



Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association
Cumann Aistritheoirí agus Teangairí na hÉireann

ITIA Bulletin

July 2014

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Editorial

In our summer issue we are pleased to confirm that we are not Euro-centric in our content and are delighted to be able to provide you with views from colleagues on the other side of the world. Despite the distance it is both, heartening to see the quest for accreditation, standards etc and a bit depressing to note that we share similar low pay rates. All the more reason to develop solidarity in our community, wherever that might be. The two articles in the quarterly newsletter IN TOUCH from Ausit (Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators) illustrate translation and interpreting services from both the end user and the providers' point of view and draw many parallels with our situation in Ireland. Also from that side of the world is an article about the Japan Translators' Association 25th conference.

We hope to develop links with other translator and interpreter associations around the world in future issues.

Not to let the home side down, also included are a number of articles from national newspapers to keep you up-to-date.

Please, also note that our previously understood but now declared copyright notice appears at the end of this issue.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Anne Larchet
Co-Editor

Standards Must Be Enforced

Good news in similar views from Down Under

Professionals Australia CEO Chris Walton outlines what the association sees as the key issues facing the interpreting industry.

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Professionals Australia recognises that in the contemporary context, the imperatives for the provision of quality and quantity of interpreters often work against each other. These imperatives operate in the context of a market that demands the provision of both at the lowest possible cost, and this presents a complex and fundamental barrier to the provision of high-quality interpreting services for end-users.

Market problems

The interpreting industry is currently characterised by what Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) refer to as “market disorder”:

“... the current state of the interpreting market that reflects ... the ... lack of consistent and reliable professional control over the variables impacting the effective delivery of interpreting services (such as induction into the field, working conditions, job descriptions, role and responsibility, wages) ...”[1].

Professionals Australia believes insecure work and the widespread engagement of casuals and contractors are

fundamental aspects of the market disorder characterising the Australian interpreting industry.[2] Market disorder and lack of control over the variables impacting quality in service delivery are significant barriers to the effective shifting of consumers away from non-accredited to accredited practitioners and ensuring high-quality interpreting services for end-users.

Lack of enforcement of standards

A significant contributor to the problems characterising much of the industry is lack of enforcement of standards. Even where the use of NAATI-accredited practitioners is set out in guidelines, enforcement is often non-existent or sidestepped via loopholes. Enforcement of standards is as important as the standards themselves.

Mikkelson (2013) suggests of government agencies:

“... the main thing they can do to support the interpreting profession is to enforce existing laws and regulations requiring the use of certified interpreters. Public sector entities (healthcare institutions, law enforcement agencies, school districts, court systems, and so on) that contract out for interpreting services should heed guidelines ...”[3]

Lack of informed purchasing

The trade-offs between price, turnaround time and quality, and the issue of competence in language services, are poorly understood, and this lack of understanding by clients can often mean that many select on the basis of price regardless of qualifications.

Status, reward and continuing professional development

It is clear that qualifications and taking on further training must be considered in conjunction with appropriate reward mechanisms, with little incentive for upgrading and improving skill levels as arrangements currently stand.

Low pay and lack of appropriate linkages between pay and training currently operate as disincentives for interpreters to enter and remain in the profession or to take on further training.

“The widespread use of interpreters who are not NAATI-accredited or accredited to an inappropriate level results in risk to government and the community.”

Risk

Professionals Australia is critically concerned about the widespread use of interpreters who are not NAATI-accredited or accredited to an inappropriate level, resulting in risk to government and the community. In the medical/health setting, lives may be endangered and the quality of care significantly impacted. In the legal context, miscarriages of justice in the form of aborted trials, wrongful convictions, inappropriate sentencing, and misunderstood bail conditions, community orders and charges, all result in potential exposure to liability. The stories we are aware of in refugee detention centres are potentially explosive and could result in legitimate refugees wrongly refused protection visas or in some cases inappropriately receiving them, leaving the government open to serious litigation.

As the European Commission put it in its report, Studies on translation and multilingualism, “Investment in quality is indispensable for reducing the risk of providing poor quality”.[4]

In summary

Clearly these problems are complex and it will take time to develop industry-based solutions. Professionals Australia will continue to play an active and considered role in identifying and responding to the challenges facing the profession and industry – challenges that can only be tackled with the cooperation and commitment of major stakeholder groups and interpreters themselves.

