminated and made available on the Salzburg Global Seminar website [www.salzburgglobal.org](http://www.salzburgglobal.org). Please contact Susanna Seidl-Fox (program director) if you would like to receive a copy of the report: [sfox@salzburgglobal.org](mailto:sfox@salzburgglobal.org).

#### A. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO INFLUENCE THE PUBLISHING WORLD?

It was necessary within this group to make the distinction again between publishers in English-language markets and others, but it was felt that some of the initiatives that would help increase the flow of translated literature into the U.K. and U.S. might also be useful ways of broadening the range of literatures that make up the translated sector of other markets. The aim is not merely to increase numbers, however, but to improve the chances of success of each title – increasing the possible reach of each book. It is important that any initiatives have a long-term perspective that considers sustainability – not, in other words, simply throwing money at one individual title after another.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations fall into four general areas: information for publishers, funding and financial issues, audience development and the role of the translator.

##### Information for publishers:

- There should be an increase in the number and ambition of exchange programmes, and share information about the many successes that have resulted from these.
- Publishers should receive more and (importantly) better-quality sample translations of a wide range of books; and reliable reviews of un-translated titles, reports from reliable readers – and all this information should be gathered into a single online location.
- Step-by-step guidelines should be produced on how to publish a translation for publishers who never have before.
- Information about all funding sources should be gathered into a single online location.
- Publishers should also be given more ammunition (from translators themselves, for example) to help them make a clearer, more focused case for the importance of translation and funding. [See also the arguments suggested in ‘How can we make the case...’ below.]

##### Funding and financial issues:

- There should be funding to support a network of translation centres around the world, often within an academic setting – in other words, funding should support not merely translation costs, but should be enabling professional development of translators, too. [See also the recommendations under ‘What is the role of literary translation in the educational process...’ below.]
- Funding for publishers should consider not just translation costs but there should be also more funds targeted specifically for marketing.
- National / regional funding agencies could also work more closely on developing demand (reading groups, festivals, library-wide promotions, etc.) and not merely with funding the supply.

### Audience development:

- Publishers need more focus on early adopters as a way of mobilising readers in larger numbers.
- Book clubs can be brought in through backlist classics that are often translations.
- Use prizes more effectively to move books onto the next country in the chain – e.g. a chair of judges of a European prize writing directly to select U.S. publishers personally recommending the winning / short-listed book(s); high-quality sample translations into English being commissioned for all short-listed books as a matter of course, etc.

### The role of the translator:

- Empower translators to help promote the books they translate, where they want to do so; they can be a book's best advocate.
- Publishers' contracts should include royalty clauses to enable the translator to share in success – and there could be a reasonable expectation for the translator to do more to help to promote the book, in turn. Some translators' associations could learn from others' "model contracts" in this regard.

## **B. HOW CAN WE MAKE THE CASE FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR FUNDING?**

The argument for funding can be framed in four ways:

- 1) Translation brings cultural experience, understanding and tolerance – sharing experience, promoting open minds and open, cohesive societies.
- 2) Translation brings commercial benefits – through the visibility of a culture (it brings value to tourism, business, etc.), building the creative economy (writers, translators, publishers) and in some cases (e.g. the E.U.) can build regional identity.
- 3) Translation encourages freedom of expression – it addresses the imbalance in the global dialogue, encourages new voices and diversity, and writers can be protected by an international reputation.
- 4) Translation enriches our own literary community and our own writers – world literature helps to develop forms within our own literature, allows local writers to be players in a world forum, raising aspirations and quality (through exposure to new influences), and makes the writing in the target language more dynamic too.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There should be evidence and stories collated which prove the need for and usefulness of funding. A working group from the translation sector (translators and others) should explore methodologies for evaluating success – quantitative data and qualitative value. (UNESCO should be petitioned to improve their translation database to make more accurate data available about translations worldwide.)
- Funding agencies should collaborate with one another on international projects to make best use of resources. The sector should collaborate on larger-scale translation-related projects where appropriate to make greater impact and attract funding. The E.U. should recognise the unique value of the network of translation centres and fund accordingly.
- Steps should be taken to improve dialogue between funders and the sector. The sector should engage funders, should use writers and translators as advocates, and build face-to-face relationships. In turn funders should offer a range of support to the sector based on their expertise in the literary field and market.

- Funders should invest in developing readerships, supporting projects that target new readers and broaden the audience. The sector should propose innovative projects to help to develop audiences for literature in translation.
- Public funders should seek to develop public-private funding partnerships to maximise resources, and broker relationships between private funders and the sector.

### C. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LITERARY TRANSLATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS?

