

## **Introduction**

Since the EU declared 2001 Year of Languages, *EnterText* has expressed a commitment to seeking and publishing academic or creative items involving translation. From the start, we have been eager to avoid a situation where English becomes the assumed language of destination, so, although we are an English-medium journal, we have already been pleased to carry creative work translated between a number of languages, many of them at our invitation. This issue, however, represents an important new step for *EnterText* in that it inaugurates our relationship with the theorisation of translation and the publication of academic articles to do with language, as well as presenting some creative work in translation, and some short essays about the act of translation itself, and about specific poetic traditions which are diversifying into new language contexts.

Translation is never a simple matter. It always involves two related but non-identical terms or factors, or groups of terms, exhibiting a transition which can be modelled in time and in space, involving an “across” or “bridging” dimension (a *traws* element, to borrow a term from Welsh, as explained in Twm Morys’s article). It is of particular and general interest because its problematics—which occur in the linguistic field—are symbolic of many of the problematics of the modern world. Global politics and individual lives are constantly negotiating “translations” between states before and after, between conditions here and there, between ourselves and others, between the “I” and the “not-I” as well as between texts. And it could be argued, with some force, that one of the prime elephant-traps of our time is the

assumption of equivalence where none really exists. Acts of translation—in the conventional sense of the conversion of a text in one language to one with similar meaning in another—are always about the dynamic between two *different* texts, whether understood in terms of Derrida’s *différance* or not. It is also vital that we remember what James Joyce pointed out nearly a century ago: that even the apparently identical may mask major difference. “How different,” he wrote in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as his Irish alter ego, Stephen Dedalus, contrasts himself with an Englishman, “are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine.” Even within the context of one language there may be many cultures. As an increasing proportion of humanity is programmed to consume similar products and to circulate ideas marketed with similar language—we may call it, for convenience, being groomed to drink Coca Cola—we should not forget that it will not taste the same in every mouth.

Paradoxically it is precisely by keeping such warnings in mind that we may the more successfully communicate between languages and across cultural divides. Just because translation is problematic, and involves the impossibility of exact equivalence, it does not mean that it is vitiated from the start, or doomed to failure. Once the necessary gap between source language and target language is recognised it can be celebrated, and used creatively, but also with precision. The interface is all. As with an engineering product, it is the fit between two congruent but radically different parts that enables the machine to function. In today’s world, translation is an essential vehicle of knowledge transmission and mutual understanding, between social groups ranging from the small to the global. Although that transmission and that understanding can never be complete or finished, they are the best we have—and *at their best*, they can be inspirational tools.

This edition on the theme of “Translation, Transcreation” is in three parts. It opens with a group of selected conference papers on the theme of Postcolonial Translation. These are followed by some short pieces involving creative acts of translation, of a wide geographical and historical range. Finally a triple presentation about the languages of the Andes and Amazon introduces a project to promote interest in the regional cultures and languages of South America, particularly those of Peru.

The bulk of the issue, then, is made up of selected papers from a conference held at Warwick University on 9 March 2002. Titled “Translating the Postcolonial” and hosted by the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies, it provided a wide-ranging and stimulating forum for international translation scholars and postgraduate students to exchange ideas and discuss their research. We are pleased to represent both groups of conference participators: eminent academics and research students. Authors include one of the foremost academics in the field, Professor Edwin Gentzler of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he is Director of the Translation Center, and the convenor of the conference John Gilmore, as well as Katia Mérine, who is working on her PhD at Warwick. As always, *EnterText* is delighted to publish fine work by research students, as well as that of recognised experts.

North America, of course, has come late to an identification with the term “postcolonial.” Edwin Gentzler gives a stimulating assessment of the present state of translation studies in the Americas, in a wide-ranging essay which will be of interest to those new to the field as well as to the experts. He begins with an exposition of Lawrence Venuti’s theory of “foreignizing” translation, set up against the traditional assumption that the objective of translation is that it should be an invisible practice, but finds this too polarised. He proceeds to investigate the ideas of French Canadian

feminist theorists, Nicole Brossard and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, who “translate” some concepts from gender studies to apply them to the specifics of translation, and finally examines the idea of translation as “cannibalism,” with the emphasis on creative appropriation, particularly as expounded by the de Campos brothers of Brazil. His conclusion is that the focus of the latter approach on “transcreation” is most promising of the theories because it remains open to possibilities. What is needed, at this early stage of such theorising, is, he argues, a willingness to experiment, and to accept diverse solutions.

The two papers which follow both develop the American theme with a focus on the Caribbean. Nadia Lie, Professor at the Catholic University of Leuven (Louvain), Belgium, takes Retamar’s famous essay *Calibán* as her key text, discussing the Cuban political context into which it emerged in 1971, and the ways in which its initial meanings have been adapted and sometimes distorted subsequently. She has some searching things to say about translation as it relates to the postcolonial field, and considers the possibility that artistic rewritings of canonical works, so central a strategy of postcolonial literatures, in which Shakespeare’s *Tempest* has played a key role, might be included under the “translation” heading, broadly conceived. While positing that there is “much to learn from the scrupulous attention to material signifiers that translators display,” she also raises the wider question of moral responsibility in translation—of a transformative ethic—with potentially profound and far-reaching resonance.