[1] Witter-Merithew, A. and Johnson, L. (2004). Market Disorder within the Field of Sign Language Interpreting: Professionalization Implications. *Journal of Interpretation*, vol. 14, p.20

[2] Translators and interpreters sourcing their work in the open market where the government is not the ultimate buyer of their services may face different challenges and different approaches to ensuring quality, and NAATI is not involved in those processes. Also, translators, while they may be involved in the community sector, may have a more diverse source of income, and issues around market disorder may be different in type or degree to those outlined for community interpreters.

[3] Mikkelsen, H. (2013). *Translation and Interpreting*, vol. 5, No. 1, p.72

[4] European Commission, Directorate-General for Translation (2012). *Quantifying quality costs and the cost of poor quality in translation*, p.49.

Chris Walton CEO Professionals Australia
Original Source <http://tinyurl.com/l6asf9h>

Apps for Interpreters

I attended the launch of the Understand me and Speak to Me mobile Apps at Dublin Castle on the 29th of May 2014. Dr Una MacConville demonstrated the apps in action and Dr Regina McQuillan of St Francis Hospice explained the need for them. The apps were officially launched by Dr Fidele Mutwarasibo from The Immigrant Council of Ireland. Also present were Diana Nurse (HSE) and representatives from the Irish Hospice Foundation as well as Mary Phelan and Anette Schiller from the ITIA.

Understand me and Speak To Me were developed by the Communicate Your Health partnership—comprising the Interpreters in Palliative Care: ‘On Speaking Terms—Matters of Life and Death’ development project (funded by the Irish Hospice Foundation) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Social Inclusion Unit, Ireland.

Understand me was developed to assist health care professionals caring for people from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups who may also have Limited English Proficiency. The Understand Me mobile App was developed in order to make these resources more readily available for health care professionals and ancillary staff in all health care settings.

Through interviews and involvement with training workshops for interpreters, the development project identified a need for specific information about palliative care services and about interpreting in these contexts. There is also a need to help with some strategies for coping with the difficult emotional issues that may arise when interpreting for people who are dealing with a terminal illness. Interpreters also need access to this

information without the need to attend training workshops and courses as current working conditions for community interpreters can make it difficult to find time and money for continuing professional training and education.

The Speak To Me App for Community Interpreters was developed with the assistance of the ITIA and some Interpreter service providers.

The App features the ITIA Code of Ethics for Healthcare Interpreters, good practice guidelines and a guide to self care strategies for working in stressful interpreting contexts. The App also includes information about core aspects of Palliative Care with links to an information video about palliative care featured in the Irish Association of Palliative Care (IAPC) website.

A link to specific on-line tutorials about interpreting in Palliative Care, developed by the California Healthcare Foundation, is provided in addition to further resources about palliative care and for interpreting in Irish healthcare.

iPhone

- <http://tinyurl.com/m7a9tl8>
- <http://tinyurl.com/mgq9wyw>

Android devices

- <http://tinyurl.com/llzdhwg>
- <http://tinyurl.com/n3h3flo>

Miren Maialen Samper

Second-class interpreting

No need to emigrate for better pay!

Erika Gonzalez says we need to get interpreters' education, competence and professionalism to a level where they deserve to get paid professional rates.

An interpreter has just finished her work. She has spent five hours in a police station interpreting for an asylum seeker. She gets back to her car. Great – she's got a fine.

She will get 65 euros for her job. After paying the fine she's got 25 euros left.

She takes the train next time. She goes to a local court and on this occasion she is done in 10 minutes. She will get 2.10 euros for her job. They won't even pay her for the whole hour (13 euros). The remuneration won't even cover the cost of public transport.

Same interpreter, same brain, same suit, same pen, same notebook. A council meeting. All the participants speak the same language, but some of them do not want to use that language, and therefore they use the other official language. The interpreter gets in the booth. She is 15 minutes early. Someone knocks on the booth door and brings her a freshly baked croissant and a latte. She spends three hours in the booth. She gets about 400 euros for the job.

That interpreter was me, seven years ago, before I moved to Australia. I could not believe the gap between conference and community interpreting, and realised that the difference between them was not due to the requirements of the job, the label or setting, but rather to the type of clients. While some were politicians, academics, doctors, engineers or the like, the others were migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Even in court, a category which falls within the community umbrella term, it made a difference whether you were interpreting for local citizens who decided to use "the other" official language or for an asylum seeker. There were permanent court interpreters in "the other" official language who were earning fairly good wages.

As I am writing these words, another AUSIT e-bulletin message on whether community interpreting should be rebranded has landed in my in box. Of course we could rebrand it, pick a fancy name and hope for the best. As some members already stated, unless there are some deeper changes, I do not think our situation will improve by just changing the label of the activity. Stakeholders, service providers and we ourselves need to understand what the professional practice implies, the kind of training and expertise it requires. No doctor or judge is

going to wake up one day and say: "Oh, I think these interpreters deserve better."

