

Interpreting, Representing and Recording

*Papers of the post-graduate conference
held at the University of Warwick
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Cristina Marinetti & Susan Bassnett

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Introduction

Prof. Susan Bassnett
University of Warwick

The annual Warwick Doctoral Conference has come to be seen today as a tradition. When the conference was first held some ten years ago, a small number of post-graduate students offered papers. In 2006, the number of students wanting to present papers had to be restricted, since so many people, not only from within Warwick but from other universities wanted to take part. The papers collected here are representative of the work presented on that occasion.

The purpose of the Warwick Doctoral Conference has remained unchanged over time. The event was originally conceived of as a training session for doctoral students, a safe space in which they could present work in progress to their peers and to an invited audience. Crucial to the success of the event are the visiting experts, three or four senior academics whose role is to comment on the papers and offer suggestions for improvement. In 2006 the visiting experts – Prof. John Drakakis (University of Sterling) Professor Daniel Gile (Université Lumière Lyon 2, France) Dr. Christina Schäffner (Aston University) and Dr. Michaela Wolf (Universität Graz, Austria) – were scholars whose breadth of research interests enabled them to offer helpful advice on a whole range of diverse topics.

The impulse to hold a doctoral conference back in the mid-1990s came in fact from the diversity of research topics being pursued by post-graduates in the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies. The Centre strategy at MA level has always been to allow students to cross over between fields of interest, combining a course in comparative literary theory, for example, with courses on post-colonial writing or on translation studies. As a result, PhD topics are hard to categorise under a single umbrella, since they reflect the interdisciplinarity of the Centre as a whole. Current PhD theses due to be submitted during the present academic year include:

Beyond the Play-text: The Relationship between Text and Performance in the Translation of Il servitore di due padroni

Placing Oneself: Traveller's Versions of Encounter with the Other

Poetry Translation as Translating the Gestalt in a Poem

Reciprocal Literary Images of the British and the Chinese from 1750s to 1850s

Relocating the Body: Memory, Ritual and Form in Caribbean Literature

Translators as Social Agents: the Case of Translated Fantasy Books in Taiwan

The Doctoral Conference has enabled students to bring their work into the public domain, to have the benefit of expert advice from outside the Centre, and also, perhaps most importantly, to gain experience of presenting a short conference paper. Students learn how to structure a fifteen minute paper, how to use power-point or hand-outs, how to project their voices, how to ensure they keep to time. They are encouraged to use the event in order to try out papers that may then be developed and presented elsewhere and over the years a number of publications have resulted from the initial presentation at the conference.

In 2005 the Warwick Doctoral Conference expanded significantly, due to two important developments. The first of these was the timing of the conference to coincide with the prestigious annual Snell-Hornby Lecture. The Inaugural Lecture was given by Prof Mary

Sn-H herself in 2005, and she kindly attended the 2006 event also, at which the guest of honour was Prof Daniel Gile of the Université Lumière Lyon. Also in 2005, thanks to funding from ACUME (A Cultural Memory Network) post-graduates from Sweden, Cyprus, Malta and Italy joined us and gave papers. In 2006, that practice continued, and students from institutions within the ACUME network were once again welcome participants.

The papers collected here reflect work by doctoral candidates at very different stages of development. In some cases, they have barely begun their studies, while others are now working towards completion. The shape and nature of the papers reflects the different levels of development: in some cases, basic research questions are being posed, in other cases an argument has already been developed and underpins the paper, while others have opted for a case-study approach. The format of the fifteen minute presentation necessarily constrains what can be done within such a tight time frame, and speakers have to decide whether to work in broad brush strokes or from the perspective of a miniaturist. This diversity of approaches is also useful, as students learn from one another and come also to see what kind of changes they need to make to a thesis chapter in order to make their work meaningful to an audience.

The Doctoral Conference is one of the highlights of the year for the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies. It is an occasion when students show an extraordinary degree of commitment to their research and to the event, which they treat with the utmost professionalism. It is an occasion when staff and students welcome colleagues from other universities who have come to share food, drink and ideas with us for two days to our mutual benefit. It is an occasion that serves to remind us all that this is what genuine education means – having the courage to bring ideas out into the open, welcoming different views and approaches, challenging and debating where required and above all, enjoying the visible evidence of so many students' sheer hard work and talent. These papers are intended to convey some of the variety of work presented in June 2006 at the most recent Warwick Doctoral conference.

Homeland, Mother-land and Imaginary Places: Michèle Roberts and Helen Chadwick's Interpretations

Maria Luísa Coelho
Universidade do Minho, Portugal

A quick glance at the most recent work produced in British Cultural Studies will not fail to perceive a generalized interest, sometimes even a certain anxiety, in what Britishness stands for at the end of a millennium and the beginning of a new one.ⁱ Robin Cohen, for example, expresses this problematic issue in the introduction to his book *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the Others*: “[t]his book is concerned with the historical, social and political construction of a British identity. The nature and contours of such an identity are exceptionally difficult to describe, and analyse” (1). This problem has been felt since the end of the empire which, roughly speaking, came to an end some thirty years after the Second World War.ⁱⁱ However, a loss of national coherence had already been in gestation before the imperial era, since Great Britain is a political entity made up of several nations. The British Isles have always had a multicultural, multiethnic composition since the very beginning of their invasion and settlement.

It is thus understandable that words such as ‘homeland’ or ‘motherland’, words so pervasive in the definition of the German ‘*heimat*’, for example, do not find an echo across the Channel, for here there are evident signs of fragmentation in the national, territorialized identity. Moreover, the difficulty in defining a British identity is also part of a more general trend,ⁱⁱⁱ which has as much to do with the effects of globalization as of postmodern thought, for both destabilise the idea of a fixed identity and a fixed place for its development. ‘Identity’ has become one of the fashionable nodal terms in social science discourse and a crucial preoccupation of our time. A current understanding of identity rejects the essentialist conception of a unified, coherent and fixed entity, envisaging it, in opposition, as a dynamic process, developed from the individual’s engagement in social relations. Hence, in postmodern discourse identity is understood as a crossroad of a multiplicity of factors such as class, race, ethnicity, sex and religion; it is, as Sheila Allen states, a “social product located in space and time” (51).

Identity is thus particularly linked to a sense of place, another widely discussed term, especially within geography, which rediscovered place in the 1970s, by emphasising “that to be human is to be ‘in place’” (Cresswell, 12).^{iv} In “Body, Self, and Landscape: A Geographical Inquiry into the Place-World”, Edward S. Casey stresses the interrelatedness of self and place: “[a]ny effort to assess the relationship between self and place should point not just to reciprocal influence (that much any ecologically sensitive account would maintain) but, more radically, to constitutive co-ingredience: each is essential to the being of the other. In effect, there *is no place without self; and no self without place*” (406). However, this place has come to be understood as a fluid concept, permanently reworked by a range of social practices. According to Tim Cresswell, “[p]lace is constituted though reiterative social practice – place is made and remade on a daily basis . . . Place is the raw material for the creative production of identity rather than an a-priori label of identity” (24).

The de-essentialization of place is also the result of migrations that have been going on steadily since the last century and that create places of hybrid cultures such as Britain, thus changing the relation between individuals and place. For Ernst van Alphen, however, that

does not simply mean the radical disconnection and displacement of place from culture, for “[o]ne could even argue, that because of (virtual) migrancy, the relationship between cultural identity and place has become more crucial. The difference is that we are no longer speaking about geographical place, but rather about imagined place” (56). Alphen also clarifies how ‘imagined’ is not the same as ‘imaginary’: “imagined places do have a connection with a place that exists geographically. However, the mode in which this geographic place is *experienced* is ontologically different: geographic place is experienced not through real interaction, but rather through the imagination” (56). This also means that when dealing with migrants’ experiences, imagination and memory are not opposing brain processes but intermingled ones, turning remembering into an active, creative activity and fusing present, past and future. The present is at stake in this rather fluid vision of migrant identity, since the “act of imagining homeland identity is radically framed by the historical dimensions of the place where the imagining is taking place” (Alphen, 67).

All the above-mentioned issues are present when we turn our attention to the visual artist Helen Chadwick and the writer Michèle Roberts. Both were born in Britain (Chadwick in 1953 and Roberts in 1949) but have mixed European origins, since Roberts’ mother was French^v and Chadwick’s was Greek. Chadwick’s mother had met her future British husband during the Second World War and followed him to his home country when the war was over;^{vi} Monique, Roberts’ mother, was working as a French school assistant in Wales when she met Roberts’ father, who was in the army and stationed near the school.^{vii} In both families the connection to the mother’s country of origin was strongly maintained, for the Roberts and the Chadwicks used to spend their holidays in France and Greece respectively and Michèle was even educated in a Catholic convent school. This paper will particularly focus on the traces of a cultural otherness in Roberts’ and Chadwick’s work. Furthermore, these artists’ search for cultural otherness is unequivocally connected with the search for the mother and for the lost bonds between mother and child. In their work ‘mother-land’ becomes an ‘imagined’ country, a place with geographical roots but reworked through memory and imagination into a blissful paradise. I will also try to prove how this movement towards otherness and the mother is influenced by what the artists carry from their British milieu thus proving the complexities and dynamics of identity formation as part of the individual’s engagement in multiple social relations. When Helen Chadwick first exhibited in 1977,^{viii} her practice as a visual artist was clearly influenced by the impact of the feminist movement in Britain at that time. This influence is obvious in works such as *Sofa and Body Cushions* (1975), *Domestic Sanitation* (1976) or *In the Kitchen* (1977), for in them we see an art committed to making the personal and private political, exposing women’s oppression in the performance of routinely domestic tasks and stereotypical roles, together with the wish to transgress these boundaries and to celebrate woman’s body, sexuality, power and difference.



Fig. 1. Helen Chadwick: *In the Kitchen* (1977)^{ix}

There is also an element of laughter, sometimes carnivalesque laughter in the Bakhtinian sense, a celebration of ‘the bodily lower stratum’, here unmistakably a female one. In the 90s her work took a new turn as the artist became fascinated with the process of in-vitro fertilization and with the advance of science, but in between Chadwick turned her attention to herself and her life, a tactic that was also in agreement with feminism, which encouraged women to speak about themselves. From this more autobiographical phase come works such as *Ego Geometria Sum*, produced between 1982 and 1984, and *Lofos Nymphon*, from 1987.



Fig. 2. Helen Chadwick: *Lofos Nymphon II: North, Agia Marina* (1987)

In *Lofos Nymphon*, together with the confessional tone there is a search for the mother and for a blissful paradise, issues widely debated by feminists such as Julia Kristeva and H  l  ne Cixous,^x writers whom Chadwick read with avid interest. It is worth remembering that Chadwick was exposed to such theoretical framework in the UK, particularly in the 70s and 80s as a result of the rise of a Third Wave of Feminism. Therefore, her interest in her mother and her mother’s land is a consequence of her family roots which are reimagined through the historical dimensions of Britain, where the artist lived.

Lofos Nymphon is a sequence consisting of five egg-shaped canvases, where Chadwick and her mother stand, often embracing (hence emphasising the interrelatedness of mother and offspring), and against a Greek landscape. This Greek setting is seen from the balcony of the house Chadwick’s mother had to abandon when she moved to England. As stated by Mark Sladen, “*Lofos Nymphon* conflates the mother’s body with homeland, and creates a fantasy of return to each” (19). The return to an origin is emphasised by the canvases’ shape – egg-like, thus pointing to the moment of birth. The playful, ironic and subversive characteristic observed in previous works is also present in *Lofos Nymphon*, though not to such a great extent: against the term ‘nymph’, which derives from the Greek word meaning a girl of marriageable age,^{xi} Chadwick places two female bodies; one surely young but the other exhibiting signs of old age. In *Lofos Nymphon* Chadwick, clearly influenced by the teachings of feminism, shows how female bodies, whether young or old, can be perceived as sacred and divine, as well as earthly and profane. She also shows a place that is as much the product of her imagination as of a real location for, on the one hand, Greece is here a metaphor for the desired mother’s body; it is also a place of fantasy, as Mark Sladen appropriately puts it, a paradisiacal land where mother and child can become one again; on the other hand, this fantasy is created from a concrete geographical place, a place connected with a particular people, with its customs, its laws and traditions, its way of occupying and imprinting their mark on the land; a place whose culture Chadwick inherited. Reality and imagination coexist and mingle. However, in Chadwick’s work, not only do

reality and imagination mingle, but also past and present, different cultures and experiences. And nowhere is this process more evident than in her series *Viral Landscapes* (1988-89).



Fig. 3. Helen Chadwick: *Viral Landscape No. 2* (1988-89)

This series illustrates the move in Chadwick's work from self-exposure and playfulness to something more cerebral and of more complex interpretation. Surely Chadwick is still exploring her body but, tired of being criticised by feminist circles, which saw in her previous work an objectification of women's bodies exposed to the male gaze (Östlund, 27), she moves from the exterior body to the interior one.

In *Viral Landscapes* Chadwick brings to the forefront of the photographic composition her own body fluids, cellular material taken from her cervix, vagina, mouth and ear, questioning the traditional opposition interior/exterior body by exposing what is inside to the outside world, whether that be a natural landscape (in this case the roughness of the Pembrokeshire coast in Wales) or the art gallery. Thus, these photographs challenge the external boundaries of the human body, inviting the viewer to see the body's interrelatedness with the outside world. But other issues are now at stake since Chadwick manipulated the images digitally, synthesizing the body fluids spread randomly against a background of coastal pictures from Wales with bright, strong patches of paint. These patches were made by mixing the paint with sea water. The place where Chadwick went to perform this operation was not Pembrokeshire, as one might have supposed, but Greece, and knowing that makes the outbursts of intense colour look very Mediterranean.^{xii}



Fig. 4. Helen Chadwick: making paintings used in the series *Viral Landscape*

This palette of strong colours is the key to other interpretations. On an autobiographical level Chadwick stresses how her identity, metonymically represented by the body fluids, is built from a whole range of conditions, that can be traced back to British and Greek heritages –

hence the presence of different geographies and places in the making of *Viral Landscapes*. This self - after all, any self - is a social being whose identity is permanently built from the myriad of relations she establishes, from the experiences she lives, places she inhabits. Therefore, fragmentation is not a synonym for reduction but for expansion of the being and its borders. Hybridism stands for the opening up of the 'I' to otherness. Paraphrasing the artist, difference is not damage but potential (Chadwick, 97). In this sense, the word 'viral', present in the title of this work, is far from having a negative connotation. When commenting about this title, Chadwick insisted that viruses should here be seen as elements of change, creating a situation where "rigid boundaries cease to be" (97). 'Viral landscapes' shouldn't suggest "ruined catastrophic surfaces but territories of a prolific encounter, the exchange of living and informational systems at the shoreline of culture" (97).