The ever accelerating interaction among cultures and economies in our globalized world has increased the need for translation exponentially. We ignore that need at our peril. It is therefore imperative that translation be given a central position in the educational process. The translator is a scholar, a writer, a mediator; the translator preserves linguistic diversity by enabling people to continue to express themselves in their own language while reaching broad audiences. Thanks to the translator we gain access to information, ideas, and works of art that would otherwise be closed to us. We call upon educational policy makers and policy implementers to recognize the value of translation and to accord it the place in the curriculum it deserves. To that end we make the following recommendations:

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Translation should have a place in the university curriculum at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Translation courses will make students more conscious and more skillful writers, will encourage enrolment in advanced language courses, will promote the development of close reading and literary analysis.
- Instructors teaching courses in which students read foreign authors in translation should highlight the fact that the works have been translated; students need awareness of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the texts they study.
- Literature in translation should be introduced into anthologies for both primary and secondary education, and in courses that train primary- and secondary-school teachers to teach literature. Literature brings foreign cultures alive; textbooks for, for example, history and geography could also benefit from the inclusion of translated literary works.
- Educational institutions should establish relationships with relevant cultural institutions – local and international cultural centres, translation centres, public libraries, private book groups, online groups, etc. This would allow specialists to share skills and encourage the reading of translated literature beyond school years.
- Universities should recognise the translation of literary and academic works as scholarship and evaluate it as such. Every translation is an interpretation and requires rigorous research and analysis.
- Translation should be integrated into the curriculum even in courses not directly dealing with translation. Translation can help students learn to write their native language even without the use of another language. Instructors may ask students to “translate” a scholarly text into a more colloquial one or a text with archaisms into a more contemporary text.
- Translation should be integrated into activities outside the classroom. Students in a translation course can work with theater students on a play, produce an on-line translation journal showcasing their work, form a translation society to invite translators to speak about their work, or constitute a translation bureau to translate documents for immigrants.

- Translation from a foreign language into the native language should be used as a tool for advanced language learning. Comparing source language and target language points up differences between languages at the most basic cognitive level. Every choice of lexical item or syntactic construction forces the translator to grapple with those differences. Students can offer workshops in schools on bilingual poetry or story writing for children who have a home language that differs from the local language

[D] WHAT CAN TRANSLATORS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS DO TO PROMOTE LITERARY TRANSLATION?

This group explored the following themes:

- 1) Legal and financial circumstances of translators  
There is no easy solution as different countries have different legal systems. In some countries they are not classified as creative artists. It is the role of the association to ensure that members have necessary information and their interests are protected; an association needs to be strong to negotiate effectively, and there is strength in numbers. Much depends on the contract being fair (hence fair rates) and its being enforceable (some countries lack the legal protection for contracts that makes it possible to enforce copyright).
- 2) Visibility  
The translator is invisible, and could be made visible, but some countries have no organisations to make this happen. And if translators are invisible to the public, their issues (conditions, pay, etc.) will inevitably be invisible too. Strategies are needed to highlight translation and what it involves, including performance-based strategies / events.
- 3) A virtual community for literary translators  
A virtual community would make it possible to share knowledge and offer networking opportunities. A social networking site might offer this platform. A collaborative database could track statistics on what has been published, including summaries of new books that might be considered for publication.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The best copyright / contract law provisions around the world should be assembled by FIT in a database for consultation by countries / associations where no such law exists; there might also be a primer on contract / copyright law.
- Associations should lobby for copyright law if there is none in their country and monitor this to make sure it is enforced.
- Associations should ensure that translators are aware of local contract and copyright law and their rights.
- In countries without translators' associations, the establishment of these should be supported by those already existing in other countries.
- Translators should have access to literary agents or copyright lawyers to assist with negotiation – associations could retain these (out of a part of membership fees) as a benefit of membership, or maintain a list of those agents / lawyers willing to offer this service.
- Associations should advocate for translators to be classified as creative artists and receive related benefits.

- In countries where copyright collecting agencies do not exist, this model should be explored.
  - Efforts should be made to showcase literary translation at book fairs, especially with events that involve public interaction.
  - Publishers should be encouraged to involve translators in the promotion of translated literature.
- Associations could increase the visibility of translators through eye-catching advertising campaign for universities, libraries, etc. (An example suggested labeled translators' headshots with the name of the author they translated – "Meet the translators – your new old friends.")
  - Associations and translators should seek greater media coverage, and not merely interviews / reviews – e.g. a short story in various translations?
  - Translators and their associations should make better use of the web, by creating their own resources (e.g. translators' blogs) and by taking advantage of existing high-profile sites (adding translators' names to Wikipedia articles about books; alerting Google to International Translation Day and lobbying for them to foreground it, etc.).
  - Alongside visibility in books and book promotion, associations and translators should consider means of improving visibility in the graphic/performing arts.
  - Translators' houses and translators' centres (with regular residencies) should be supported – local associations should petition the European Commission and other funders to do this. And local arts councils should be petitioned for general support for translation.
  - Some of the 'Visibility' recommendations arising from the CEATL survey ([www.ceatl.eu/docs/surveyuk.pdf](http://www.ceatl.eu/docs/surveyuk.pdf)) should be taken up.
  - Associations should lobby organisers of writing prizes to have specific translators' prizes.
  - Associations and translators should support WALTIC, where translators and writers participate on an equal footing.



### SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

The Salzburg Global Seminar is a unique international institution focused on global change – a place dedicated to candid dialogue, fresh thinking and the search for innovative but practical solutions. Founded in 1947, it challenges current and future leaders to develop creative ideas for solving global problems, and has brought more than 25,000 participants from 150 countries and regions to take part in its programs.

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