It takes time. They need to be trained and taught how to work with interpreters, and to understand the level of specialisation required to interpret. Professionalism is gained through self-recognition and internal regulation, as well. The so-called "control professions", notably the law and medicine, regulate and control the entry of new professionals and establish high standards for new members. I would have been petrified if they had told me that the surgeon who removed my thyroid tumour a couple of months ago got his credentials through the National Accreditation Authority for Thyroid Inspectors just by sitting for a test that involved dissecting a chubby dolly and removing a fabric thyroid. We need compulsory training, and yes, research that contributes to the design of quality training programs. Little will change until every single interpreter understands this. Nobody is going to fight the battle for us.

As one contributor to the debate has commented, the term community is associated with community centres, cake stalls, welfare, close family, safety, nurturing and the like – all lovely things that at little perceived financial cost. It is our responsibility to raise the bar and demonstrate that this is not right.

"The difference between conference and community interpreting was not due to the requirements of the job, the label or setting, but rather to the type of clients."

Community interpreting in Australia (I'll stick to this term until we find a better one) is no longer an occupation. We have much to improve, but fortunately we are among the leading nations in the field. At least judges do not rush out of their offices to grab the chef in the restaurant across the road to get an interpreter, and nobody receives insulting fees (even if some agencies and institutions are pretty tight) that do not even cover the interpreter's commuting costs. It is a profession, and a profession is an activity that is practised by specialists who gain their expertise through training and practice, and abide by the code of ethics that regulates the activity.

Professionalism in community interpreting is built upon four pillars: technical competence (interpreting skills, linguistic skills, communication management skills and the ability to adopt a pragmatic approach when interpreting); knowledge of the code of ethics and how to apply it; knowledge of the role and its limitations; and knowledge of the work environment, protocols and politics involved in each setting. If any of these pillars starts eroding, the structure will begin to crack.

Continuous learning will provide us with the materials to fight erosion and rust. At the same time, those who didn't build their pillars solidly enough or who engaged in the project with no guidance will end up compromising the balance of the structure. Quality is a shared responsibility, and quality means good, well-respected practitioners who are paid according to their level of expertise and performance.

As Spanish academic Abril Martí has observed, "training in conference interpreting is a given". Hopefully in a not too distant future we might be able to say the same about community interpreting. Then when we go to court, we may have a waiting room with the materials to prepare for the case, and a dedicated desk in the court with a jug of water and connection to the internet – and maybe we'll even be welcomed with a freshly baked croissant and a latte. Then people will get the same high-quality service whether they be lawyers, engineers, unskilled workers or citizens who have been contributing to our society for years but lack fluency in the official language. We need to get interpreters' education, competence and professionalism to a level where they deserve to get paid professional rates. We need to get to a point where nobody will question the professionalism of interpreters, and therefore the rates they charge. The journey won't be an easy one, but I am heartened that there are interpreters and academics working hard to win the profession the status it deserves.

Erika Gonzalez
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AUSIT

The Best-Loved Canadian Tale in Japan

It's IJET weekend. More than 500 translators and interpreters working mainly between Japanese and English are gathered at Big Sight, Tokyo's international conference center, for the twenty-fifth **International Japanese-English Translation** Conference.

Since its launch in Hakone a quarter-century ago, the annual conference organized by the **Japan Association of Translators** has given wordsmiths a forum for sharing tips and tricks to get them through their work. This year the organizers have outdone themselves, putting together a program that has attracted twice as many participants as any previous IJET.

A big draw this year was the **keynote speech** by Muraoka Eri. The granddaughter of Muraoka Hanako (born Annaka Hana; 1893–1968), whose Japanese translation of *Anne of Green Gables* was published in 1952, she shared stories about her grandmother's life and her efforts to bring Anne to Japanese readers.

Muraoka is a big name in Japan now. The quasi public broadcaster NHK runs serialized dramas in 15-minute segments each morning, with a new show beginning twice yearly, and the current one—*Hanako to An*, or "Hanako and Anne"—is based on her life as presented in Muraoka Eri's biography of her grandmother, *An no yurikago: Muraoka Hanako no shōgai* (Anne's Cradle: The Life of Muraoka Hanako). Much of the program adheres closely to actual events: A young girl born into an impoverished farming family in Yamanashi Prefecture manages to attend the prestigious girls' school Tōyō Eiwa Jogakuin, where she learns to love the English language under the tutelage of the foreign teachers there. Her aptitude for memorizing poetry, and later for translating it into Japanese, leads to her career as a translator, with *Akage no An*, the Japanese edition of Canadian writer Lucy Maud Montgomery's novel set on Prince Edward Island, as her most famous work..