In interviews and lectures, Michèle Roberts hardly ever fails to mention her French heritage and her ties to her mother's home country. In her website (www.micheleroberts.co.uk) the writer states: "I was born in 1949, twenty minutes after my twin sister Marguerite, to a French mother and an English father. I grew up in Edgware, a suburb of north-west London. My sisters and I attended two local convent schools. Summer holidays were spent at the house of our French grandparents in Normandy, near Etretat, in the Pays de Caux". The summer holidays in France seem of great importance to her since they are placed along with major events of a person's life: birth, place of living, education. Roberts' thus sees her identity as much a product of British as of French influences.

The relation to French culture, history, and geographical location is further established in *During Mother's Absence*. At the end of this book of short stories there is a section doubly entitled "Une Glossaire/ A Glossary" where Roberts explains the importance and meaning of several French words. These words can refer to geographical places, food, traditional feasts, rooms of the house and domestic furniture. However, more developed are the entries referring to the members of the family who have always lived in the French village house. One becomes soon aware that more than a denotative glossary, with entries providing factual, objective information, Roberts' 'glossaire' develops a loose narrative of her childhood years spent in France and of her still dominant connection to a French background. The poetic quality of each entry renders to the glossary a literary dimension. In addition, memory is blurred by feelings, tender pictures of relatives, recollections that bring Roberts back to her lost childhood. Geographical places are mingled with the past, with a way of life, with the love for relatives, with the mother.^{xiii} France is also an absent place, like the absent mother from the title of this book, a place the writer tries to recover through her writing, knowing, at the same time, that she is creating a past and thus an imagined country. As in Chadwick's treatment of her Greek memories and culture, France is an 'imagined' place, that is, as much a real place as the product of the author's fantasy and imagination.

In this context it is useful to analyze the first entry in the glossary, which is appropriately entitled "Absence". In it Roberts blends time and space, recognizing that France brings her back to her past:

My childhood in France is vanishing, a tide going out. Each day, the receding waters stretch further away . . . I need to keep coming back to this seashore at Etretat in Normandy, to walk along the tideline and re-examine these mysterious traces, this line of fluid script, this low water-mark dividing the pebbles from the shingle; to reselect and rearrange. (131)

The excerpt also makes clear the fictional process involved in remembering the past since Roberts refers to this past as the "line of fluid script", a script that has to be reselected and rearranged. Remembering is keeping the past alive, is recapturing the bond between being and place, but remembering is also creating fiction by the use of the imagination. It is not so much *recapturing* a past as *re-creating* it. As mentioned before, recollections of her childhood in

France bring Michèle Roberts back to a lost paradisiacal relation with the mother. Such a relation is discussed by Roberts in her essay “The Place of Imagination”:

Over the past few years I’ve come across, quite by chance, different exhibitions or collections of Black-and-white photographs by French photographers representing the daily lives of ordinary working people in the forties, fifties and early sixties in France . . . These images come from the period of my own childhood spent partly in France. They give me back what I have lost – childhood – and enable me to re-create it idealistically as a happy paradise. They stand in, these images of lost bliss, as images of something even more specific than childhood: she who is paradise itself for the baby, the growing child: the mother. (19-20)

The same identification between France and mother previously seen in the glossary can be found in this essay. Moreover, the writer also acknowledges that the search for her French roots is the search for her lost childhood and the search for the lost paradisiacal relation between mother and child. Roberts also recognizes that in this searching process she is conflating memory and fiction; she is blending real space, characters and events with figments of her own imagination.

Trying to answer to the question of her writing being autobiographical,^{xiv} Roberts concludes: “I feel that autobiography and imagination are deeply connected” (“The Place of Imagination”, 14). No wonder then that in her novels the importance of the French cultural heritage in the construction of the writer’s identity, as well as social hybridism, imagined places and the search for the ‘mother-land’ are given a fictional form. Appropriate examples of this process are two of her novels, *Daughters of the House* (1992) and *Fair Exchange* (1999).

Daughters of the House is set in Blémont, a small Norman village, and in *Fair Exchange* the titles given to the chapters set the plot in different locations, some in England but the majority in France. This fictional location is used in other novels and is related to Roberts’ own biographical details. There are also plenty of references to traditional French cuisine, describing in detail the way to prepare typical dishes. Indeed, many of Roberts’ novels have the kitchen as the most recurrent setting and present characters that are busy with kitchen activities. In *Daughters of the House* the two main characters, the cousins Léonie and Thérèse, are deeply involved in the housework, regularly help Victorine, the housekeeper and a talented cook, and try to impress the grown-ups with their cooking, always French in style. Another typical feature of these novels is that though they are written in English, they abound with French words. Some brief examples should make this point clear: “[p]eel the *patates* for me for the soup, she said: and I’ll keep the pan of *choux* mixture for you to lick” (*Daughters of the House*, 46); “[a]fter the *dessert* and the fruit came the coffee” (146); “Louise ran out of the *potager*, pulling the gate shut behind her” (*Fair Exchange*, 86). It should be noticed that these words are often associated with a domestic environment (food and dishes, kitchen utensils, furniture, rooms of the house).^{xv} Also, the majority of these words have an English equivalent and their use cannot be seen as due to the difficulty in adequately expressing in English the meaning they convey in French.

In “The Place of Imagination” Roberts reflects on language, seeing it as created from absence, since it is used to designate a reality that is not there, but, at the same time and for that very reason, helping to create reality: “[l]anguage erupts out of silence and splinters it. So when I write fiction I’m creating a presence” (12). Connecting the view Roberts has of writing and language to her extensive use of French in her novels, this technique should be seen as another way to reconnect the writer to her French heritage, her childhood and her mother. In her glossary, there is also an entry for French (under the heading “Français”), an entry that shows the importance played by language in Roberts’ search for the (lost) mother: “French. The French language. My mother’s tongue. My mother-tongue, that I take in along

with her milk" (*During Mother's Absence*, 157). Searching for lost mothers is, inclusively, a dominant plot in some of her novels: in *Daughters of the House*, Thérèse's desperate search for Our Lady in the woods represents the child's urge to be reunited with her dead mother and *Fair Exchange* has at its centre a baby swap and the search for a lost father, which, in the end, turns out to be the search for the lost mother.

However, as in Chadwick's case, Roberts is also aware of being a mongrel, someone with a hybrid identity who is influenced by different cultures and contexts. She may speak of Etretat, France as home, but she also looks at these places, with their traditions and their people as an outsider: "I'm part of this huge, enduring, passionate family; yet my life in London also makes me an outsider" (*During Mother's Absence*, 177). There is ambiguity in Roberts' identity, hers is not a situation of either/or, as the writer well knows: "I was bilingual, with a French mother and an English father, and grew up hearing those two languages behave like lassos thrown across the dining-room table over supper" ("Words across the Water", 138).

What is more, this ambiguity, though sometimes disorienting, is not necessarily seen as negative, as is stated by the writer: "I've been lucky, I think, in that the circumstances of my life have meant that I've recognised the need for translation, almost from the day I was born, as simply part of the daily business of sorting out how to live with other people" ("Words across the Water", 137). Translation, as cultural hybridism, can establish a common ground for the self and the other; it can be a bridge for understanding difference. It can be a rewarding experience in that it opens up the self to otherness without losing the self in the process.

Roberts' fiction also addresses this issue since the writer creates characters with a similar hybrid identity and plots which move from England to France and vice-versa.^{xvi} *Daughters of the House*, though entirely set in France, follows the life of two cousins, one of whom- Léonie- is half-French, half-English. Because of that, Léonie is often teased or sometimes even sneered at by her French cousin and other French characters whom she meets. However, it is Léonie, and not her cousin Thérèse, who, as an adult, gets to live in the French village house and is fully integrated in her French countryside environment. *Fair Exchange* deeply explores multicultural issues, as the title of the novel suggests, presenting characters who are mostly either English or French or both, and making them go back and forth between England and France during the French Revolution. Roberts' comment in her essay "Words across the Water" aptly applies to these novels, for in them, due to the sheer power of the imagination, countries and people are brought together and the distinctions between otherness and the same, foreign and home become blurred: "[t]he waters of the imagination transform us and our emotional geography, so that she who was a stranger becomes a neighbour and what was foreign becomes the place where we are most truly at home" (146).

Michèle Roberts and Helen Chadwick are part of a multicultural British society; they are also the expression of a fragmented postmodern self. Theirs is a hybrid identity, for even when they search in their familial past for an originating land (France or Greece) this search is framed by the historical dimensions of the *now*, their present place of dwelling (Britain). Moreover, for these artists the question of a complex, disjunctive identity acquires a particular colouring, since their 'homeland', the place where they were born and have lived most of their lives, is not their 'motherland' (here taken in its literal sense). Both artists explore the issue in their work, where hybridism is constantly at stake and 'mother-land' becomes an imagined place created by memory and imagination and a blissful paradise of reconnection to the mother.

NOTES

ⁱ It is interesting to note, as Bill Schwarz does, that the development of cultural studies in Britain, particularly the intellectual break inaugurated by British Cultural Studies in the 1950s and 1960s, occurs when a coherent British identity becomes more evidently problematic and questioned. Schwarz calls this situation a “dislocation in the native culture” (166), “the decentering of the British” (166), of which British Cultural Studies can be seen as one manifestation.

ⁱⁱ India conquered its independence from Britain in 1947. In 1957 Ghana became the first British African territory to become independent and others shortly followed (South Africa, Nigeria and Tanzania in 1961, Sierra Leone in 1962, Gambia in 1965). In the east, apart from India, Malaysia made the transition to independence in 1957 and full withdrawal east of Suez occurred by 1971. Obviously, the independence of the American colonies had occurred much earlier (1776).

ⁱⁱⁱ This general trend has been discussed not only in cultural studies, but also in such wide range of fields as geography, anthropology and sociology.

^{iv} As it is further discussed by Tim Cresswell: “[t]he rediscovery of place and the challenge to empty and abstract space have their roots in the work of humanistic geographers in the 1970s. Inspired by philosophies of meaning including phenomenology and existentialism, humanistic geographers sought to make sense of the geographical nature of being-in-the-world. Drawing on the work of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) and Edward Relph (1976) sought to repeople the geographical lifeworld through a focus on the notion of place” (12). Such notions led to a negative view of mobility, seen as lacking significance. However, in more recent, post-modern theories mobility becomes a central term. Such theories have developed what Cresswell calls a “nomadic metaphysics” (15-18), which, nevertheless, and like sedentary metaphysics, has flattened out differences (18). For Cresswell, the way out of this dilemma is the notion of a practicing place, that is, a place that is never complete, finished or bound but is always becoming – in process (20).

^v In *John Bull’s Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971*, Colin Holmes refers to a small French population which added to the texture of British society after 1945 (227). In his monumental and impressive study of British immigrants between 1871 and 1971 there are no references to Greek communities.

^{vi} Mark Sladen refers to Chadwick’s mother as being Greek and having left Greece for England in 1946 to join Chadwick’s father, a British soldier who had been on active service in her country (19).

^{vii} These details are referred by Michèle Roberts in the glossary at the end of Roberts’ collection of short stories *During Mother’s Absence* (139).

^{viii} Chadwick’s first solo exhibition was *In the Kitchen*, at the Chelsea School of Art, when the artist was still a master student there.

^{ix} Images from Helen Chadwick’s work reproduced with kind permission of the Helen Chadwick estate.

^x Niclas Östlind refers to Chadwick’s archive (which can be found at The Henry Moore Institute, in Leeds), where “there are a large number of texts and articles on feminism and the gender issue, including articles on or by Julia Kristeva, Griselda Pollock, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Hélène Cixous, Jean Genet and Georges Bataille, published in *Women’s Art Magazine* and elsewhere. Helen Chadwick was a committed reader and there are underlings in many of the articles as well as a lot of comments in the margins” (34).

^{xi} According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the word ‘nymph’ comes from the Latin *nympha*, meaning “nymph, bride,” and from the Greek *nymphē*- “bride; beautiful young woman; semi-divine being in the form of a beautiful maiden”. It is also related to the Latin word *nubere*- “to marry, wed”.

^{xii} I am indebted to Bo Nilsson, from Liljevalchs Konsthall, the art gallery that had an exhibition on Helen Chadwick between 17 September and 27 November 2005, for the insight regarding the use of warm, bright colours in the artist’s work.

^{xiii} The connection between place, time, feelings, values and people is fully presented in the entry dedicated to the place where Roberts’ relatives still live: “Criquetot L’Esneval. The name of the village where the family lives. Not just a geographical place: a place in the heart, in the psyche. My mother’s home. The past. A way of life. A system of values. A group of people we refer to with respect and love” (Roberts, *During Mother’s Absence*, 154). Roberts also explains that this place is not particularly beautiful and it doesn’t need to be for she sees it not with the eyes of the tourist, looking for the picturesque, but with the eyes of the emigrant: “[w]e don’t look for beauty in such a place. It is familiar, familial, ordinary, interesting. It is France, *tout court*. Not abroad. Home” (156). Here France becomes compressed to the size of a small village in Normandy and the village becomes a synonym for home. Thus, going back to Criquetot (whether in reality or in imagination with the help of memory) is going back home. In “Less Is More”, Dydia DeLyser draws attention to the power of synecdoche in landscape, referring that “the power of synecdoche in landscape is that such a fragment takes on greater meaning: the projected meaning of the *imagined* whole” (27). The same process is at stake in Roberts’ description of her mother’s home village, which represents the whole country and the writer’s fabricated image of it.

^{xiv} According to Roberts, this is one of the questions she is most frequently asked at public readings. (“The Place of Imagination”, 3).

^{xv} This could also explain why the use of French is especially evident in *Daughters of the House*, since this is one of Roberts’ novels most directly placed in a domestic environment.

^{xvi} Sometimes the plots are set in Italy and the characters can also be Italian (the third main cultural reference in Roberts’ fiction). This is the case of Roberts’ latest novel, *Reader, I Married Him*, and of some of her short stories.

^{xvii} This is if we take for granted that Léonie is Thérèse’s cousin and not her twin sister. Both possibilities remain unanswered by the novel’s plot and characters. But even if Léonie is Thérèse’s biological sister, their experiences and their processes of identity formation are not the same, since Léonie was raised as a child in England, by an English father and a French mother, therefore with a life experience very different from Thérèse’s.