A much older text from the francophone, as opposed to the hispanophone, Caribbean is the focus of Katia Mérine’s paper. Discovered only in 1985, it is an extraordinary text, a Creole version of St. John’s Gospel, written in the eighteenth century but in many ways prefiguring many of the contemporary debates about

aesthetics and language in the Caribbean. Presumably the creation of a French Jesuit, written for the purposes of evangelism, it is not only a treasure-house of language from a period from which relatively few written examples of the Antillean vernacular survive, it is also fascinating as an example of cultural transcreation. The author shows how the world of the slaves was brought into play in the retelling of the story of Christ's Passion, discusses the complex relation of *La Passion* to the colonial project of assimilation, and draws a telling parallel between the unknown translator's (or transcreator's) devising of a language his hearers would understand and the conceptualisation, in our time, of a Martiniquan Creole aesthetic.

John Gilmore's article also relates to the peak of European empire in the eighteenth century, and the transatlantic slavery which sustained it, but in addition it traces links much further back. Through the trope of the parrot—so central to the metaphorisation of linguistic subservience—he examines the way eighteenth-century English poets (writing in Latin or English) drew on Latin models, in Pliny, Ovid and Statius. In the genre, the suitor presents himself poetically making a gift of a parrot to his beloved, with wry reference to the bird's imperfect use of language. As the author reminds us, it is an established part of the classical foundation of the tradition to hint that eloquence in the subordinate implies insubordination and must be curbed. It is not hard to see a gender politics in the application of the trope. However, when the politics of race are inserted into the eighteenth-century manifestations of the genre, a new edge emerges. The focus turns to the place of Francis Williams, an eighteenth-century black Jamaican whose father had been a slave, famous as the author of a Latin ode welcoming a new Governor to Jamaica. Although, understandably, he did not deploy the parrot trope, others used it disparagingly of him, notably as eminent a person as the Scottish philosopher David Hume. As the essay shows, the precise

textual comparisons are compelling, and damning. Full texts of the some of the works discussed are appended, including a translation from Latin into the idiom of eighteenth-century poetry in English by John Gilmore himself.

A colonial and postcolonial history closer to the here and now is the target of Aidan O'Malley's article. He begins with acknowledging the controversy over terminology: the use of the blanket term "postcolonial" is sometimes regarded as erasing difference and promoting false assumptions about the specificities of the history and culture of Ireland. The most famous play of the Irish playwright Brian Friel is undoubtedly *Translations*, but while that text from 1980 is touched on, the principal focus of discussion is his subsequent drama *The Communication Cord*, a 1982 response to its predecessor which has received relatively little critical attention. The paper argues that the later play takes the earlier one's exploration of colonial acts of translation and translates its concerns into the postcolonial. This relates to the house which is the central figure of the play—a metaphor for language—a house which is read as "a piously translated construction" which, "in producing an effect of authenticity, would seek to deny its status as a translation." With reference to Heidegger, the collapse of this house is regarded as a necessary stage towards the construction of a more robust "postcolonial home" conceived in terms of language. The play is seen as positing a counter-hegemonic postcolonial strategy involving ambivalent and conflicting dynamics. It returns us to the unpredictability of language, a fitting place, perhaps, for such an arc of diverse papers to come to rest. The field of postcolonial studies is itself a site of transitions and the analysis of transitions, including translation and transcreation. As Nadia Lie suggests, postcolonialism itself seems to have become a language into which one can translate and which can fulfil specific rhetorical functions.

The group of creative pieces involving translation, or transcreations, opens with a poem in Polish by the Nobel prize-winning poet Wisława Szymborska. It is published with a translation into English by Piotr Kuhiwczak and Susan Bassnett, who, of course, is well-known in the field of translation studies and as Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Warwick was closely involved with the conference. The poem reminds us that there is no such thing as the apolitical, and refers to the famous controversy over the shape of a Central American conference table to which Edwin Gentzler's paper makes an opening reference. This is followed by two short pieces containing translations, but also with reflections on the act of translation, by J. Gill Holland. He presents some of the writings of the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, translated into English (one with its Norwegian original), and discusses the choices a translator has to make. Ancient Chinese literature is the topic of his other piece. He translates a poem by T'ao Ch'ien (T'ao yuan-ming), who lived from 365-427CE, and comments on the useful lessons which can be learnt by today's anglophone creative writing students from such a seemingly remote but beautiful tradition. The third contributor to this group of creative pieces is Catherine Daly, who presents some of the work of the extraordinary medieval mystic Marguerite Porette, in free poetic adaptation, itself a different kind of translation. Porette of Hainault, as she was also known, was burned at the stake in 1310 for her refusal to succumb to what we might today call the church's gagging orders.