Looking Back at Hanako's Early Life

As Muraoka Eri noted, though, not everything in the NHK version is true to life. The characters use a dictionary as a pressing stone to make Japanese pickles—something that the real Hanako would never have done with such a valuable and valued possession. While the actual translator was never much of a drinker, in the show she drinks so much wine that she passes out. To great laughter, our keynote speaker today proclaimed: “Finally I realized that this was all an advertising campaign of sorts for Yamanashi wine!”

In the show, Hanako's Yamanashi home is a warm, welcoming place to return to. In real life, though, she had little desire to spend time there after leaving the country for school and city life.

Perhaps naturally, given the years she lived through, Muraoka Hanako's life was hard at times, stretching from grinding childhood poverty to the Great Tokyo Earthquake of 1923 and the destruction and hardship of the war. The darkest hour, explained her granddaughter, was the death of her six-year-old son. “My grandmother was able to recover quickly from the blow of the 1923 quake, but not from this loss. She considered abandoning the Christian faith she had adopted in her school years, but in the end remained faithful, inspired by the Bible verse about how ‘God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son.’” Giving her love to the children of Japan by sharing with them the English-language stories she cherished became her way of dealing with the loss.

A Wide Range of Work

She was blessed in the encounters she made during these years. Isabella Blackmore (1863–1942), her teacher at Tōyō Eiwa, demanded no less than her students' very best, inspiring Muraoka to master English to a considerable level. The poet and translator Katayama Hiroko (1878–1957) was a mentor to Muraoka and comforted her greatly after her son died. (In addition to producing some of the first translations into Japanese of Irish literature, Katayama is known for the praise she

received from the great author Akutagawa Ryūnosuke: “Finally I have met a woman who can be called my equal in the arena of words.”)

Muraoka's bibliography of translated works is extensive. According to her granddaughter, she did a range of other work, too, including simultaneous translation—not interpreting. When US President Franklin Roosevelt was scheduled to give a speech at 6:00 AM Japan time, she was in the radio studio of what is now NHK. The clerical staff listened to the speech as it was broadcast, typed it up, and handed her the pages. She translated these into Japanese on the spot, handing her papers to the announcer, who read the speech in Japanese an hour later that morning.

Muraoka received her copy of *Anne of Green Gables* in 1939 or so. The details are unclear, but she probably started translating it around 1943, completing the bulk of the work during the war. The English book and the handwritten pages of her translation were the possessions she grabbed and took with her whenever the air raid sirens went off. According to Muraoka Eri, the text meshed perfectly with her grandmother's own childhood: a tale of a young girl in a pastoral setting, a love of poetry. (Even Anne's insistence that her name be spelled with an e to make it “more distinguished” mirrors Hana's own change of her name to Hanako, which figures largely in the TV drama as well.)

After the war, Japanese publishing was in a shambles. The censorship of the Allied occupation forces and the lack of money in the industry meant there was no chance to print new things. But around 1950 things began to start up again. The publisher Mikasa Shobō took a chance on this translation of this book by an unknown (to Japanese readers) author and printed it in 1952. And the rest is history—a history of success for the book in Japan that is often surprising to those of us from the English-speaking world, where Montgomery's book is not such a famous work of children's literature.

Finding Familial Love in Books

When the publisher suggested the title *Akage no An*, literally “Red-Haired Anne,” Muraoka hated it. She wanted to call it *Madobe ni yoru shōjo*, or “The Little Girl at the Window,” instead. When she shared this idea with her daughter, though, she was told in no uncertain terms that was a terrible title, and the publisher’s suggestion was better. “It’s girls her age who will be the readers of this book,” she realized. The next day she called Mikasa Shobō, apologized, and went with *Akage no An*.

Muraoka Eri’s grandmother passed away when she was just one. Her sister Mie is eight years older, and has memories of reading books together with Hanako. “We had so many books in our home signed ‘To Mii-chan, with love from Grandma.’ I only had the hand-me-downs. Every time I opened a book to read, I had to stare at how much my grandmother loved my sister, never me!” Before she died, though, Hanako did put her youngest granddaughter’s name in a book—one of her own, in which she wrote that young children should never be kept apart from their mothers for long.

“My mother and sister were out one day, and Grandma was at home taking care of me. I cried and cried, and she could find no way to console or distract me. At around this time she was planning her first trip to Prince Edward Island, and my mother was to accompany her, but this made her rethink her plans. A week later she was felled by a stroke.