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Plurilingualism and Translation in Contemporary Canadian Writing

Mirko Casagrande
University of Trento, Italy

It is no surprise to say that wherever many languages are spoken, translation has a pivotal role in human communication. It is also true that there is no individual that can be defined as completely monolingual. Monolingualism is a theoretical concept which has no real application in everyday life. More than the single person, it concerns a representation of the world which is far from reality, a world where monolithic nations extend their political and economic influence to culture and language, representing themselves as a compact entity with precisely defined linguistic borders (Dorian 438-439). There is no need to affirm that such a vision is distorted, since everyone can speak at least two languages, or, using a sociolinguistic definition, two linguistic variations. The sociolinguistic approach allows us to widen the notion of plurilingualism, since it includes both the plurality of languages *and* their use in different contexts. It cannot be denied that there is an important difference between the concepts of language, dialect and variation,ⁱ but it is fundamental to stress that every speaker possesses the ability to adapt his/her language to the specific social situation. My assumption here is that language must be understood in its broader meaning, i.e. a communicative means which is characterised by an endless number of possible variations. Thus, plurilingualism can be defined on the one hand as one's proficiency in more than one idiom, and on the other as the sum of linguistic variations, such as those involving the register or the style a person can recur to in his/her everyday life communication.

The sociolinguistic methodology is particularly helpful when studying the linguistic scenario of those countries which are formed by speakers who have experienced massive migration. The case of Canada is very interesting since it is an officially bilingual and constitutionally multicultural country. In fact, in 1988 the Canadian Government promulgated two laws, the *Official Languages Act* (whose first version dates back to 1969) and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, which became the basis of Canadian enhancement of cultural and linguistic diversity. As there is a fundamental relation between language and culture, the former being the expression of the latter and vice versa, it is obvious that in a country where many cultures coexist, more or less peacefully, many languages are spoken, at least within one's community. Indeed, whereas a native citizen should speak the national language which coincides with his/her mothertongue from his/her birth and takes the relation between language and culture almost for granted, an immigrant must deal with a language which is not his/her mothertongue as soon as s/he enters the new country and must re-shape his/her cultural identity in relation to this linguistic gap as well. In other words, for an immigrant the connection between his/her language and his/her culture is much stronger because of the linguistic alienation s/he might experience.ⁱⁱ

Furthermore, dealing with plurilingualism, one has to distinguish between the societal and the individual level, since proficiency in many languages does not mean that those languages can be understood and used in public. Assuming that most of the world's population is at least bilingual, it is nevertheless unusual that more than one language gains an official status, i.e. socially recognised plurilingualism, and, if it is so, that every citizen is able to speak all of them. Although official languages are very important in the definition and representation of a country and their official nature is the recognition of the cultures and ethnicities that contribute to the construction of the national identity, a few countries where a

plurality of languages are spoken privately are also officially bi- or plurilingual. It depends on their history and on the relations of power that develop between their ethnic communities. In Canada, for example, English and French are the official languages because of Canada's colonial history, but not every Canadian can speak both of them, neither those who belong to the 'founding' peoples, nor those of another ethnic group. Canada is thus officially bilingual (societal level), and sociolinguistically plurilingual (individual level).

In order to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of Canadian plurilingualism, I divided my research into a theoretical part, in which I try to outline the characteristics of plurilingualism with the support of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic approaches, and an analytical part, in which I would like to analyse how plurilingualism is expressed through works such as novels, poetry, essays, and literary journals. Since there is not a univocal definition of plurilingualism, the starting point of my study is the comparison between some dictionaries of linguistics which belong to different cultural and linguistic areas, such as the *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* by Hadumod Bussmann (1996), the *Dictionnaire de linguistique et des sciences du langage* by Jean Dubois et al (1999) and the *Dizionario di linguistica e di filologia, metrica e retorica* edited by Gian Luigi Beccaria (2004). A varied and complex classification of plurilingualism emerges from the analysis of these works; for example in the Italian dictionary the term is described only as a stylistic device, while the meaning that I am interested in is incorporated in the definition of bilingualism.

Moreover, another important distinction should be made between the use of the prefixes *multi* and *pluri*: while the first is usually employed when dealing with multiple entities that coexist but scarcely interact, the second evokes a reality where diversity is a unique and fundamental paradigm and the pieces that compose the unity establish a process of mutual exchange. For example, when speaking of multicultural Canada as a mosaic of cultures, each piece of the puzzle — each culture — is divided from the others, even if part of a whole. On the contrary, with the term 'pluricultural' the diversity of each culture is maintained and put in relation with the others.ⁱⁱⁱ Although the noun 'multilingualism' is still very used, even by scholars, I would suggest the word 'plurilingualism'. In order to prove the disproportion between the use of these two terms, suffice it to say that when searching the on-line catalogue of the British Library, 380 items appear with the keyword 'multilingualism', while only four titles are shown with the key 'plurilingualism'.

When analysing plurilingualism, it is possible to refer to the same theoretical approach adopted in the study of bilingualism and consequently see it as an extension of the bilingual phenomenon^{iv}. I am not going here to make a list of the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic features of plurilingualism. It is nevertheless important to mention that when switching from one language to another, in sociolinguistics the stress is not on the language itself, but on the uses of language(s), which may vary depending on the communicative and social situation, the interlocutor and the purpose of the utterance. Furthermore, psycholinguistics studies how the plurilingual brain works and how the switches from one code to the other take place physically, following a path similar to that of the neurosciences.

As I have anticipated, Canada is a very stimulating subject of study, both linguistically and culturally. One of the most interesting issues is how Canada represents itself as a multicultural country. The choice of the term is not casual: since its promulgation in 1988, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* has been sometimes ferociously attacked by those who saw it as a political strategy to gain the immigrants' votes and to pacify the struggle with francophone Québec^v. From the 1990s until today, the meaning of *multiculturalism* has been constantly questioned since it has been clear that, in spite of the good intentions and the many folkloristic manifestations supported by the Government of Canada, the policy failed to represent a plural and equal society.

From the linguistic point of view, the situation is even more complicated because, although it is undeniable that Canada is officially bilingual – which means that official documents, public signs, writings on every product that is manufactured in Canada are in English *and* in French –, the real linguistic scenario is far from being bilingual. As Linda Hutcheon affirms in *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fiction* (1996), the two so-called Canadian linguistic and cultural solitudes are like the two faces of the same coin: they coexist in the same place, but they do not belong together; they proclaim themselves as the two founding peoples, but do not share values. In fact, apart from the linguistic pockets of Francophones, it is very hard to find a person in Western Canada able to speak French; on the contrary, bilingualism is almost an obliged choice in Québec, where, in spite of the severe linguistic legislation of the 1970s and the 1980s, which proscribed the use of English in public signs and writings^{vi}, the economic power of the anglophone world – especially that of the United States – is still influencing Québécois linguistic behaviour. Canada represents itself as a multicultural and bilingual country, but basically on paper. Instead, I would say that it is a *pluricultural* and *plurilingual* country where many cultures coexist and share a common land and where many languages are spoken even though only two — the invaders' ones — have an official status. Plurilingualism characterises the so-called ethnic communities who necessarily possess proficiency in more than one language. Let us consider the example of the son or the daughter of Italian immigrants in Montreal in the 1960s: s/he would probably speak Italian at home with his/her family, French at school and English in the neighbourhood or in the work place.

In my research, I am particularly interested in how this plurality of languages takes shape in literary texts, i.e. those texts that are deliberately written in more than one language in order to portray and reflect a spoken linguistic situation. As travel literature from the past three centuries testifies, many idioms are employed in the same text whenever writers have to describe what is other and different from their culture. What is new in the case of Canadian ethnic authors is the awareness of this use, the tongue-in-cheek attitude they have depicting their linguistic and cultural hybridisation. Most of the time, in fact, the reader is invited to participate in a linguistic game where languages mix and play.

Moreover, a key point in the study of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism is translation since, from this perspective, it is not merely a passage from one language to the other, but a complex mediation between cultures. It is clear that in a country like Canada there would be no communication at all without a constant process of translation – and I am not referring here to Federal documents. In *In Italics: In Defense of Ethnicity* (1996), Antonio D'Alfonso, a contemporary Italian/Canadian writer and publisher, affirms that what people need in their everyday life are subtitles, stressing the fact that plurilingualism is an essential part of one's identity and underlining the almost simultaneous coexistence of languages in the very same person (143). Postcolonial and Translation Studies are a solid reference when dealing with pluriculturalism and plurilingualism. Scholars like Bassnett, Venuti, Bhabha and Spivak have investigated the cultural implications of the use(s) of language(s) and translation in a pluricultural environment focusing more on the relations between the speakers than on the languages themselves. The case of Canada, especially that of Québec, is doubly appealing since it includes two official languages with which the ethnic speaker has to deal with when expressing him/herself. Not only s/he has to face the tension between his/her own language and the official ones, but s/he has to struggle between two different and opposite cultural systems with which s/he has to negotiate in order to define his/her linguistic and cultural identity.

Canadian bilingual and plurilingual writers work between two or more languages and cultures privileging one of them and placing themselves in a specific cultural and linguistic perspective. Even though what is said in one language and what refers to one culture can be

expressed in another language, plurilingual writers prefer to disseminate their texts with words of another language they know which are like marks from other ‘parts’ of their characters, intentionally recurring to many devices such as code-switching and code-mixing, borrowing and culture-bound words^{vii}. In the case of borrowings, it is implicit that the reader understands the foreign word since its use has become common in the official language; it is the case of words such as ‘pizza’, ‘kimono’ and ‘croissant’, which, although commonly used in English and part of every English dictionary, immediately refer to their original culture, i.e. Italian, Japanese and French cultures. On the contrary, code-switching and code-mixing are not always understandable to the average reader and the first impression is of foreignisation and exoticism, especially when the sentences are not immediately translated within the text.

In my research, I have outlined three perspectives in the use of plurilingualism in Canadian written texts: plurilinguistic disseminations, trans/lation (or two languages/one text) and auto/translation (or two languages/two texts). I would like to underline that in this list ‘text’ must be understood as the physical object that the reader holds in his/her hands. With the expression ‘two languages/one text’, in fact, I mean the coexistence of more than one language on the very same page, which does not mean that the two or more versions are equivalent. Indeed, the physical text is one, even if it may have the form of many texts with semantically different meanings. Moreover, what follows is a brief division and quasi-schematic categorisation of my research, which needs further development.

In the first two case studies I would like to analyse the works of two contemporary Canadian women writers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, Mary di Michele and Dionne Brand. The first is an Italian/Canadian poet who has published collections of poetry and two novels; among them we can list *Bread and Chocolate* (1980), *Mimosa and Other Poems* (1981), *Immune to Gravity* (1986), *Under My Skin* (1994) and *Tenor of Love* (2004). Dionne Brand is an Afro-Caribbean/Canadian author of poems and novels such as *No Language Is Neutral* (1990), *Land To Light On* (1997), *At the Full & Change of the Moon* (1999) and *What We All Long For* (2005). While di Michele usually disseminates her texts with many Italian words, Brand tends to express her original culture only in English, so that the feeling of otherness is evoked rather than rendered through foreign words. The following verses from di Michele’s significantly entitled poem “Benvenuto” (1980) contain at least three examples of language contact, which recur to different strategies:

The ladies, *le signore*, are ready to repeat
stories as my mother offers coffee and cake.
Ti ricordi, zio Gianni, who made his wife suffer,
the poor saint, bringing in his mistress to live
with the family, her own room, for the slut,
while the wife was made to play
the servant; he sent the children to school
with *biscotti* in their lunches, such a treat,
when their lips were so firmly sealed from
shame they could not eat or speak; (8)

In the first case, *le signore*, we find a translated noun which is also an interpolated clause. The reader has to know both languages in order to understand that it actually is a translation and, to do so, s/he is guided by the title of the poem, which suggests that the expression is in Italian, and by the two commas, which imply that it refers to the previous words. Furthermore, it is at the centre of the verse, so that the stress on the poet’s culture is rendered also visually. The second example, *ti ricordi, zio Gianni*, is an appellative phrase. It is a code-mixing which opens the sentence and syntactically connects the two parts of the verse (“[...]who made his wife suffer”). Di Michele purposefully does not translate either the

degree of relationship (*zio* – uncle) or his name. The last one, *biscotti*, is a simple code-switching and, if the anglophone reader does not know Italian, it is hardly understandable to her/him. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that di Michele's most recent production gradually abandons Italian words; yet, her Italian culture and the Italian atmosphere of her works are still central topics in her writing. Her case is not isolated and it seems that plurilingual choices at the beginning of a writer's production are a necessary means to distinguish and construct his/her ethnic identity. Rather than recurring to code-switching and code-mixing, Dionne Brand usually works on the structure of English in a way that makes her 'other' culture permeate the English text, so that she creates a new hybrid idiom which has its root in Creole languages. For example, in the following verses from "No Language Is Neutral" (1990) a form of creolization is the replacement of the possessive adjective 'her' by the pronoun 'she': "[...]Even she daughter didn't know but only/ leave me she life like a brown stone to see. [...]" (21).

In the second case study, I would like to investigate the extensive use of more than one language within the same text. In the past, Canadian writers and critics have tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to publish texts in two languages in order to reflect the officially bilingual nature of Canada. Apart from Government publications, many reviews and literary journals have chosen to appear as parallel texts. It is the case of *Tessera*, a feminist literary review whose editorials are written both in English and French and whose articles are introduced by an abstract in the other language^{viii}, or *Vice Versa*, a translingual cultural magazine in English, French and/or Italian. These typographical strategies are common also to literary production. A good example is given by a recent novel by Yann Martel, *Self*, published in 1996. In order to give life to a polymorphic language and to reflect Canadian officially bilingual nature, Martel chooses to juxtapose in some passages two versions simultaneously and to split the page in two, dividing it into two columns, one in English, the other in French, or even other languages. On the one hand there are parallel texts, on the other two different texts, which, although plurilingual, do not represent a cultural mediation at all since they literally face each other without communicating. In the first of the following examples taken from *Self*, one column is the translation of the other, while in the second, the two parts are linguistically and semantically independent as the two speakers do not understand each other:

“Pour être mâle ou femelle,
une chose doit être vivante,
bouger d'elle-même, et être
visible.”

“To be male or female, a
thing has to be alive, move
on its own, and be visible.”
(25)

“To ale byly tri dlouhé dny,
vid milácku. Ale uz to bude
v porádku. Novy začátek v
nové zemi. Budes mít nové
kamarády. Tak na nás
usmej.”