Following this, the Welsh-language poet Twm Morys introduces to English-speaking readers in a short essay the Welsh tradition of strict-metre poetry, *Cerdd Dafod* ("Tongue Craft"), derived from the middle ages but still in active use today. It is the tradition in which he chooses to work. However, since he gives here English-language exemplars of the alliterative and syllabic forms he is explaining, this too will

be of great interest to anglophone creative writers. It might have been thought that a metrical tradition of such precision which was devised for the specifics of Welsh would not be “translatable” to another language, but the beautiful poem illustrating its music in English amply proves this wrong. We are particularly pleased to publish Twm Morys now, as just a few days ago he was crowned Bard at the Eisteddfod in Wales, and it gives us an opportunity to offer him our hearty congratulations:

*llongyfarchiadau!*

Another ancient strict-metre poetic tradition still in vigorous use is the parallel subject of the next short piece. Debjani Chatterjee introduces the ghazal, the lyric form derived from Arabic tradition and particularly associated with Urdu, though today it is being used, as she points out, also in a number of other Indic languages, as well as Arabic, and new poems are being written and performed—and they are typically written *for* performance—wherever inheritors and enthusiasts of the tradition now live, including the UK. It is a reminder that the adaptation of specific aesthetic forms to different times and places, and the adoption of forms originating in one language into another, are also kinds of translation.

Finally, an unusual group of papers rounds off this edition. They echo Edwin Gentzler’s starting point in an awareness of the politics of language practice in the Americas, and of the indigenous or regional languages of the Americas, and are of particular interest because they address the question of global communities and cultural transition as it impacts on language, with a special focus on endangered languages. Also, they do so in a new idiom, and with a particular rationale for internet publication. They focus on the role the international South American community—particularly that of Peru—can play in promoting the survival of the region’s languages. The idea is that by being published online educational materials can be



shared and passed on, to help keep marginalised cultures alive, whether in ancestral communities or global diasporas. Paul Goulder, who is co-ordinator of PROANDE, an educational programme for the Andes, introduces edited transcripts of two talks given in Paris and London, one by César Itier, renowned scholar of Quechua, and the second by himself. He has also translated César Itier's talk, which was delivered in Spanish, into English (the first time *EnterText* has published an academic article in translation). The first of the three-part address to the theme of "Languages of the Americas" is Paul Goulder's introduction to the idea of the "iterative relay" or *relevé iterativo* as a means of disseminating educational materials and promoting interest and discussion across scattered diasporas. The metaphor of handing on the baton, as in a relay race, is central to the idea of cumulative transfer of knowledge, as each new contributor carries forward the work already initiated. This is followed by a translation of César Itier's lecture giving an exposition of the history and current position of Quechua and Aymara, the main Andean language-families. The group of articles, and the issue of *EnterText*, are concluded by an edited transcription of Paul Goulder's own illustrated lecture introducing the Andean and Amazonian languages of Peru, in the context of some reflections on the wider question of how to keep regional languages alive in the face of unrelenting pressure for their decline. Ironically, recent history has produced the greatest absolute numbers of Quechua speakers known to history, because of the high birthrate. This apparent buoyancy may, however, prove a very easily burst bubble, as, even in one generation, the *proportion* of the population speaking Quechua has already suffered a catastrophic decline. Educational and other measures, particularly those involving diasporas, are evidently urgently needed if this wealth of languages (and Peru has, in global terms, an extraordinary number of languages within its chief language-families) is not to be

lost to posterity. Paul Goulder's concluding paper is lavishly illustrated with maps, photographs, and examples of educational materials, including audiofiles, as well as having a Macromedia Flash sequence (presenting the opening sequence of the talk as delivered) attached to its initial footnote.

Clearly the hope is that by making such materials freely available internationally online, the ready access to top-level information will of itself help to encourage an informed interest in the situation, stimulate further discussion, and make its small contribution to raising the profile of those campaigning for greater support for language programmes, whether in Latin America, Europe, or other parts of the world where similarly stark futures are being faced (we welcome responses to our Forum). The extraordinary cultural resources which languages represent are, of course, global resources which enrich us all, and to which we all owe a responsibility.

At *EnterText* we have said that we are interested in new ways of doing things, in submissions which break the mould of the conventional academic essay, and we therefore welcome the short contributions from Gill Holland, Twm Morys and Debjani Chatterjee for their use of a different idiom to communicate a thought-provoking freshness. The group of articles on Languages of the Americas is also new, not just because it includes an article in translation but because it is about new ways of raising awareness and communicating across cultural and international boundaries. We are pleased to publish such an interesting and diverse edition on such an important theme as the way we not only translate between texts, but also transcreate between cultures and situations. The internet is an unprecedented resource for such practices, and perhaps the "true home" of all we mean by the postcolonial.

Paula Burnett, Editor