“She never made it to Prince Edward Island, although she planned trips a number of times. Something always came up that took precedence—caring for her husband, who was frequently sick, or making sure my mother stayed with me. In the end, though, it may have been for the best that the island she knew was the perfect one she had created with her translation.”

Peter Dufree
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Open letter to Dean Burnett

Senior Manager, Literary Translation Programme
AmazonCrossing

Dear Mr. Burnett, AmazonCrossing recently approached members of the French literary translators’ association (ATLF, Association des Traducteurs Littéraires de France) with a view to offering them translation contracts.

We are naturally delighted in the interest in literary translation shown by AmazonCrossing (and, by extension, Amazon Publishing), yet we have been alerted by the European Council of Literary Translators’ Associations (CEATL) that certain clauses in your contracts contravene the law and professional practices in Europe, notably in France.

Since discussions between AmazonCrossing and our sister associations in Germany (VDÜ) and Italy (STRADE) have failed to resolve fundamental differences, we would like to explain once again why **the conditions you are suggesting are incompatible with professional statutes in our countries:**

*** Copyright and publication of work:** your standard contract (which, to the best of our knowledge, exists solely in English) does not explicitly assert that AmazonCrossing has acquired the translation rights to the work to be translated (regarding those not in the public domain). Furthermore, it contravenes French intellectual property law (*Code de la Propriété Intellectuelle*, CPI), which regulates publishing contracts in France, in so far as your contract stipulates that the translator must grant AmazonCrossing **the exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide rights to the translation in every format, but imposes no obligation on AmazonCrossing to publish the resulting translation and to maintain it on the marketplace.** Unlike French contracts, your proposed agreement offers the translator no recourse for recovery of the rights to his or her intellectual property should the translation remain unpublished or vanish from the marketplace.

* Moral rights: your proposed contracts, drafted under Luxembourg law, raise issues with respect to moral rights, which are of primary concern to us. Unlike French law, the law in Luxembourg permits an author 'to assign or transfer part or all of his or her moral rights as long as doing so does not affect the author's honour or reputation.' AmazonCrossing's standard contract appears to make light of moral rights in general, notably insisting that:

To the extent not prohibited under applicable law, Translator irrevocably and unconditionally waives in respect of the Translation (and any updates or revisions made to the Translation) all moral rights to which the Translator may now or at any future time be entitled. If Translator is unable to waive his/her moral rights under applicable law, Translator irrevocably and unconditionally agrees not, at any time, to assert any of his/her moral rights to which the Translator may now or at any future time be entitled.

* **Payment:** the rates of pay you are offering (five to twelve US cents per word, based on source text) are unacceptable in this day and age – **the lower end of your scale is one-third the average rate currently practiced in France.** Furthermore, when it comes to royalties, the contract excludes certain revenues (such as advertising) from the base figure, whereas others are left entirely to the whim of AmazonCrossing (subscriptions, digital packages, etc.).

* **Editorial work:** according to your standard contract, acceptance or rejection of the translation is done at the sole discretion of AmazonCrossing. Should the translation be rejected, AmazonCrossing is entitled to demand reimbursement of the initial 50% advanced to the translator. This clause violates French industry guidelines (*Code des Usages*). Furthermore, we would like to point out that **editorial work on translations into French can only be done by a native-French-speaking editorial team that perfectly masters the cultural and stylistic import of the written word.** So far, however, all the documents you have submitted to

European translators—not only legal, but also editorial and stylistic—have been written solely in English, and are obviously aimed at an English-speaking audience (translators and readership).

In addition, your contract stipulates that translators must report twice a week on the progress of their work, submitting successive versions of their translations, which are then subject to comments. This clause not only violates the trust that must exist between publisher and translator, but also conveys a misunderstanding of how literary translation works. Translators must be able to organize their time as they wish, and must not be obliged to justify a translating decision until it is definitive, that is to say, until the final translation has been submitted.

* **Confidentiality clause:** Finally, since we are an association that defends translators rights' in the legal sphere as well as in terms of working conditions and pay, we would like to point out that **the nondisclosure agreement that you ask potential translators to sign, prior to any discussion, violates the very principle of negotiating a fair, even-handed contract.** A contract is not a document to be taken or left as is. Translators are entitled to adopt a critical stance toward any contract they are offered, and must be free to consult colleagues and authors' associations on points they feel are debatable.