“Dors bien, chéri.”
“Oui, oui.”
“Demain nous irons voir la
cathédrale Notre-Dame.”
“Oui, oui.” (36)

The innovation of this novel consists in the graphically simultaneous passage from one cultural and linguistic system to the other through the translation or juxtaposition of chunks of text. Thanks to this technique, the author is able to recreate on the page the linguistic fragmentation and cultural plurality of Canada.

In the third and final part, I would like to study the case of the writer translator of him/herself. Auto-translation, or self-translation, becomes fundamental in Antonio

D'Alfonso's production since he publishes almost everything in two languages, English and French, providing two different versions of the same work, which is the same but not the same since switching from one language to the other also means to change cultural perspective. His first novel appeared in French in 1990 with the title *Avril ou l'anti-passion* and five years later in English as *Fabrizio's Passion*. It describes the life of a young Italian/Canadian boy, from his childhood to his first love and his first film as director. Although most parts of the two novels are equivalent, which would allow the reader to see it as the same text in two versions, sometimes there are differences of content and meaning which may suggest that in reality they are two independent texts. In spite of the temporary gap between the two editions, there is not an original version in one language and a successively translated one, since, as D'Alfonso affirmed in an interview to *Le Devoir*, a Québécois newspaper, the novel was conceived in English, French, Italian and even Latin (Royer D4). For example, when Fabrizio is seven years old, he speaks of his godfather and affirms that he wants to be like him, to belong to Canadian culture and not to the Italian one. Let us compare the two versions:

My godfather is a Notte, just like my father, but a Canadian Notte. He represents for me that which I want to become. Being Italian, I dream of changing myself into a Canadian. To be Italian is simply an aberration, something that is outdated, something to be ashamed of; whereas the Canadian is the hero I want to emulate. (68)

Mon parrain est un Notte tout comme mon père, mais un Notte québécois. Il représente tout ce que je désire devenir. Italien, je veux me muer en Québécois... Être italien est pour moi une aberration, quelque chose de dépassé, de honteux. Tandis que le Québécois est un héros à aduler. (93)

The context is almost the same, apart from the fact that, switching language, the narrator also changes the cultural setting. In the construction and representation of the main character's identity, Canada is replaced by its Francophone province and vice versa, and even if the message is basically the same, i.e. the young protagonist's refusal of his origins and his desire of assimilation to the mainstream culture, the text becomes another text. This switch can be interpreted, on the one hand, as a result of the division between the two cultural solitudes that form Canada and, on the other, as evidence of the author's awareness of the different cultural contexts that constitute the reader's encyclopaedia. Moreover, we cannot say that one version is original and that the other is a translation, since the creative process, as we have seen, was plurilingual from its beginning and most of all because the two texts are like the two faces of the same coin, i.e. D'Alfonso's two novels represent one text. This means that Canada is a cultural and linguistic 'discourse' that must be read and analysed as a polymorphic text, which has many faces but is at the same time one.

NOTES

ⁱ For a definition of these concepts see Berruto's, Hudson's and Trudgill's introductory works on sociolinguistics.

ⁱⁱ This is true for immigrants who speak a language different from that spoken nationally in the arrival country. It could be very interesting to analyse the case of immigrants whose mothertongue is that of the host country, but who nevertheless feel that they belong to a different culture.

ⁱⁱⁱ See also D'Alfonso, *In Italics* 177-178, where the author compares and defines the concepts of interculturalism, melting pot, transculturalism, multiculturalism, and pluriculturalism.

^{iv} See the introduction to *The Handbook of Bilingualism*, in which the editor affirms that, even though the title refers to bilingualism, the volume should be understood as a work on multilingualism as well.

^v See the revised edition of Bissoondath's criticism on multiculturalism since the 1980.

^{vi} I am referring in particular to the 22 and 101 Bills, promulgated in 1974 and 1977, which forced immigrants to send their children to francophone schools. The latter is also known as the Charter of the French Language.

^{vii} I will not deal here with the definitions of code-switching, code-mixing, borrowing and culture-bound words. For an analysis of the terms see Appel and Muysken.

^{viii} If the article is in English, the abstract is in French and vice versa.

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Trainspotting: novel, play and film Where the “literary” and “pop” meet

Ana Raquel Fernandes
University of Lisbon

1. Introduction: background to *Trainspotting*

‘Choose us. Choose life.’
Trainspotting (1993)

Twentieth-century Scottish writing, for most people, involves names such as Alasdair Gray (*Lanark*, 1981) and James Kelman (*How late it was, how late*, 1994),ⁱ responsible, among other authors, for the new Scottish renaissance in the late 1970s and 1980s. In the wake of the developments brought about by Kelman and Gray, who broke away from the English middle-class novel, depicting characters who struggle with modern life and their fragmented identity, and who, through their narrative innovations, experiment with language, Irvine Welsh emerges. He belongs to the new wave of Scottish writing, together with authors such as Janice Galloway, Ian Banks, Alan Warner and A. L. [Alison Louise] Kennedy. Welsh's narratives focus on Scottish youth culture, gender, urban lifestyles and the complexities of Scottish identity.

In *Trainspotting* (1993), Irvine Welsh developed an innovative fictional form to illuminate the contemporary decline of the social landscape in post-industrial Britain, specifically Scotland, denouncing the squalid texture of everyday life in Edinburgh's underclass. The novel is set against a background marked by the policies of monetarism and privatization introduced in the 1980s by a new Tory administration under Margaret Thatcher. The decline of traditional industrial society had a tremendous impact on gender roles, on the formation of subjectivity and on class-consciousness, accelerating its fragmentation. According to Ian Haywood:

[The] emphasis on poverty rather than capitalist exploitation has had the ideological effect of submerging working-class identity (or significant fractions of it) into a heterogeneous, proletarianized underclass of alienated social groups, defined by their economic unproductiveness and an inability to participate fully in society: families living on social security, single parents, the disabled, the homeless, delinquents, drug addicts. (Haywood 141)

The characters portrayed by Welsh are characters who 'inhabit the geographical and social margins of Edinburgh' (Hageman 13). These characters are essentially roguesⁱⁱ moving in an urban setting, linked to the criminal underworld, who assume a central role in the narrative, as is the case with Renton in *Trainspotting* (1993), exposing problems of violence, drug use, self-centeredness and the complete absence of any developed sense of morality.

The novel has been described by John Hodge, responsible for the screenplay for Danny Boyle's 1996 film version, as 'a collection of loosely related short stories about several different characters' (Hodge xi). Indeed the fragmented episodes, in which various voices appear, all share elements such as setting, time, characters and themes. The book is divided into forty-three chapters, comprising seven sections ('Kicking', 'Relapsing', 'Kicking Again', 'Blowing It', 'Exile', 'Home', 'Exit'). The loosely connected chapters also reflect the publication history of *Trainspotting*, sections of which appeared in different anthologies and literary journals prior to the publication of the novel. The story entitled 'First Day of the

Edinburgh Festival' was the first to be published (1991) in *Scream, If You Want to Go Faster: New Writing Scotland*, edited by Janice Galloway and Hamish Whyte. Duncan McLean also published parts of the novel in two *Clocktower pamphlets*, *A Parcel of Rogues* and *Past Tense: Four Stories from a Novel*, and Kevin Williamson published sections of what later become part of *Trainspotting* in the literary magazine *Rebel Inc.*ⁱⁱⁱ

This essay develops from an interest in the process of transferring, translating, adapting a work across different media: from a genre such as the novel, originally, to a play on stage and then into a film. *Trainspotting* was rewritten into a play by Harry Gibson and first seen at Glasgow's Citizens theatre in 1995. It suffered its ultimate metamorphosis in 1996 when it was adapted to the screen, with Ewan McGregor as Renton.

The history of the adaptations may be regarded as an interesting example since it promotes a reflection on contemporary Western popular culture. *Trainspotting* by Welsh is a striking example of the way literary and popular cultures meet, defying all attempts of division between the two and pushing forward theory and criticism. Indeed, the novel illustrates some key characteristics of postmodernism: it blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular culture', introducing everyday experience and common themes (such as pornography, violence, criminality, among others) into the realm of art.^{iv}

2. *Trainspotting*: Harry Gibson's stage adaptation

"It is not what critics call 'a well-made' play; back in 1994 we simply aimed to get it on, small and quick, because we thought highly of Irvine stuff and wanted to see whether it could work on stage.

Harry Gibson, *4-Play* (2001)

Adaptation from one medium to another in contemporary Western culture has become common practice. Most studies on the subject of adaptation focus on the process of transference from novel to play or novel to film.¹ This tendency seems to be associated with modern reading practices, where resistance has developed to re-reading the novel. The public therefore seeks another way of repeating the experience: '[a]daptation into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original presentation, and repeating the production of a memory'.^v

Trainspotting was originally adapted into a play by the playwright Harry Gibson.^{vi} Previous to the stageplay, however, an attempt was made to adapt it for the BBC Radio but the project was never carried on, the language was too strong and the piece was censored. In an interview with Chris Mitchell, Gibson explains: "BBC Radio asked me ages ago to do an adaptation of *Trainspotting*. Then they looked at it. When they realised that landing on 'Planet *Trainspotting*' means you can't walk for two lines without bumping into a cunt, they bottled". (Mitchell)

Gibson's stage adaptation of *Trainspotting* premiered at Glasgow's Citizens Theatre, as part of Mayfest, in 1994. The play became a classic of in-yer-face theatre, a kind of experiential theatre which unsettles the audiences by the use of extreme language and images, questioning moral norms, depicting as well as criticising society. According to Derek Paget:

The staple theatrical techniques employed are those perfected in the post-war alternative theatre: direct address to the audience, rapid transformations of time, place and character through 'open' declaration of theatrical process (as against the elision and concealment used in bourgeois, boulevard theatre). (Paget 133)

Paget goes on to explain how through the collective role-exchange of actors and the rapid transformation of settings on stage, the play managed to convey the novel's multiple points of view, 'inviting the audience into the creative process'. (Paget 134)

Indeed, the original cast was of four actors, who just as in the published text shared roles and were named as 'Mark' (Ewen Bremner), who also played Boy; 'Tommy' (Jim Cunningham), who played the Drunk, Simon and Morag; 'Franco' (Malcolm Shields), who played Johnny and the Mother; and 'Alison' (Susan Vidler),^{viii} who also played June, Lizzie and Lassie:

Although surprisingly faithful to Welsh's dialogue interior monologue presentation, and range of characters and narrative lines, Gibson reduced the novel's forty-three vignettes to twenty short scenes, used just four actors to play twelve parts and significantly reduced the novel's humor in order to emphasize the unrelieved grimness and futility of the characters' lives. (Morace 78)

From this first production onwards the play toured within the UK. It was at Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre (1994), Edinburgh Festival (1995),^{ix} and London with two productions, both in 1995, the first at the Bush, in North London, directed by Ian Brown, the second at the Ambassadors and Whitehall theatres, in West End, directed by Gibson. There were also various stagings outside the UK, 'including the "sanitized version" that appeared off-Broadway in 1998 with no injecting, no body fluids, and no overflowing toilet' (Morace 79). According to Welsh in an interview by Kano: '[s]ince then [the first production on the small stage at the Citizens] I've seen many versions of it all over the world, the latest an incredible operatic-style piece in Portuguese which I stumbled on to by chance in Lisbon' (Gibson and Wyatt 3).^x

The success of the novel, which was initially published as a small print run of 3,000, outstripped the expectations of both its author and publisher.^{xi} And the reasons for this go from the good reception of Welsh's second work, a collection of short stories entitled *The Acid House* (1994),^{xii} which made readers backtrack into *Trainspotting*, to the success of Harry Gibson's stage adaptation and undoubtedly the release of the film *Trainspotting* in February 1996.

3. Screening *Trainspotting*

'Multicultural societies need multicultural art [...]'
Irvine Welsh, *4-Play* (2001)

The project of adapting Irvine Welsh's novel to screen was carried out by the same trio responsible for the successful contemporary thriller *Shallow Grave*, released in 1994, and which won the Alexander Korda award for Best British Film of that year. The trio was producer Andrew MacDonald, screenwriter John Hodge and director Danny Boyle. The film emerged at a moment when British film production witnessed a rise in its levels. According to John Hill, throughout the 1990s there were a number of outstanding commercial successes, such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Trainspotting* (1996) and *The Full Monty* (1997). As far as *Trainspotting* is concerned: '[it] took over £12 million at the UK box office (and a further \$16 million in the US).' (Hill 75)

Besides being a mark in the history of British cinema, *Trainspotting* has also played a fundamental role in the degree of visibility of Scottish cinema worldwide. Together with the 1995 box office successes of *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart*, which triggered a revival of Scottish image, *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting* contributed to a higher perception of the distinctiveness of Scottish film production. Nevertheless, a non-Scottish company played a

fundamental part in financing both *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*. As Murray Smith points out: ‘*Shallow Grave* was funded jointly by the Glasgow Film Fund and the London-based television company Channel 4 (total budget at just over £1 million), while *Trainspotting* was, uniquely, financed wholly by Channel 4, the budget of £1.7 million exceeding the company’s investment in any other single film’.^{xiii}

In his introduction to *Trainspotting and Shallow Grave*, Hodge explains the two main reasons why he thought *Trainspotting* would never make a film. First, its disruptive narrative, there is no single story: ‘[o]nly towards the end does it take on a continuous narrative form.’ Second, its multiple narrators, each enacting a different variety of ‘Scots’: ‘[t]he characters, each with a distinctive voice, are defined by internal monologue as much as anything, and the language is uncompromisingly specific to a time and place’ (Hodge ix).

Part of the success of the film, however, is due to the way it follows a strategy of differentiation which offers audiences a distinctive kind of film experience, playing up the Scottish/national as well as the American/international elements of the film, moving away from Hollywood norm and asserting itself as an art film. Adapting the film was no easy task and Hodge followed many of Gibson’s strategies, reducing incidents and amalgamating characters, but also adding up some scenes:

My intention was to produce a screenplay which would seem to have, approximately, a beginning, a middle, and an end, would last ninety minutes, and would convey at least some of the spirit and content of the book. This involved amalgamating various characters, transferring incident and dialogue from one character to another, building some scenes around minor details from the book and making up a few things altogether. (Hodge 10)^{xiv}

According to Hodge, in order to get the essence of the adventurousness of the novel, the reckless extreme lifestyles of the characters, a choice had to be made. As Renton is one of the most frequent voices to be heard in the novel and the most articulate, he became the natural choice as the main-character.

