

On Translations Conference

Nottingham Contemporary
Sat 17 Feb 2018

At the borders there is the movement of rejection but also the movement of incorporation; where translation appears as a process of selection, classification and appropriation that erases all that does not fit into the proper place of the already established epistemic territory.

(Rolando Vázquez, 2011)

This one-day event, including talks, a performance, and a screening, brings together artists and scholars to explore the cultural and political contradictions that arise in processes of translation, in language and beyond.

‘On Translations’ conference derives from an understanding that translation encompasses processes of erasure – in colonial language and epistemologies, as well as in contemporary transnational and globalised communication. At the same time it asks what the potential capacities of translation are, when understood as sites of inhabitation and less as a transition or middle passage from the original to the translated text. The guest speakers bring different views and modes of inquiry to the debate; including explorations of non-aligned revolutionary solidarities (**Quinsy Gario**), poetic confusion of phonetic overlaps (**Ricardo Marques** and **Ghazal Mosadeq**), cultural erasures (**Fehras Publishing Practices**), and the untranslatable (**Andrew Goffey**). Speakers also include: **Dima Hamadeh**, **Rana Hamadeh**, and **Stefan Nowotny**.

The conference is part of the ‘On Translations’ research strand of Nottingham Contemporary’s Public Programmes and Research (PP&R) department and is premised on events that activate research questions and further investigations.

Programme:

9.45 am – Registration

10.00 am – Introduction and welcome
Carolina Rito (Head of Public Programmes and Research)

10.15 am – Keynote
Stefan Nowotny: The Ambivalence of Translation, or: The Foreclosed Middle

11.00 am – Q&A

11.15 am – Coffee break

- 11.30 am – Session I
Quinsy Gario, Talk: Whatever Floats Our Boats: Curaçao and Global Liberation Movements
Rana Hamadeh, Talk: As a Monument to Absent Speech
- 12.10 pm – Q&A
- 12.30 pm – Visit to the exhibition *From Ear to Ear to Eye* and viewing of Joe Namy's video *Purple*
- 1.00 pm – Lunch break
Cafe.Bar.Contemporary special lunch offer.
- 2.00 pm – Session II
Fehras Publishing Practices, Screening: *Soapy Postmodern Bathwater*
Conversation with Dima Hamadeh and Fehras Publishing Practices
- 3.00 pm – Q&A
- 3.10 pm – Session III
Ricardo Marques and Ghazal Mosadeq, Performance: *Portugal*
Andrew Goffey, Talk: Speculative Negotiations around Untranslatability
- 3.50 pm – Q&A
- 4.10 pm – Coffee break
- 4.20 pm – Final remarks and closing discussion
- 5.00 pm – Launch of *The Contemporary Journal*
Carolina Rito, Introduction
Conversation with Rafa Prada (MADE ABROAD)
- 6.00 pm – Close

Presentations and speaker biographies:

Stefan Nowotny

The Ambivalence of Translation, or: The Foreclosed Middle (talk)

Critical thought on translation has for some time now highlighted the political implications of translation. Moving away from notions of communication – between ‘languages’, ‘cultures’, etc. – and quasi-equivalence (of ‘meaning’), the theory of translation has become a field of enquiry marked by deep ambivalence, which calls for an engagement with the inscriptions of power in symbolic exchange and relations of address. However, translation still raises the question of a ‘middle’ – articulated through the process of translation, yet also foreclosed by it. To return to this question seems all the more important in a political climate characterised not only by the rise of new nationalisms and identitarianisms, but also by massively accelerated translational regimes.

Stefan Nowotny is a philosopher based in London. He teaches at the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, and is a member of the independent research institute eipcp – European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies. Between 2005 and

2012 he collaborated in various international research projects on the politics of translation, resulting in the co-authored book *Übersetzung: Das Versprechen eines Begriffs* (with Boris Buden, Vienna/Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2008), several co-edited volumes as well as numerous articles on translation (some of which can be found in English on the multilingual web journal *transversal.at*). As a practitioner, he translates mostly from English and French into German.

Quinsy Gario

Whatever Floats Our Boats: Curaçao and Global Liberation Movements (talk)

For this talk, Gario draws on his lecture performance 'Whatever Floats Our Boats', which sketches a decolonial positioning of the southern Caribbean island of Curaçao on the world stage in the 20th century. Gario presents three instances of resistance to colonial and dictatorial practices that involved Curaçao and which had international consequences. Through archival photos, videos and family stories, Gario presents the actions of Venezuelan revolutionaries, exiled Portuguese soldiers, and black Curaçao dockworkers that affected militarisation in the Caribbean, the decolonisation of Lusophone Africa, and the independence of Suriname, respectively. Through images from the Tropenmuseum archive in Amsterdam, found archival footage on YouTube, and oral histories, another lens is proposed with which to look at the political significance of Curaçao.