On the assumption that you would appreciate a fuller understanding of the legal and professional context in which French literary translators work, we might suggest you consult the following documents:

* The 'literary-translation industry guidelines' jointly signed on March 17, 2012, by the ATLF and the French publishers' association (Syndicat national de l'édition, SNE): [Code des usages pour la traduction d'une oeuvre de Littérature Générale](#). This document is reprinted and discussed in the [Guide de la traduction littéraire](#), published jointly by ATLF and the SNE.

* The sample contract drawn up by the ATLF: [modèle de contrat de traduction](#).

* The ATLF's annual survey of current rates being paid in France for literary translations: [enquête annuelle de l'ATLF sur les rémunérations](#).

* The 'digital publishing framework agreement' signed on March 21, 2013, by the French authors' council (Conseil permanent des écrivains) and the SNE: [Accord-cadre sur le contrat d'édition à l'ère du numérique](#).

Do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to meet and discuss ways of pursuing your publishing business in France under conditions that respect the law and industry standards advocated by the profession.

Yours faithfully,

Executive Committee, ATLF

RTÉ to begin audio description for 'EastEnders'

Broadcasting regulator has increased subtitling targets under proposed access rules

Audio description, which is a verbal commentary describing what is happening on screen, has been more or less non-existent in Irish broadcasting, to the disappointment and frustration of people with sight loss. But after some technical investment and internal trials, RTÉ will begin providing it for episodes of its imported soap opera *EastEnders* later this year.

In its consultation document on proposed changes to television access rules, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland says there will be "an expectation" by audiences who use audio description that "over time the emphasis will shift to the provision of audio description on Irish content".

Independent producers applying to the regulator's Sound and Vision fund are being encouraged to seek funding to add audio description to their programmes. The advent of digital television means audio description can now be provided on a "closed" basis – in other words, it can be turned on or off. However, the service, which can be expensive for broadcasters to either

purchase or produce, is likely to remain at low levels in Ireland. The regulator's proposed audio description targets apply only to RTÉ and begin at 1.5 per cent of programming, increasing to just 2.5 per cent by 2018. The public has been invited to make submissions in relation to the rules governing the subtitling, sign language and audio-description services that Irish television broadcasters must offer. The consultation document is available in text, signed video, subtitled and audio formats on the [baifuture.ie](#) website and the consultation period runs until July 23rd.

A subtitling target of 87-92 per cent in 2018 has been proposed for RTÉ One – up from 82-87 per cent in 2014 – while TV3 will be asked to steadily increase the percentage of programmes it subtitles from 43-47 per cent to 51-55 per cent. Subtitling targets have also been set for the first time for the three RTÉ television services established in 2011: RTÉjr, RTÉ One +1 and RTÉ News Now.

Laura Slattery
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Book Review

Kafka Translated: How Translators have Shaped our Reading of Kafka. Michelle Woods. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014. x + 283 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-9771-9 (pbk). £17.99 / €28.99.

I hear the voice, my voice! [...] I don't know how it happens, after all I only read it with my eyes, so how did my blood find out so quickly, so quickly that my veins are already hot from circulating its words.
(Kafka, on reading a Czech translation of his work by Milena Jesenská)

The centrality of translation to writers and writing in non-Anglophone cultures, it has been said, is far greater than it is to their English-language peers. Yet on hearing this there is an inclination on the part of many readers of Anglophone literature to imagine that such influence may be first and foremost on the page – foreign writer reads international classics and is thus inspired to write

new literature in his or her native idiom. Or alternatively the centrality may lie in the opening up of possibilities for new readerships for such writers internationally, particularly in Anglophone communities. This study of Kafka and translation (i.e., not exclusively in, but also Kafka and translators, Kafka as a translator-interpreter, Kafka after translation etc.) shows the extreme limitations and cultural imperialism of these kinds of Anglophone assumptions. Translation, Woods reveals, was far more central to Kafka's oeuvre than a mere channel of influence and dissemination.

Take Mila Jesenská, Kafka's first translator, who rendered his work into Czech. The epistolary romance that blossomed between the two has long been noted, though the fact that of their correspondence it is only Kafka's letters to her that have been available (in the book *Letters to Milena*) has led to a silence on Jesenská's part, compounded by the invisibility afflicting most translators. Of course she lived on as both an object of Kafka's desire and as a tragic victim of the Nazis (dying in Ravensbrück). Woods's aim here, however, is to return to her some agency of her own – a difficult task given the many gaps in our knowledge of her life, though one attended to meticulously and with some success by focussing on her translation decisions and on her other writings.