The film’s reception has not been unanimous, while an undoubted success at the box office, those who praised Welsh’s novel for its political force, for addressing issues of de-industrialisation, class tensions, racism, sectarianism, domestic violence, sexism or homophobia, severely criticised the film. Alan Sinfield suggests that:

The extent to which ideas and attitudes may be provocative but constructive in subcultural contexts, and unacceptable in the mainstream, is illustrated by the film *Trainspotting* [...]. Unfortunately, the film diminishes or removes most of the challenging aspects of the book. This is not because film is a blunter medium – by no means – but because film as we plan and distribute them today cost a lot, and therefore tend to get made with international money for mainstream consumption. (Sinfield xxxvii-xxxviii)

The film becomes appealing to mainstream audience, particularly to a young one, for the way it enacts British popular culture, and celebrates social difference as cultural diversity. No doubt there is an erasure of the novel’s class dynamics, which ‘results in a shift from recognising social difference as constituted by inequality and disadvantage to the depoliticised celebration of social difference as cultural diversity’ (Kelly 72). However, according to Cartmell and Whelehan: ‘[c]ommercially it is obvious that a popular film adaptation of a novel can transform the text’s value, from esoteric object to object of mass consumption [...]’ (Cartmell and Whelaehan 7).

Together with the release of the film there was an aggressive and canny marketing. Director Danny Boyle explains the importance of a powerful marketing for the success of any film, mentioning two examples, *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*:

We had a relationship with a company [...] they picked *Shallow Grave* and they marketed it in an amazingly proud way. They didn't try to sell it just as a British film. They sold it as a film to go and see in the Multiplex on a Friday night [...]. And they really went for it in *Trainspotting*. They marketed it in a hugely inventive way, tremendously aggressive, slightly glamorous but [...] you have to appeal to people, you have to tend people and get them into the cinema.^{xv}

The celebration of British popular culture becomes even more effective in the film by the careful construction of a soundtrack, mixing countercultural classics of the 1970s and 80s with Britpop and dance tracks, making it really connect with the audience:

What we've tried to do in the film is make it stand through a period of time running from the mid- to late 80s up to now. We've tried to illustrate that not with signs going up saying '1987' but actually with pieces of music. So these guys are trapped inside Iggy Pop, they're still listening to it, they're a kind of washed up punks at the beginning of the film [...]. But by the time you reach the end of the film there's actually a wonderful Pulp track in it, there's a Blur track and there's a lot of more modern stuff. They move through the house scene and the rave scene, that's represented by underworld [...], and then they end up with Britpop. So we've tried to shape the chronology of the film through the music.^{xvi}

Indeed, the film starts with a chase, Renton (Ewan McGregor) and Spud (Ewen Bremner) being pursued by two security guards. The scene rapidly changes to an image of Renton drugged followed by an opening five-a-side soccer game, where the whole gang is presented, and ending with Renton lying on the floor of Mother Superior/Swanney's flat. The use of Iggy Pop's 'Lust for Life' over these opening scenes sets the tone of the film, one of disenchantment and nihilism (Smith 47). This view is stressed by Renton's voice over, who just as in the novel expresses an attitude of criticism towards consumer society, towards the British way of life:

Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a fucking big television [...]. Choose good health, low cholesterol and dental insurance. Choose fixed-interest mortgage repayments. Choose a starter home. Choose your friends. [...] Choose sitting on that couch watching mind-numbing, spirit crushing game shows, stuffing fucking junk food into your mouth. Choose rooting away at the end of it all [...]. Choose your future. Choose life.

But why would I want to do a thing like that? (Hodge 3-4)

Renton's voice over is undermined, however, by the images that go with his internal reflections. Renton and Spud are pursued by two hard-looking Store Detectives precisely because they've stolen different objects (pens, tapes, CDs, etc.), which fall during their run, in order to pay for the heroin they consume: 'I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?' (Hodge 5).

Heroin is also a commodity bought and sold, turning Renton and his friends both into consumers and characters consumed by trade in heroin subculture. This is already implicit in the first scene at Mother Superior's, when Alison (Susan Vidler), Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller), Spud, Renton and Swanney (Peter Mullan) take heroin. And it becomes even more evident in future scenes, such as when Renton accepts Tommy's money and actually becomes partly responsible for Tommy's (Kevin McKidd) addiction, which will ultimately result in his death.^{xvii} Again this sequence significantly has Iggy Pop's 'Nightclubbing' as the background for the events, since Iggy is a popular icon and a junkie-survivor (Smith 18). Another scene quite important in this context occurs when Renton pays a visit alone to the Mother Superior: 'What's on the menu this evening?' he asks, to which Swanney answers:

'Your favourite dish,' adding cynically: 'And would sir care to settle his bill in advance? [...] Regret to inform, sir, that your credit limit was reached and breached a long time ago' (Hodge 60-1). Lou Reed's 'Perfect Day' seems now to be the perfect background music, not without a touch of irony, for the sequence that follows, in which Renton having had an overdose is taken by taxi to the hospital and dumped outside it.^{xviii}

Thus, heroin becomes a metaphor for the loss of identity and stands for the supposed pleasures associated with consumer society, in which existence is reduced to the very act of consumption. In Western contemporary capitalism, Jean Baudrillard explains: 'consumption is an active mode of relations (not only to objects, but to the collectivity and to the world), a systematic mode of activity and a global response on which our whole cultural system is founded'.^{xix}

4. Conclusion

[P]opular cultural forms have moved so far towards centre stage in British cultural life that the separate existence of a distinctive popular culture in an oppositional relation to high culture is now
in question.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Popular Culture' (1987)

As Diane (Kelly Macdonald) explains to Renton, in what might be considered a turning point of the film (Renton has just quit for the second time his drug habit): 'You're not getting any younger, Mark. The world is changing, music is changing, even drugs are changing. You can't stay in here all day dreaming about heroin and Ziggy [Iggy] Pop' (Hodge 76). Renton fully understands this, his view filtered through his voice-over: 'She was right. I had to find something new. There was only one thing for it' (Hodge 76).

At this point the action of the film switches to London. The metropolis is presented by a parodic contemporary retake of all those 'Swinging London' montages, changing rapidly at the rhythm of the music, 'Think about the way (Bom Digi Digi Bom)' by Ice MC: Big Ben, the Tower of London, Piccadilly Circus, traditional buses and taxis, City gents in suits, classic street names (such as Carnaby Street, Regent Street, Oxford Street, among others). These images are linked to previous scenes, mocking what is traditionally perceived as British, such is the case with the close up of a traditional Sunday morning breakfast at Gail's home, just before Spud makes a mess of it, splitting the contents of his dirty sheets over everyone and everything in the room. Nevertheless, the London images are in strong contrast with the urban setting or even with the view of the Pentland hills presented in the film up to this moment. There is also a clear shift as far as music is concerned with Britpop coming forward, illustrating not only a change of settings as well as of times.

This change is crucial to Renton, who leaves the gang for the first time, moving away from a countercultural culture and actually entering mainstream, as he will find work in the world of real estate. His words in the film embody the Thatcherite ethos of the late 1980s: 'Profit, loss, margins, takeovers, lending, letting, subletting, subdividing, cheating, scamming, fragmenting, breaking away. There was no such thing as society and even if there was, I most certainly had nothing to do with it. For the first time in my adult life I almost felt content' (Hodge 78). Murray Smith suggests:

With their parallel commitments to self-interest, greed and short-term gain, the junkies constitute a revealing mirror image of the political and economic neo-conservatism of the 1980s. Both stand in contrast to the ordinary, lower-middle-class and working-class life that we see elsewhere in the film. (Smith 48)

Renton will be reunited with the whole gang once more for one last skag deal. At this point in the film Sick Boy has become a pimp, Begbie is wanted by the police in connection with an armed robbery, Spud is in need of money and Tommy has just died HIV-positive (although the actual cause of this death is toxoplasmosis). The success of the heroin deal makes the gang feel united again: 'We settled on sixteen thousand pounds. [...] And just for a moment it felt really great, like we were all in it together, like friends, like it meant something' (Hodge 99). However, this feeling of joy does not last long, the moment of celebration in the pub being replaced by Begbie's usual violence, who first abuses verbally an unfortunate customer and then smashes a pint of beer in the man's face. Renton's thoughts are echoed by Sick Boy's comment in the pub, who after being briefly away, jokingly says: 'Still here, I see' (meaning Spud, Renton and obviously the money). And when Renton suggests they wouldn't 'run out on a mate,' Sick Boy promptly answers: 'Why not? I know I would' (Hodge 101).

As the film draws to a conclusion, we see Renton betraying his 'friends,' stealing the gang's money and running away: 'So why did I do it? I could offer a million answers, all false. The truth is that I'm a bad person, but that's going to change. [...] I'm cleaning up and I'm moving on, going straight and choosing life. [...] I'm going to be just like you: the job, the family, the fucking big television [...] to the day you die' (Hodge 106).

Alan Sinfield argues that one of the most disappointing differences between novel and film is how the latter suppresses the contrast between Renton and Sick Boy, crediting Renton with Thatcherite sentiments, when in the novel Sick Boy is *the* Thatcherite *par excellence* (Sinfield xxxviii). Murray Smith, however, has a slightly different and interesting interpretation of the film, drawing a comparison between Renton's story and the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of 'character formation,' in order to point out the ambiguity present at the end of *Trainspotting*:

In its traditional form, such a novel [the *Bildungsroman*] would end with the central character finding his place and integrating with society. The ending of *Trainspotting* in these terms is, once again, ambiguous. On the one hand, Renton breaks with the gang and thus with his past, and to that degree appears to be abandoning his life as a countercultural 'outsider' for something more conventional. On the other hand, he has just stolen several thousand pounds, money obtained from the sale of illegal drugs, and doesn't seem too perplexed by his actions: hardly the behaviour of a model citizen. (Smith 50)

Richard A. Gilmore suggests that Renton does not mean what he actually says. Thus, his last monologue, just as his first one ('Choose life'), should be taken ironically: '[g]iven what we have come to know about Renton, however, his intelligence, his wit, his determination, not to mention his opening monologue, we might want to take this [the concluding voice-over] ironically. [...] [H]e does not mean exactly what he says. What he does mean remains unspecified, remains to be reconstructed' (Gilmore 118).

In 2006, ten years after the release of the film, Harry Gibson directed a new production of *Trainspotting*, the stage adaptation, equally successful. The cast this time was of five actors: Brian Alexander as Franco, Laura Harvey as Alison, Peter Milne as Mark, Peter J. Ireland as Sick Boy and Ruaraidh Murray as Tommy. Their 2006 tour included theatres all over Britain: Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast, Oxford, Birmingham, Bath, among other cities.^{xx} Gibson states again the differences between the play and the movie:

One big difference between the play and the film apart from the fact that the play just uses one set and four actors [sic] and you can smell it happening in front of you is that the movie ends up being the [anti-]hero's getaway, while the play stays with the trainspotters, left standing in the ruined old Leith railway station waiting for trains that will never come to get them away from it all. Irvine Welsh liked that ending. Truer to life.^{xxi}

The novel's end, the play's or the film's endings, despite variations of tone, settings and themes, all share something in common. Indeed, the characters portrayed in these works are not simply good or bad, rather survivors in the society we live in, making us think carefully about the kind of world we belong to.

NOTES

ⁱ James Kelman won the 1994 Booker Prize with *How late it was, how late*. Along with Tom Leonard, Alasdair Gray and Liz Lochhead, Kelman had been involved since the 1970s with Philip Hobsbaum's creative writing group in Glasgow, having been responsible for a rebirth of Scottish letters.

ⁱⁱ Rogue as noun refers to 'one belonging to a class of idle vagrants or vagabonds,' 'a dishonest, unprincipled person; a rascal,' 'one who is of a mischievous disposition.' A distinction must be drawn between 'rogue' and 'tramp'. The first refers mainly to human outlaws who inhabit urban spaces. The latter is more associated with itinerant vagrants or beggars, who travel from place to place on foot and are not necessarily connected with urban spaces. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed. 1989. 23rd October 2005. < <http://dictionary.oed.com> >.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Cristie L. March, *Rewriting Scotland. Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway, and Kennedy* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002) 11; Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2005) 10. For further information see also BBC - Writing Scotland - Irvine Welsh, 13 March 2006): http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/arts/writingscotland/learning_journeys/scotlands_languages/irvine_welsh/

^{iv} See Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998* (London, New York: Verso, 1998).

^v On general theory of adaptation see, Philip Cox, *Reading Adaptations. Novels and Verse Narratives on the Stage, 1970-1840* (2000), Robert Giddins, Keith Selby, and Chris Wensley, *Screening the Novel: The Theory and Practice of Literary Dramatization* (1990), Peter Reynolds, ed. *Novel Images: Literature in Performance* (1993); Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan, eds. *Adaptations. From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999); Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975).

^{vi} Gibson has also adapted the following novels by Welsh: *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (Citizens Theatre, 1996), *Filth* (Citizens Theatre, 1999) and *Glue* (Citizens Theatre, 2001).

^{vii} See 'In-Yer-Face Theatre.' 19.08.2006: < <http://www.inyerface-theatre.com/az.html#> >.

^{viii} These actors will come across Welsh's path again, Susan Vidler in the *Trainspotting* film and in the play, *Hole*, Ewen Bremner in the films *Trainspotting* and *Acid House*, Jim Cunningham in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and Malcolm Shields in *Hole* and the *Acid House* film.

^{ix} While the play at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, was directed by Ian Brown, Harry Gibson developed the version which played the Edinburgh Festival (the Edinburgh Fringe) in 1995.

^x In Portugal, *Trainspotting*, directed by Pedro Varela, was performed at Apoiarte, Casa do Artista, Carnide (2000). The following actors took part in the play: Ricardo Carriço, Julie Sergent, Pedro Varela, André Gonçalves, Pedro Górgia, Gonçalo Dinis, Lavínia Moreira, Ana Rita Inácio and Anabela Moreira. Marta Plantier was responsible for the music and Paulo de Carvalho also participated. There was another adaptation of the play entitled *Xuto*, directed by Marco Alves, and performed at Cine Teatro dos Olivais (2005). The following actors took part in the play: Marco Alves, Marta Inez, Manuel Bernardo, Tiago Ferreira, Frank Navalhadas, Mariana Inez, Luís Filipe Martins, Erika Monteiro, Manuel Antunes, Paula Barbosa and Tony Galamba. See CETbase – Teatro em Portugal. Centro de Estudos de Teatro, Lisboa. 23.08.2006: < <http://www.fl.ul.pt/CETbase/default.htm> >.

