Friday October 12, 2018
Round Table : translators, editors and publishers

Chair: Marie-Nadia Karsky

This round table addresses play translations and the various roles and tasks involved in bringing translations to life. Let us introduce the speakers: Marianne Drugeon, a member of the Maison Antoine Vitez, teaches theatre and translation at the University of Montpellier and translates British theatre, particularly Tom Stoppard; Nathalie Rivère de Carles, teacher of English drama at the University of Toulouse, directs English and bilingual publications of plays for the series *Nouvelle Scène* anglaise and also co-translates plays; Caroline Schlenker directs acting workshops in English in Grenoble, using acting as a tool for language learning, and is currently working with local actors on a translation of the play *Fool for Love* by Sam Shepard; Michael Raab, a translator and lecturer in Frankfurt, worked as a dramaturg in various theatres in Germany and has translated authors from Agatha Christie to Michael Frayn; Sarah Vermande, an actor and member of the Maison Antoine Vitez for over 15 years, has translated a debbie tucker green play and done co-translations of Linda McClean with Blandine Pélissier; Séverine Magois, also a drama translator from the Maison Antoine Vitez, has regularly won awards for her translations, and is Daniel Keene's agent in France; Blandine Pélissier is a feminist activist and actress, a stage director, and co-translator with Sarah Vermande and Kelly Rivière, specializing in Scottish women playwrights; Maggie Rose, a playwright and teacher of British theatre at the University of Milan, is a member of the Scottish Society of Playwrights and has widely published on translation and re-writing.

The round table begins by discussing how the decision is made to translate a particular play or playwright. Schlenker found Sam Shepard's play *Fool for Love* a good choice for several reasons. She loves the

playwright and this play in particular, and was interested, as an actor, in May, a strong female character. She was also intrigued by the challenge of bringing it to the French stage and making it accessible to a French audience while remaining true to Shepard's American voice. Rose began her work as a translator by translating authors she wanted to make known in Italy. In recent years, she has focused on the Scottish repertoire, creating the very first anthology of Scottish plays translated into Italian. More recently, she did a project called Intercultural Dialogues, theatre workshops with writers coming to Milan to translate plays of playwrights never staged before in Italy. Vermande translated one play at the request of the playwright, and otherwise chooses plays that she either wants to see in her native language or that she would love to act in. Drugeon, an academic specialist of Anglophone theatre more than a translator, explained that her translations have been the result of two chance meetings. The first was in the form of a workshop she was asked to organise at the University of Montpellier, where she is currently teaching, which invited translators to work with students on a play. Later, a colleague offered to co-translate a Stoppard play. Rivère de Carles primarily publishes play translations and has so far chosen the plays recommended by translators or playwrights.

The round table next discusses the speakers' experiences with co-translation specifically, as many of them primarily work with other translators on their projects. As an actor, a translator, and a director, Pélissier appreciates the process of acknowledging multiple ways of interpreting a text. She also believes that co-translating finally produces a better play because each of the co-translators must be more selective about the words they choose. Vermande finds co-translating with other translators both easier and more difficult than collaborating with a director or actors. She appreciates that she and other translators have the same access to the original language and to the tools, while directors and actors often have their own instinct about the text and lack a firm understanding of the original language. Conversely, working with other translators challenges her to be more selective about word choice, to defend interpretations, and to avoid reverting to comfortable preferences. Pélissier also finds working with actors to be difficult,

because they do not always understand the nuances of the original language and therefore often do not understand the translations of these nuances. Magois typically prepares the text before meeting with co-translators, and in this way, they work quickly to arrive at a final co-translation. However, her first co-translation involved a translator she had never met, so they first had to establish that they would work well together from both an artistic and ethical standpoint. They then worked on the text directly together, which took more time but which Magois also found very stimulating.

Following the discussion on co-translations, Raab addresses the relationship between translation and dramaturgy. He began as a dramaturg, and after learning more about gestural language he was able to transition into translation for the second part of his professional life. He likes the lightness, elegance, and directness of plays and so uses modern idioms to make it seem as though the character is speaking words he or she has just thought of and that have never been spoken before. He finds this easy to do because he feels more comfortable with colloquial language than with heightened, poetic language. Translating into German is a challenge for him, though, as the language in the source text does not easily allow for this.

Finally, the round table addresses the publication of play translations. Rose's translations are primarily for production in the UK and in Italy; however, she does place an emphasis on the importance of publication to make the texts known. Vermande raises the thorny question of the circulation of unpublished translations. The Maison Antoine Vitez makes these available to a wide audience, yet it is important to stop doing so once a publication is available for purchase so that an unfinished version of the translation does not circulate. Rivère de Carles adds that most publications of translated plays do not sell well. They finance the publication of new playwrights by publishing them alongside the works of well-established authors. Pélissier emphasizes the importance of distributing translations to multiple reading committees, even if the play is not published, to ensure the play

is read by many. However, translators do not earn much money from translations and often receive little or no recognition for their work.

(Transcript and summary by Isabel MILKOVICH, Master's student, University Grenoble Alps)