Woods also succeeds in restoring credit to another translator of Kafka's work Willa Muir. The first English translations of Kafka's works were formally attributed to "Willa and Edwin Muir", though it was Edwin who was often credited with being the main translator (and indeed, often criticised for many of the errors in these early editions). For many, he was the more visible both because of his work as a poet and because of the introductions which he wrote to their translations. Yet following her husband's death, Willa in her memoir writes "that they had an equal input into the translations and that they would literally tear the books in half to achieve this."

For the Irish reader, Woods's discussion of Mark Harman will be of particular interest. Harman was born and educated in Ireland, but went to Yale to complete a PhD. Schocken published his translations of *Das Schloß* (The Castle) in 1998 and *Der Verschollene* (Amerika: The Missing Person) in 2008. Woods (also from Ireland) notes what she hears as an Irish tonality to Harman's translations and presents us with the fascinating story of Harman's path to Kafka, focusing particularly on how cathartic the experience of translating *The Castle* was for him – he describes it as "like an axe for the frozen sea within me: in impersonating Kafka in English I drew on my own father-obsessed Irish upbringing and in the process distanced myself from it" (82). Kafka had at least one other Irish translator (James Stern, who worked on the first translation of *Letters to Milena* with his wife Tania in 1953, and on *Letters to Felice* with Elisabeth Duckworth in 1973) and it would have been interesting to see whether any of Harman's Irish tones are to be found in these translations.

Woods concludes her presentation of Kafka's translators with a discussion of – and interview with – Michael Hofmann, and then proceeds in the second chapter to concentrate on translation in Kafka's works and on Kafka himself as an interpreter of the literature of others. She begins with Josef K. in *The Trial*, who is asked by his boss to interpret for an Italian client but has difficulty in understanding what is being said. Close reading of this incident leads on to other considerations of the role of narrators as translators in Kafka's works, the issue of translation with regard to zoopoetics and animal communication, the role of the immigrant translator (with particular reference to Karl in *Amerika*), and Kafka himself as literary interpreter of Dickens, František Soukup, Arthur Holitscher and Benjamin Franklin (again in *Amerika*). There is also an extended discussion of interpretation in *The Castle*.

The third chapter examines adaptations (or "intersemiotic translations") of Kafka, starting with Orson Welles's film version of *The Trial* (1962) and then

considering Michael Haneke's *The Castle* (1997), Fellini's *Intervista* (1987, a mockumentary about filming an adaptation of *Amerika*), Vladimír Michálek's *Amerika* (1994), and Steven Soderbergh's *Kafka* (1991) inspired by Kafka's life, similar to Peter Capaldi's *Franz Kafka's It's a Wonderful Life* (1995). Kafka was cautious about visual representations of his work (he famously forbade his publisher from printing a drawing of an insect on the cover of *Die Verwandlung* in 1915) so the matter of adaptations is a vexed one, though Woods is interesting in her analyses nonetheless. Her consideration of the final two films here poses a question that is taken up in her final chapter "Interpreting Kafka": "Can we learn as much from the translations of Kafka's texts as we can from the 'translation' of Kafka's biography?" (247). She considers the novel *Zauberreich der Liebe* (1930) in which his friend Max Brod tries to bring him back to life for himself in a new way. Of course Brod did far more than this by keeping and publishing Kafka's papers, albeit against his wishes. Yet in his reminiscences of Kafka he writes of him in his biography as a light-hearted, humorous man, a depiction which was to be lost in subsequent writings by others who did not know him so well.

As befits a study that considers the human – rather than purely textual – sides to Kafka and translation, Woods's writing often goes beyond academic discourse to a writing style that reaches out to general reader and scholar alike. This is welcome, particularly when discussing something like the Irishness of Harman's work, where subjective reaction is inevitable and welcome. As it stands, the accounts of the five translators were the most interesting for this reviewer and suggested a longer study of more Kafka translators in the same vein. Similarly the third chapter could also easily be extended into a full-length study of its own – as Woods acknowledges, there are many other film adaptations of Kafka that could be considered, not to mention adaptations in literature and other media. As it stands the chapters – though interesting – are quite disparate

and notwithstanding Woods's penchant for close reading, each gives the impression that it is a springboard for future discussions.

This excellent study, considered together with Woods's previous monographs *Censoring Translation* (2012) and *Translating Milan Kundera* (2006) mark her out as arguably the leading Irish literary translation scholar of her time.

John Kearns
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Irish translation of 'Dracula' funded by minister who slashed the old-age pension

A fresh insight into Mr Blythe's economic stewardship has been highlighted by the discovery of a rare copy of Dracula "as Gaeilge"

Former minister for finance Ernest Blythe who, in a previous era of austerity, cut the old-age pension still found public funds to translate *Dracula* into Irish, it has emerged.