^{xi} By early 1995 *Trainspotting* had sold 50,000 copies and three times that number a year later, having been reprinted sixteen times. In 1996 two editions of the novel were on the bestseller lists, the regular and the film tie-in. See Morace 73.

^{xii} According to Welsh: 'It was only when clubby types started buying *The Acid House*, then backtracked into *Trainspotting*, that it started to shift from the shelves.' Irvine Welsh, 'Introduction' in *The Acid House. A Screenplay* (London: Methuen, 1999) vii.

^{xiii} Also according to Smith: 'So a non-Scottish company played a major hand in enabling both projects [*Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*]. It is also worth emphasizing that Channel 4 is a television company, and that both films appeared as part of the company's very successful 'Film on Four' series. 'Film on Four' pioneered the practice (in Britain) of a television company producing or co-producing films which would receive a theatrical release prior to broadcast, a formula subsequently emulated by the BBC (who, using this model, co-funded with

the Glasgow Film Fund another one of the four Scottish films in production in 1995, *Small Faces*).' Murray Smith, 'Transnational Trainspotting' in *The Media in Britain*, 219-220. See also Murray Smith, *Trainspotting* (London: BFI – British Film Institute, 2002).

^{xiv} Hodge adds: "If I missed out your favourite bits, well I'm sorry but I missed out some of my own as well. 'Memories of Matty', for example, is probably my favourite chapter: it has enough material for a whole film in itself, but too much to fit into a single scene in this version. [...] My own contributions to the script make up a small proportion of it and are not crucial. I am proud, however, to have found a fitting monument at last for Archie Gemmill's goal against Holland in 1978. A whole nation of gullible males was moved by feelings of disappointment, betrayal, and ecstasy during that summer. Seventeen years later it seemed an ideal emotional cocktail for Mark Renton"(Hodge x).

^{xv} This extract is taken from 'Retrospective: An Interview with Director Danny Boyle - February 2003.' *Trainspotting. The Definite Edition*. 2 disc. 2003. According to Smith: "The film distributor, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, launched an expensive publicity campaign (£850,000, or half as much as the film's production costs, for the UK launch) which resembled the heavy publicity associated with the Hollywood 'event' movie more than the modest campaigns associated with 'small' European releases. [...] Indeed, the publicity for the film showed a wry awareness of its own nature, exhorting us to 'Believe the Hype!' Rather than using the channels and spaces typically used by the large American distributors, however, PolyGram invested in outlets and employed a design consultancy (Stylorouge) associated with pop and rock music culture. The company also collaborated with its competitor EMI in order to ensure an effective launch of the soundtrack CD tie-in." Smith, *Trainspotting*, 10.

^{xvi} This extract is taken from an interview with director Danny Boyle, Shepperton Studios, 10th November 1995, during the audio dubbing of the film. 'Retrospective: Sound of the Film -Then.' *Trainspotting. The Definite Edition*. 2 disc. 2003.

^{xvii} Renton is also partly responsible for the breaking up between Tommy and Lizzy, having switched their sex video, 'Tommy + Lizzy Vol. 1,' with another video labelled '100 Great Goals.' During the sex scenes which bring to a climax the night spent at the Volcano club, Lizzy urges Tommy to put on their sex tape, but they soon discover that it is nowhere to be found.

^{xviii} On heroin and the politics of popular culture see Henry A. Giroux, *Stealing Innocence. Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

^{xix} Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001) 24.

^{xx} *Trainspotting* – The Play. 23.08.2006: < <http://www.trainspottingtheplay.co.uk/> >.

^{xxi} This extract is taken from an interview with Director Harry Gibson: 'Trainspotting The Play 10 Years Ago' [Interview provided to the press to promote the 10th anniversary production of *Trainspotting*, the play based on Irvine Welsh's novel]. Spike magazine: books, music, art, travel. 23.08.2006: < <http://www.spikemagazine.com/1205-harry-gibson-trainspotting.php> >.

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Trainspotting, 1996, UK. Directed by Danny Boyle. Produced by Andrew Macdonald.
Screenplay by John Hodge. Based on the novel *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh.

Cast overview, first billed only:

Ewan McGregor Renton
Ewen Bremner Spud
Jonny Lee Miller Sick Boy
Kevin McKidd Tommy
Robert Carlyle Begbie
Kelly Macdonald Diane
Peter Mullan Swanney
James Cosmo Mr. Renton
Eileen Nicholas Mrs. Renton
Susan Vidler Alison
Pauline Lynch Lizzy
Shirley Henderson Gail
Stuart McQuarrie Gavin/ US Tourist
Irvine Welsh Mikey Forrester
Dale Winton Game Show Host

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Translation as Memory

Xiulu Wang
University of Warwick

Metaphor can lead to the emergence of a new intricate understanding of a phenomenon which otherwise would be hard or even impossible to grasp. Titled “translation as memory”, this paper attempts borrow some ideas from the conceptual domain of memory, so as to offer a perspective on translation as an active element in the literary system of a society, which records and narrates the history of that society in a very special way. While investigating the long-neglected literary translation practice in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), this paper can also be read as an attempt to retrieve a lost memory of this very special historical period in China.

There might be doubts about the use of literary translation as a source of information for understanding/remembering/rewriting contemporary China. While history is always presumably preserved in forms of documentary writings, like newspaper stories, Party resolutions, official documents, or first hand eye witness reports, the analysis of literary translation as historiography seems of questionable validity. However, when it comes to anything to do with history, there is always this unfortunate problem of verification. Which is the more reliable source, or is there any reliable source at all? Would one source be just as plausible or as biased as another? Would a double-check improve accuracy or compound misunderstanding?

We need an instant to suspend all these questions of how history should be verified. The idea of verification itself is somehow based on the presupposition that there should be an authoritative version of history that reveals the truth of the past. But what if the presupposition of a real past is faulty in itself? It is undeniable that we do have all the physical and historical evidence that marks the apparent pre-existence. While conventional historians and archaeologists were much preoccupied with the searching for these types of evidence, they started to realize that what they can find often remains so fragmentary and flawed that history to some extent remains essentially speculative. Stimulated and enriched by the insights of post-modernism, historians have been sceptically rethinking the meaning and implications of historical inquiry.

Once we realize that the past is the empirical experience of a panorama that appears and disappears at every instant, we might accept that there is no way for us to get a full picture of it. The questions we need to address become how and why a certain experience is/should be remembered, recorded and narrated. These questions unavoidably link history with memory, or more precisely, memories. I prefer the plural form because memory never has a definite shape. It alters and changes all the time. We constantly validate and falsify the stories in our memory, and decide the one that we believe at each moment. This process of validating and falsifying and the decision-making involved in the writing and rewriting of memory is exactly what defines history. In the different voices or even noises of memory, history explores the possibility of constructing plausible and acceptable conjectures. In this sense, the historical inquiry of finding out empirical reality remains absolutely important, not because it may establish a narrative of hegemony, but because it allows the competition of different memories. It is in this conception of memory and history that this paper looks for a possible narration of the history of Chinese intellectual life during the Cultural Revolution reflected/remembered through the operation of literary translation.

There is little research on literary translation in the Cultural Revolution. In a recently published textbook on Chinese literary translation history, only nine out of six hundred and forty five pages refer to literary translation practices during the Cultural Revolution. But even these nine pages are somehow an unprecedented attempt as many other translation textbooks either neglect this periodⁱ or simply offer an analysis only up to 1966.ⁱⁱ

There are several reasons for this blank in literary translation research. On the one hand, it does seem that there is not much to examine, since in reality very few literary translations were published publicly during the Cultural Revolution.ⁱⁱⁱ On the other, there is a general reluctance to look back at the past which is subject both to enforced forgetting from the government and voluntary forgetting among those who survived the disaster. The Cultural Revolution was a political campaign launched by Mao Zedong, the chairman of People Republic of China (PRC) and leader of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at that time. It lasted for ten years from 1966 till 1976^{iv} and brought catastrophic consequences to Chinese society. Nowadays official discourse refers to the Cultural Revolution as a ‘serious mistake’ in the search for a true socialist and communist ideal. The Chinese Communist Party, the party that is responsible for this ‘serious mistake’ is still in power today. In order to ‘protect the image of the party,’ the government avoids mentioning this history and urges its people to ‘look forward for stability and unity’.^v Such deliberate toning down of the Cultural Revolution is not only the result of a political trend. It also comes from individuals who personally experienced the trauma. During the Cultural Revolution, all traditional values, Eastern or Western, were derided and thrown overboard; literature was limited to nothing but political propaganda; almost all cultural activities were dropped except for eight ‘model theatrical pieces’; libraries were closed, books burnt, writers persecuted, and ‘intellectual freedom was virtually nonexistent’ (Shapiro and Liang: 3). It is not hard to imagine that under such an oppressive regime the situation of literary translation was desperate, and translators suffered. Many translators choose not to look back into their painful memories. When interviewed about his translating experience during the Cultural Revolution, Cao Yin, a renowned translator of Russian literature, explicitly stated his reluctance to look back: ‘It (The literary translation) should have been something enjoyable for us, but at that time, it meant nothing but humiliation. Now we really don’t want to talk about it again. I never keep a single book that I translated during the Cultural Revolution. I don’t want to see those books again. Whenever I think back, my heart aches’ (Chen Danyan: 271).

Research into literary translation in the Cultural Revolution therefore seems to be an unpleasant, unwanted and perhaps even taboo subject with only a handful of published translations to study. We can not change the fact that published translations were indeed very scarce, we do not have the power to reshape the dominant political discourse, and we are certainly not in a position to push anyone into his or her traumatic memories. These problems leave a blank page in literary translation history. In an attempt to fill this void, this paper will explore literary translations that were not published publicly as a testimony of the Cultural Revolution.

Published works have long been the sole focus of research based on the assumption that a book is not of observable social significance unless it is published, circulated, and read. This might be a sensible assumption in ordinary cases, but nothing about the Cultural Revolution – often described as ‘an era of nightmarish insanity’ – can be assumed in the ordinary way. In a framework where all published works of literature were ‘manufactured’ to repeat official guidelines and clichés, it would be too naive to assume that the reading public was really content with the slogan-loaded propaganda. After all, ‘a party-led campaign can of course force people to buy something and to read it, but they may simply read it without enjoyment, and furthermore, without believing it’ (Hung: 327). The reality in China is definitely not as simple as what propaganda would suggest. ‘Invisible writing’ that was not

published but somehow was read and circulated underground is becoming an increasingly important research subject in Chinese studies (Chen: www). It is not hard to imagine that activities of this ‘invisible’ or ‘underground’ nature also existed in the practice of literary translation. One noticeable phenomenon is the translated books published for ‘internal-use’ during the Cultural Revolution, known as ‘white cover books’;^{vi} the other is the unpublished works carried out by translators who would not give up their literary pursuits even in the darkest time. The current paper will offer a descriptive study of the first phenomenon.

One of the basic features of the descriptive approach to translation studies is that translations are facts of the target culture. By declaring that ‘translation is basically designed to fulfil what is assumed to be the needs of the culture which would eventually host it’ (Toury: 167), DTS aims to contextualize translation with respect to its position in the social and literary systems of the target culture. From this point of view, the complex process of translation can be studied more as an event that took place in the target literary system than as an endeavour of achieving equivalence between the source and the target. Based on Jakobson’s communicative model, Even-Zohar developed a scheme that illustrates the constitutive factors of a literary event, which I will adopt, in an adapted form, as a model for the analysis of the phenomenon of translation:

	INSTITUTION	
	REPERTOIRE	
PRODUCER		CONSUMER
	PRODUCT	
	MARKET	

Fig 1 – Adapted from Itamar Even Zohar’s model of the literary event (1997a: 20)

To situate the study of white cover books in ‘the *macro*-factors involved with the function of the literary system’ (Even-Zohar, 1990: 32), this paper will explore the stories behind these books so as to understand better what had happened in China at that time.

The institution and the market are two relatively simple factors. In the Cultural Revolution, a small group of Chinese Communist Party officials, or more specifically Mao Zedong and the Gang of Four, controlled almost every single aspect of social life. They determine what kind of books could be translated, and for what purposes. The market for translation was virtually non-existent as white cover books were translated for “internal use” and were not supposed to be sold or read in public. They were published with very limited distribution for leading cadres and research departments so that they could be analyzed as negative examples to prove the ugliness of imperialism and capitalism.

The producers of the translations were translators. Most of the translations of white cover books were group works and were published under collective signatures such as: ‘Shanghai Five-Seven Translation Group’, ‘Beijing Translation Centre’, or ‘North East Translation Team’. Some translations were under strange, presumably assumed names such as ‘Qi Gan’ (literally meaning ‘labour together’), ‘Qi Ge’ (‘fight together’), or ‘Gong Gong’ (‘work together’). This group work phenomenon is related to the social background of that time. Most translators were defined as ‘rightists’ or ‘counterrevolutionary authorities’ in the

political campaigns before and during the Cultural Revolution. They were sent to 'labour farms' for 're-education'. Usually the translators were ordered to form random teams to translate when there was a translation task. Once the task was accomplished, the translators were sent back to the farms to continue their re-education. Ren Rongrong, a famous translator of children's literature, described vividly how she was ordered to join the group work of translating a Soviet novel after she finished her daily work feeding pigs on the farm (Ren: 81-2). It is obvious that under those circumstances, there was no respect for the translators. The party leader of the Shanghai Peoples' Press explicitly called the translators as 'translation machines', and asked them to take it as an honour to be such machines for revolutionary purposes (Wu: 21). The above mentioned Cao Yin, who was actually one of the leading translators of white cover books, identified himself as a 'slave', who had no choice in the material, no authority over his translated text, and no knowledge of the purpose to which those translations were put (Chen: 216-7).

The nature of the consumer of white cover books is another intriguing element of this research. Although these books were supposed to be for 'internal-use' only, the actual consumers of these books were never restricted only to the party leaders and researchers. In reality, they were widely read, hand-copied, circulated, and discussed among young people craving for knowledge (Zhu). Despite strict institutional control, these books found their way from one corner of the town to another, from one city to the next. They were carefully tucked under shirts, skilfully wrapped with the cover of *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, or even secretly hidden in trash bins. In post-Cultural Revolution writing, especially in reflection literature and scar literature, many writers recalled their encounters with white cover books in one way or another and regarded that experience as their initial enlightenment. These works translated as 'poisonous weeds' were initially supposed to be used for criticism and repudiation. Ironically they turned out to be important nourishment for the Chinese reader of that time.

Now we look at the white cover books themselves---the product---to find out why many people would risk their lives to read and circulate them. According to the *General Index of the Published Books in China*, there were nearly 1000 translations of foreign literature that were published as white cover books in the Cultural Revolution. In "the Trajectory of Books--a Spiritual Reading History", based on many interviews with those who experienced the Cultural Revolution, Xiao Xiao lists thirty-seven white cover books that are considered influential. The list includes *The Revolution Betrayed* by Leo Trotsky, *People, Year, Life and the Thaw* by Ilya Ehrenburg, *One Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne, *The Outsider* by Albert Camus. With a quick glance at the list, we can almost immediately understand why those books were so popular among the generation of the Cultural Revolution. One type of white cover book was written by revisionist writers who initially believed and supported, but later doubted and eventually objected to the idea of a Communist revolution. These works stirred readers by revealing the dark side of a power struggle and Stalin's autocratic government under the disguise of the so-called communism. The Cultural Revolution undoubtedly was just another Stalin-styled ideological cleansing. In *Manhattan's China Lady*, the author tells how after reading some of these white cover books from her father's bookshelf, she discovered that 'Stalin's regime and the Cultural Revolution are just like twins. The disappearance of any person, the execution of any individual or the unknown fate of any family, is always linked with the so-called respectable and dignified revolutionary cause of the Party'. At one point the author says: 'For the first time, I started to think about the possibility of a meaning to life outside politics' (Zhou: 113).

Another type of white cover book was modern Western literature, often permeated with feelings of suspicion, desperation and a strong sense of rebellion. It is not hard to understand why these works struck a responsive chord in the hearts of Chinese readers, who were also facing a serious spiritual crisis since traditional values were collapsing in the Cultural Revolution. Writers such as Salinger, Beckett and Camus somehow captured the mood, although they wrote about other countries and other societies.

Even-Zohar discusses repertoire as a central notion in his scheme of literary event. He defined repertoire as ‘the aggregate of options utilized by a group of people, and by the individual members of the group, for the organization of life’ (1997b: 355). In a political order where diversity of ideas was not tolerated at all, the ideological restriction and institutional control left no room for options. There was only one option left, which was to conform. If cultural repertoires can be considered as tool kits for meanings to be decoded and encoded (Codde: 95), the Cultural Revolution almost left no tool for any meaningful message to be conveyed or understood, since all writings had to follow the same pattern, all slogans were of the same tune, and even every thought had to conform to the official dogma. By putting everything under the bureaucratized and sanitized linguist cover, the Cultural Revolution is ‘perhaps the time in the twentieth century when language was most separated from meaning’ (Mitter: 209). Although white cover books were also published with the consent of the authorities, they somehow spoke in a different way. The intention to have these books translated was to offer negative examples of capitalist or revisionist literature to the Chinese reader. But literary works have a unique power of defying any interpretation imposed by coercive institutions and once published they cannot be deprived of their function to disseminate multiple meanings. Many issues discussed in white cover books, like the conflict between humanity and revolution, love and desire, politics and power, were enlightening for both translators and readers. The style and skill of the foreign works also had formative influence on many Chinese writers who grew up in the seventies, and left a trace in their own literary creation afterwards. We can say that white cover books not only brought in new materials, but also new rules for discussing these materials, i.e. the two most important elements in the making of new cultural repertoires. The repertoires of these translations might not be necessarily foreign, but are definitely different from the meaningless repetition of party guidelines or leaders’ quotations.

While looking at Even-Zohar’s model comprising the six factors: institution, market, producer, consumer, product and repertoire, it seems that we can define the white cover book as a phenomenon characterized by a series of paradoxes. The books brought shame and humiliation to the producer, but immense benefit to the consumer. The production of the books was meant to be restricted, but in fact they enjoyed considerable circulation. They were produced by controlling institutions, but eventually generated independent thinking and new repertoires. These paradoxes, I believe, constitute the key for us to get to know the history of the Cultural Revolution. It was indeed the darkest time in contemporary China when a totalitarian regime showed no respect for individual freedom and human dignity, but it is also a time when we witnessed the brightest sparkle of individuality and humanity. It might be an era of nightmarish insanity, but it is from this insane era that China produced a generation of its most outstanding intellectuals, who calmly and firmly continued the perpetual struggle for a decent space for the independent human spirit.

If it has been commonly accepted that literature is a form of “social evidence and testimony”(Corse, 2), what this research has been trying to show is how literary translation can also be read in a similar way. Empowered by Even-Zohar’s model, I have investigated translation as an extremely complex system which connects not only the original text to the translated text, but also involves complex relationships with contexts of production and reception. This means that when we go back to the archives of the literary translation practice

in China during the Cultural Revolution, the phenomena that passed and flowed into and out of this system will unavoidably come into sight. Consequently, out of the study of translation, there emerges a bigger picture of Chinese intellectual life at that specific time in history, which has been largely ignored or forgotten by mainstream discourse.

Admittedly this depiction of history is still far from complete, but when it comes to any historical inquiry, we always have to bear with the assumption that it might never be complete and will be perhaps forever uncertain. In retrieving a lost memory, every plausible depiction has a profound impact. Taking translation as a site of historiography embedded with “questions of representation, power, and historicity” (Niranjana, 1), we need to keep the constant interrogations into these questions, through which comes out not only a more richly textured concept of translation, but also more importantly, a story of the evolution of our culture, our nation and our identity.

NOTES

ⁱ See Mu Lei, *Translation Teaching in China*, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1999. In this textbook, there is only one paragraph about translation in the Cultural Revolution, which simply describes the Cultural Revolution as a disastrous time with “all foreign language journals suspended and few translations published”.

ⁱⁱ See *The History of Literary Translation in China*, Chinese Translation Publishing House. 1989

ⁱⁱⁱ In the first five years of the Cultural Revolution, there was no single translated literary work published in China (Meng & Li: 390).

^{iv} The Cultural Revolution was a campaign launched in 1966 by Mao Zedong as an attempt to eliminate political rivals. Mao officially declared the campaign to be ended in 1969, but in most history books, the Cultural Revolution is considered to have lasted until the death of Mao and the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976.

^v Widespread ignorance of the Cultural Revolution in official historical discourse is prevailing. On May 16th, 2006, the 40th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, Ye Yonglei, a noted Chinese historian, called on deeper reflection on the Cultural Revolution. He criticized the “watering down” of the Cultural Revolution and its dismissal in Chinese historiography as “a textbook problem”.

^{vi} Those books were actually books with grey and light yellow covers. There was no special cover design, and they are now known as “white cover books” in general.

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A Click to the United Kingdom in Three Voices: An Investigation of the British Council Websites in Greater China

Yvonne Lee
University of Warwick

1. Setting the Scene

Translation activity in the cyberspace occurs mainly in software localisation and website translation. The localisation industry and translation studies have been in constant debate over the role of translation since the 1990s. Yet both sides recognise the enabling power of translation as a tool to cross borders (Cornin 2003, Pym 2003, 2005, Wiersema 2003, Tam 2004). Researchers have delineated translation activity in the cyberspace in our time: translation is crucial to go global (Topping 2000, Chiaro 2004), it almost always involves English in the language pair (Brookes 2000, Cheng 2000, Pym 2004, 2005), and it is marked by complexity owing to its multidisciplinary nature (Ramael 2001, Millán-Varela 2004, Scholte 2004). In the case study of Microsoft's localisation policy, David Brooks distinguishes three 'degrees or levels' of localisation, ranging from 'enabled' (adaptation for core products), 'localized' (partial adaptation) to 'adapted' (full adaptation), suggesting the determinants being the size and nature of the market (48-49). Even in international organisations, the translation team cannot be exempt from the complexity faced by that of private sectors (Joscelyne 2000). The debates, however, seem to centre on the tug of war between English as the *lingua franca* in the cyberspace and the struggle of European languages to resist Anglification.

A market such as China is not only large but culturally and linguistically distant from organisations and private sectors operating internationally. To enter this market, translation plays a pivotal role. To date, little research has been conducted for such a translation activity in East Asia. Hung recognises that the dearth of information keeps peripheral the development of Asian translation studies (1), marking the need for more research. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to record the observed phenomena in this field, thereby raising questions and suggesting possible developments in the future.

2. Material Selected

The merits of the Internet have already been recognised by individual users and corporate giants. International companies as well as non-profit organisations venture into Greater China thanks to translated websites. Li and Kirkup's case study suggests that students in the United Kingdom and China recognise the Internet as a useful source of information. They also argue that Chinese students are more likely to use the Internet for personal interests than their British counterpart (309). Websites, therefore, serve as a powerful tool to increase exposure in distant markets, such as Greater China.

Two considerations guided the selection of websites: locale and language. Within the localisation industry, 'locale' denotes a market with the same linguistic and cultural characteristics. Greater China is one locale sharing similar linguistic and cultural factors. In this locale, the three localities (People's Republic of China, hereafter China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) share the Chinese language and culture. Analytical approaches for this paper involve examinations of visual and linguistic elements in websites. The particular grouping is used simply as a methodological expedient. The procedure followed enables us to view the

websites and see the conditions in which they are developed. The following pages aim to present a dynamic, functional study of visual and linguistic transfers of information in the British Council websites in Greater China in the light of the changing landscape of website development and updating.

3. Within the British Council

The British Council, an international organisation registered as a charity in the United Kingdom, aims to provide education services (exams, language learning and education in Britain) and promote cultural interaction. Established in 1934, the British Council is now operating in 220 offices in 110 countries around the world with funding from the British Government.ⁱ The design of the corporate website is the standard template; regional offices adopt this template from the Head Officeⁱⁱ server and provide contents with local relevance. The resemblance of all websites creates a brand image of the organisation. Contents in localised websites are subject to frequent changes much more than the corporate one.ⁱⁱⁱ When websites, software and the alike are to be marketed globally, they tend to be designed in a generic manner so as to be easily compatible with local features, shaping the concept of ‘a globally relevant ST’ in the translation of globalised products (Adab 224), an idea in line with the design of the British Council localised websites.

Although the British Council is an organisation of great magnitude, not all of its websites are localised. Among Asian countries, only Korea and Greater China (China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) are provided with localised websites in Korean and in Chinese respectively. In the studies of globalisation, a relatively strong culture tends to be less tolerant to the foreign or foreign-sounding language (Pym 2005). On the contrary, cultures with inferior status often allow translation more freedom. When the market is not big enough, localisation might even be abandoned altogether; Burma, Vietnam and Thailand fall into this category. The acceptance of English accounts for another reason for the lack of localisation. In Singapore, Malaysia, and India, localisation is not a priority since English is well accepted within the locale, where users are presumably at ease with English.

Websites serve as an important tool for the British Council to penetrate into different countries.^{iv} Although they adopt the same template in design, the contents have significant differences that reflect different level of engagement, understanding and operation.

China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are designated as the same ‘locale’ in marketing terms. Yet there are differences in this seemingly homogeneous environment. In language terms only, differences occur on both the spoken and written level. Mandarin is the official language for all three areas; however, the situation is more complex in Hong Kong, one of the former colonies of the British Empire, where English and Cantonese are both official languages. In terms of written language, simplified and traditional Chinese characters characterise the most significant divide between China and Taiwan, while both systems are accepted in Hong Kong.^v The British Council websites in these three localities are created in both English and Chinese. Links on the corporate homepage provide access to the English version by default, where users will find links to the Chinese versions.

4. Visual Transfer

Website translation deals with multimodal texts with the use of signs from different semiotic systems. Signs are also communicated with different media. In the case of websites, the medium is a computer. Multimodal texts contain written texts, pictorial and visual elements. The latter two elements in particular, beg for a rounded analytical approach in addition to the

interpretation of written contents. Images in websites offer pictorial references while animations, special effects, pop-up windows and other visual presentations deliver immediate messages to users. All these non-verbal elements mark the necessity of reading images. While some images are visually sufficient, others are imposed with culturally-specific knowledge and are at risk of misinterpretation (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). In line with this thought, it is important to incorporate grammar of visual design into the analysis of websites.

Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that a webpage is structured along both vertical and horizontal axes. The value of information is reflected by its position. Users are assumed to treat information differently on different parts of the webpage (2006). Divided by an imaginary horizontal axis, texts and images in the upper section usually visualise ‘promise’ or ‘ideal’ value; contents in the lower section are factual or ‘real’ information (186). By the same token, information on the left and the right also carries different significance. Contents on the right represent the ‘message’, namely the key information. The left is perceived to accommodate information ‘already given’ to the users (180). The following figure demonstrates different values bestowed upon information on a webpage.

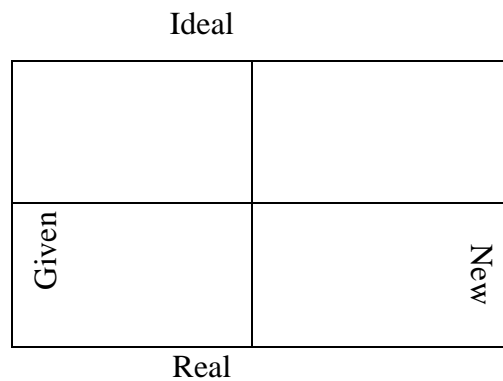


Figure 1. Webpage composition: horizontal and vertical structure



Figure 2. A Screen Shot taken from the British Council Global Homepage

The British Council corporate homepage serves as a starting point for visual analysis (Figure 2). On the webpage, the left column is occupied by images. The animation on the upper right corner is never static; it aims to promote the latest events that the organisation hopes to draw

attention to. At the bottom of the animation lie links to local websites. Contents on the right are primarily written text. These links are presented as rhetorical questions, eliciting curiosity and inviting users to learn more.

The design of the British Council website coincides with the visual design theory explained earlier. Information in the upper section embodies the ‘message’, outlining the ‘ideal’ image of the British Council. The lower-left section is where a user finds factual information about the organisation. These links are ‘given’ and ‘real’ in terms of information value.

The three localities in Greater China vary in language use and perceive British culture differently. The following section is dedicated to the analysis of visual transfer in the China, Hong Kong and Taiwan websites.