A fresh insight into Mr Blythe's economic stewardship has been highlighted by the discovery of a rare copy of *Dracula* "as Gaeilge". Published in 1933, with a translation by Seán Ó Cuirrín, it introduced native Irish speakers to those, hitherto alien, Gothic-horror Transylvanian creatures: vampire (*súmaire*) and undead/zombie (*Neamhmarbh*). Mr Blythe, who was minister for finance during Ireland's first decade of independence after British rule, notoriously cut the old-age pension by a shilling in 1924 – reducing the weekly payment from 10 to nine shillings. He justified the cut because of "the very great financial difficulty that this country is in".

Literature in time of austerity

But despite his reputation for austerity, the minister funded a government unit established to translate important works of literature into Irish.

The total spent is not known but, in just one year – 1929 – the department of finance allocated £6,400 – a huge sum at the time – for the translation into Irish of novels including *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Details of the translation project came to light during cataloguing for Fonsie Mealy Auctioneers' rare books auction in Dublin tomorrow where a first-edition copy will go under the hammer.

The book was originally priced at two shillings and 11 pence but the auctioneers expect their copy to sell for about €200. Despite his commitment to restoring the Irish language, Mr Blythe lost his Dáil seat in the general election of 1932 when his Cumann na nGaedheal Party – the precursor to Fine Gael – was swept from power by the newly established Fianna Fáil.

Mr Blythe was subsequently elected a senator and, in 1935, addressed the Senate on “the question of songs in Irish” and said: “My feeling is that it would be worth consideration whether we should not get somebody to write Irish words to the tune of ‘Get Along, Little Doggie, Get Along’ or ‘The Isle of Capri’.”

Translations continued

The translation project continued to receive funding from his successor in the department of finance – Seán MacEntee. Other, now collectable, titles published in the 1930s include *An Mairnéalach Dubh* (The Nigger of the Narcissus) by Joseph Conrad, translated by Seosamh Mac Grianna; *Cú na mBaskerville* (The Hound of the Baskervilles) by Arthur Conan Doyle, translated by Nioclás Tóibín; and, *Scéal Fá Dhá Chathair* (A Tale of Two Cities) by Charles Dickens, translated by Seán Mac Maoláin. The books were published by *An Gúm*, which was under the remit of the department of education, and sold through *Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais* (the Government Publications Office).

Michael Parsons <http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/homes-and-property/fine-art-antiques/irish-translation-of-dracula-funded-by-minister-who-slashed-the-old-age-pension-1.1849581>

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The *Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association* is pleased to welcome new members to the association. We currently have the following categories of membership:

- Professional
- Associate
- Institutional
- Student
- Honorary

Professional Membership is awarded to translators or interpreters who meet the strict criteria of the ITIA based on qualification and level of experience.

Applicants must also achieve a PASS in the annual Professional Membership Examination (translator or interpreter) set by the ITIA.

Associate Membership is available to translators and interpreters who are starting out on their careers and to those who do not work full-time as a translator or interpreter. Many members avail of Associate Membership until such time as they have acquired the requisite experience and/or qualifications to apply for Professional Membership. Associate Membership is also availed of by people with a professional interest in the professions of translation and interpreting (e.g. terminologists, translation/interpreting tutors etc.) and by those who have a general interest in these professions.

Institutional Membership is available to bodies that do not function as commercial agencies, for example university centres for translation and interpreting studies or cultural institutes. Application documents for Institutional membership are currently being prepared.

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For further details and application forms, please see our website at <http://tinyurl.com/y65bgtb>

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ENGLISH from Spanish

ALEKSANDER KOCOT

ENGLISH to and from POLISH

TARA HORAN

ENGLISH from French

What's Hot, What's Not?

What's HOT...

Manuela Spinelli, ex Irish Soccer coach Trappatoni's interpreter has been seen on TV reviewing the Italian teams' performance in the World cup. Yet more confirmation of our ability (need?!) to diversify our skill base!

...What's NOT

Skype Translator, 'language decoder in real time' claims **automatic simultaneous translation**. Has anyone seen the results?

Worth a click

Tips for understanding non-verbal communication

<http://tinyurl.com/c7hlx>

Skype Translator Will Change the World

<http://tinyurl.com/pfrm2c3>

Language professionals call for court interpreter qualification regime (in Japan)

<http://tinyurl.com/ozft6lp>

The Journal of Specialised Translation

<http://tinyurl.com/or5bumj>

Contacting the ITIA

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