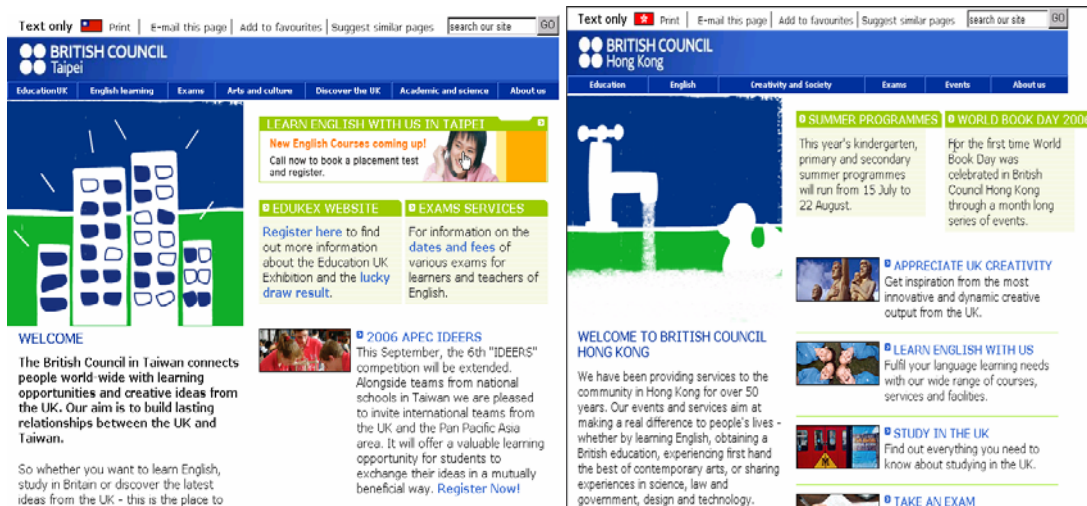


Figure 3. A Screen Shot of the Taiwan Homepage Figure 4. A Screen Shot of the Hong Kong Homepage

Taiwan and Hong Kong websites bear a great resemblance (Figure 3 and 4) to the corporate one. The layout suggests a template available at the start of localisation. Localised websites offer different contents for news and events (the ‘message’). Since events are organised separately, they are subject to local conventions and partnership. Website of the British Council China provides a slightly different image as seen in the following figure,



Figure 5. Screen Shot of the British Council China website in English

Figure 5 suggests that the design of the China website adopts the corporate template. Yet not only is the colour different, the animation features a series of scenic spots in the United Kingdom, delivering a different visual effect than the others. The most distinguished

disparity, nevertheless, is the promotional event displayed in Chinese on the upper-right hand corner. The descriptions in Chinese create an eye-catching effect for local users.

In the design of localised websites, animations in particular, parade images that are ‘not’ Chinese, giving users a sense of the foreign, or to be more specific, British. Moreover, these websites have different focus. An observation of the ‘message’ corner indicates that website of the British Council China aims to introduce a friendly image to China to promote British culture. The Hong Kong website, by contrast, promotes local activities. The same section for the Taiwanese version displays information about educational opportunities in the United Kingdom.

Animations showcased on the local websites mainly derive from the Head Office; however, regional offices might adapt the ready-made animation with local features.^{vi} At the time of writing, the Hong Kong regional office replaced the old animation (‘Zero Carbon City’) with that of English language learning; the China office revamped the website, giving it a slightly different look.

5. Linguistic Transfer

The contents are almost always produced in English. However, not every piece of information is translated into Chinese. The translation or the lack of it are both key to the analysis. Based on the preliminary findings, phone interviews were conducted with the regional offices so as to question and verify the reasons for translations/lack of translations.

Major difficulties presented themselves at the outset of the attempt to study this contemporary phenomenon. First, there is the underlying risk of not being completely objective. The observation and analysis are subject to linguistic and cultural nuances and therefore a certain degree of subjectivity is unavoidable. Back translations and constant review are measures to make the analysis as objective as possible.

Regional offices suggest that contents are produced in English and translated by in-house translators.^{vii} However, there are certain messages left in English while some, though on very rare occasions, are created in Chinese.^{viii} The nature of information, time and budget limits are interwoven factors contributing to different levels of linguistic transfer. To deliver a strong presence in the local community, the British Council overseas offices organise events or work with local organisations. The major event is the annual education exhibition. During the promotional period, regional offices make every endeavour to highlight the event on websites. Not only do eye-catching advertisements adorn the ‘message’ corner but announcements, pop-up windows and other features also orchestrate a powerful marketing message of ‘British Education’ to users.

Marketing of British education is also visible on other occasions. Events organised by the British Council often carry across the same objective. The ‘story-telling workshop’, for instance, is an event where guest speakers from Britain are invited to give workshops to English teachers in Taiwan. The regional office claims that such events help ‘interact with local teachers and students’; in the meantime it also suggests ‘a long-term impact’ brought to the local community through these activities. The ‘long-term impact’ extends to aspects other than the selling point of education. In other areas, such as scientific, artistic and cultural development, the British Council fully exploits the merits of the Internet to disseminate information. To bring a ‘British flavour’, information about British culture is constantly uploaded to local websites. Each of the three websites in Greater China composes a different medley of such information targeting local interests; these contents are brainchildren of the Head Office. Analysis of content translation in these three websites suggests that the regional offices have their own house style that applies to the ways in which translation is performed. The remainder of this paper provides examples.

6. House Styles and Content Translation

Interestingly, the text in the localised websites is significantly longer than the original.^{ix} Pym argues that human translators are prone to render texts more naturally, adding, changing or making explicit information to meet local linguistic conventions, resulting in longer translations than those produced by machine translation (2004). This holds true as the British Council regional offices delegate translation to in-house translators. Whether it is addition, paraphrasing or explicitations, the English contents undergo an adapting process to cater to local conventions. The analysis suggests that the China website maintains a house style marked by a high degree of adaptation, while the style of Hong Kong and Taiwan websites sports an opposite fashion by staying closer to the English content. In certain cases, the English contents are even left without translation. The following passage describes these house styles with examples to illustrate how they influence translation.

Contents in the British Council China website are almost always translated and are more likely to be subject to changes. Wiersema observes that translators are likely to rewrite a text to make it more acceptable to users as an attempt to render globalised concepts and contents (2003), which is seen in this case. The linguistic transfer for the China website occurs in the form of rewriting and paraphrasing.

English: You don't need to fly back to UK to take any school or college entry exams. You can take it here in our office in China! Our networks in China provide you with the most flexible and convenient option to take these UK exams.

Chinese:

想省掉飞回英国参加学校的入学考试或课程考试的麻烦?们遍布中国的考试服务以帮助你在中国以最灵活方便的方式完成考试。

Back translation: Do you want to save from the trouble flying to the UK for entrance exams to British schools? Our exams services in many cities in China can help you take exams in the most flexible and convenient way.

The back translation demonstrates that the Chinese translation extends translation to rewriting as it conveys the information in an entirely different manner. Starting with a rhetorical question, the translation attracts the attention of the users and then proceeds to give the underlying message. While getting the message across, it achieves the same effect by using a similar informal register. The translation in the China website not only experiments with rewriting but with colloquialism, as the following example suggests,

English: Experience the current dynamic and diverse happenings in the UK from a UK point of view.

Chinese: 和我们的专栏作家维多利亚一起品评英国当代热点话题, 时尚文化感受英国最新最 i n 的生活。

Back translation: With our columnist Victoria, learn the British contemporary hot topics, fashion, and culture. Experience the latest, the most 'in' life of Britain.

By adding information (underlined), the Chinese translation explicitates the content as the information cannot be found without a further click on the link. In addition, the description of 'the most "in" life' demonstrates the way colloquialism packages the message. 'In' is a colloquial expression that denotes things or events that are 'trendy'. The explicitation and colloquialism together add appeal to this information. The Chinese translation is observed to exercise a high degree of flexibility to arise the curiosity of the users. The following example

not only portrays a case of addition, it is more likely to be a rewritten version of the English text.

English: BBC Symphony Orchestra is coming to Beijing this October! Invited by Beijing Music Festival, they are going to have two concerts at Forbidden City Concert Hall. (British Council China)

Chinese:

BBC交响乐团将在金秋10月为北京观众在家门口重现BBC逍遥音乐会的盛况。这次在中山音乐堂的两场演出势必让观众看到这支世界一流交响乐团的真实魅力。北京国际音乐节邀请BBC交响乐团的原则就是“100%艺术水准，100%视听享受”。

At a glance the Chinese translation is obviously lengthier. An attempt of back translation goes,

Back Translation: 'In the golden month of October, BBC symphony Orchestra is going to deliver their spectacular performance to the audience in Beijing as it is in the Promenade Concert. This time the two performances at our doorstep in Forbidden City Concert Hall will definitely show audiences the true charm of this world-class symphony orchestra. The Beijing Music Festival invites BBC Symphony Orchestra based on the principle of '100% artistic standard, 100% audio-visual enjoyment.'

The back translation of this example is marked by several foreign-sounding expressions. 'Golden month of October' denotes the season of autumn from the image of the colourful foliage. If the description of '100% artistic standard, 100% audio-visual enjoyment' sounds exotic to the English-speaking ears, it is likely to be paraphrased as 'best quality, great enjoyment'. The translation also delivers a feeling of 'an exclusive performance' by adding information such as 'the audience in Beijing', 'at our doorstep' and 'the true charm.' A description of the organiser (The Beijing Music Festival) hints that the performance is tailored to meet its high standard. The example shows the different ways in which contents in British Council China website are adapted. These adaptations are more likely to occur in the translation for British Council China website than the other two. The British Council China website is also the only one to showcase information about British football culture. This is evidence of the regional office's intention to strengthen bonds with the local community as the Chinese football culture is developing rapidly. In line with Cheng's observation on website localisation, the contents for the China website are obviously '... translated in culturally targeted way that reinforced the site's marketing message...' (30)

Although the regional offices claim they operate separately, there is an apparent sign of division of resource between China and Hong Kong websites. The China website offers information at a national level (funding for researchers, BOND scheme, human right issues) that are eliminated in the Hong Kong website. In the meantime, the Hong Kong website is crowded with services and information about British cultural events, promoting the culture and possibly bypassing the likelihood of a tighter censorship (online radio programme 'Selector', broadcasting British popular music). The Chinese text in the China website is a linguistic transfer customised for the local community; it extends the notion of translation and creates a linguistic transfer that is 'relevant' (Adab 1998), yet not identical to the English contents. Contrary to the translation style of the China website, not all the information is translated in the Hong Kong and Taiwan websites. The lack of translation marks a different house style of these two regional offices. The 'CUBED' event in the Hong Kong website, for instance, covers contents with a large amount of scientific terminology and concepts. In the Chinese version, there is no translation available. Instead, a reminder under the link states that

it leads to an English-only page. The regional office attributes the lack of translation to budget and time limit with an emphasis that even with a budget limit, the material is so valuable that it has to be introduced. Wiersema contends that source-language terms are more likely to be preserved in translation as an effect of globalisation (*Ibid.*). Similar examples recur in the Hong Kong and Taiwan websites, where translation is abandoned when professional knowledge, thence more time and budget, are required. In addition to the lack of translation, the translation of local activities is likely to undergo the opposite process of adaptation, namely deletion or summary. The following example shows how information is summarised.

English: British Council Taiwan was co-operating with Cranfield to bring this exciting simulation, “Business Game” to you. The Minimax simulation has been used with students, lawyers, bankers, architects, engineers etc. in the Malaysia, the USA, Pakistan and throughout Europe. It is a compulsory part of the MBA programmes at Cranfield. The Game was run over two days in each of Taipei and Kaohsiung. In Taipei our hosts for the first day, 18th October, was the National Taipei University. (British Council Taiwan)

Chinese:

英國文化協會與臺北大學及中山大學於臺北、高雄舉辦兩場企業經營競賽(Business game), 由英國Cranfield大學商學院提供協助及指導。

Back translation: The British Council Taiwan organises two ‘Business Games’ in National Taipei University, Taipei and National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung. Cranfield University offers assistance and guidance to the event.

In opposition to the general lengthening tendency, information about this business game is brief in the Chinese translation. The English text gives a short description as an introductory remark by highlighting its popularity in various countries; the remarks also give credit and reputation to the event. Yet all these descriptions are nonexistent in the Chinese version. Another interesting phenomenon is the information on educational exhibitions created in Chinese. The exhibition is not only a major event but is organised single-handedly by the British Council overseas offices. From the observation, new advertisements are placed in the ‘message’ corner of the homepage. The linguistic elements within, however, are all in Chinese and remain the same in the English webpage, suggesting that the regional office rather than the Head Office is the producer of the website content. In summary, in the Hong Kong and Taiwan websites the original content is less likely to undergo the type of adaptation that occurs in the China website. Information about local events can either remain in English or be abridged, which is a phenomenon unseen in the China website.

The British Council websites in Greater China all claim to have a similar objective, yet the observation suggests a slightly different story, thence creating distinctive images of the same organisation. British education is indeed a recurrent theme for all three websites, and the organisation has certainly made good use of the website as Chinese students rely on the Internet for information. However, the Hong Kong website presents the United Kingdom as a culturally diverse and advanced country with frequent inputs from the Head Office remaining in English to give a British flavour. On the contrary, the British flavour has a Chinese twist in the China website as information undergoes a colloquial adaptation. The Taiwan website appears to adhere to the agenda to promote British education to local users. Granted that no one phase of observation can be adequately understood as a completion, the British Council websites are still under observation.

7. Conclusive Remarks

This paper sets out as an attempt to describe translation activity in websites. The investigation of the British Council websites in Greater China indicates that the translation of content, characterised by different house styles, reflects the way the organisation is perceived. Although the design of websites follows the top-down convention from the Head Office as seen in localisation industry, the contents are adapted by regional offices which demonstrate their knowledge of the local market. This form of localisation remotely echoes the ‘bottom-up localisation’ suggested by Schäler, aiming to provide ‘relevant, local digital content’. (Cited in Cronin 2006) The result is the different faces of the British Council presented in Chinese. This paper hopes to provide a point of departure for further investigation into translation activities on the Internet. It is not a full stop; rather, it is a starting point for the study of translation phenomenon on the Internet.

NOTES

ⁱ Information from the British Council corporate website. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-about-us.htm> [access date 24/07/2006]

ⁱⁱ All information regarding ‘Head Office’ in this paper comes from interviews conducted with regional offices of the British Council in Greater China.

ⁱⁱⁱ A source from the British Council Hong Kong suggests that the website is monitored and updated frequently, usually on a weekly basis.

^{iv} Suggested in the interviews with regional offices.

^v Before Handover to China in 1997, traditional Chinese character was the recognised written language in Hong Kong. Post-1997 Government adopted simplified Chinese characters while preserving traditional ones.

^{vi} Information obtained from interviews.

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} This is always advertising material, mostly in the form of animation, on the ‘message’ corner. This has been found in China and Taiwan websites, whereas the advertising material in the Hong Kong website either remains in English only or is presented in both languages.

^{ix} An example of deletion will be discussed separately in the following passages.

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