Quinsy Gario is a visual and performance artist from Curaçao. His most well-known work, *Zwarte Piet is Racisme*, critiqued the general understanding of the racist Dutch figure and practice of *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete). He followed this up by bringing out into the open the governmental institutional support that keeps the figure alive in the Netherlands. He has a background in gender and postcolonial studies and is a recent graduate of the "Master Artistic Research" at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague. He is currently a BAK fellow, a board member of De Appel, the Keti Koti Tafel foundation, and The One Minutes network, a member of the pan-African artist collective State of L3, and a recurring participant in the Black Europe Body Politics (BE.BOP) biannual conference series. *Whatever Floats Our Boats* is supported by *Dr. Steven Engelsmann Grant of the Research Center for Material Cultures*.

Rana Hamadeh

As a Monument to Absent Speech (talk)

Hamadeh's contribution focuses on her recent operatic project, *The Ten Murders of Josephine*. Inherited from the genre of legal spectacle on the one hand, and on the other from Hamadeh's earlier claim that viewing justice is 'the measure to which one can access theatre', *The Ten Murders of Josephine* explores – among other questions – the conditions and expressions of 'validity' (and 'valid speech') within legal discourse. It addresses, primarily, the emergence and constitution of the 'testimonial subject', which is not only outside the bounds of courts of law, but furthermore, in place of the legal subject. Hamadeh's activation of the 'testimonial' is attuned to all that is irrational; unspoken, and unspeakable – unmarked and unmarkable. The testimonial points to an 'erased archive of erasure': a violence never attended to, which materialises – phonically – as a monument to absent speech. Hamadeh engages the questions of translation and translatability with particular attention to this emergent notion of testimonial subjecthood.

Drawing on a curatorial approach within her artistic practice, Rana Hamadeh develops longstanding discursive projects that think through the infrastructures of justice, militarism, legality, labour, histories of sanitation, and theatre. Her work stems from an extended investigation into specific concepts and terms and treats the field of theory as fiction. In 2011, she initiated her ongoing project, *Alien Encounters*, which has since been operating as an incubator for a growing series of works that examine corporate and state-sponsored forms of violence and the legal apparatuses that enable them. Since November 2016, Hamadeh has

been developing her large-scale opera project, *The Ten Murders of Josephine*, which is based on the question of provincialising citizenship, as a new formal and conceptual departure from *Alien Encounters*. Hamadeh's previous solo projects include commissions and/or collaborations with, amongst others, the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, (Rotterdam, 2017–18), the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2016); The Showroom (London, 2016); Nottingham Contemporary (2015); Western Front (Vancouver, 2015); Gallery TPW (Toronto, 2015) and KIOSK (Ghent, 2014). Hamadeh is the recipient of the 2017 Dutch Prix de Rome.

Fehras Publishing Practices

Soapy Postmodern Bathwater, 16:9, 24 minutes (screening)

Soapy Postmodern Bathwater is a film by Fehras Publishing Practices based on research that looks at “the transformation of modern Arabic in the context of the rise of Arab cultural institutions” – a phenomenon that has emerged in recent decades. The work is part of a larger project entitled *Institutional Terms*, which concerns itself with the emergence of a language specific to bilingual art publications published in the last decade in the East Mediterranean and North Africa regions.

The film takes us to the not-so-distant future, to a language laboratory where researchers analyse the bodies of people who have fallen into comas while reading bilingual art books. It is a strange phenomenon that has led intellectuals, artists, curators, and exhibition visitors into unconsciousness. Attempting to track the phenomenon, researchers resort to a range of analytical procedures, operating under the assumption that the language of the books the afflicted bilingual bodies have read caused their comatose state. Through an analytical laboratory process, the film studies the effect of bilingualism on cultural bodies, and in turn the effect of language on artistic practice and artworks.

Fehras Publishing Practices (Kenan Darwich, Omar Nicolas, Sami Rustom) is an artist collective and publishing house established in Berlin in 2015. It was founded as a response to mounting questions concerning the history and presence of art and publishing in the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and the Arabic diaspora. Fehras' research focuses on the interrelation between cultures and publishing, including the different fields of language, archives, and arts. Their work has been exhibited at the Sharjah Biennale 13 and in the exhibitions *Apricots from Damascus* at SALT Galata, Istanbul (2016), *Disappearances. Appearances. Publishing* at Villa Romana, Florence (2017), and *After the Wildly Improbable* at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2017). They recently showed their work at SAVVY Contemporary and District Berlin.

Dima Hamadeh

Dima Hamadeh is a researcher and writer currently based in Beirut. She holds a research MA in Cultural Analysis (Arts and Culture) from the University of Amsterdam and a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Media Studies from the Lebanese University, Beirut. Her work is focused on areas related to contemporary art practices, in terms of their epistemological frameworks and thematics, modes and conditions of production, institutions and labour, within the Arab context. In 2014, Hamadeh launched an ongoing research initiative on Arab Feminisms, which studies Arab female/feminist representations – whether theoretical, literary or artistic – in the context of anti-colonial struggle, feminist Islamic hermeneutics, and militarised feminist movements. Since then she has organised related study groups in collaboration with 98Weeks Research Project, amongst others. Between 2014 and 2017, Hamadeh worked as assistant director of Beirut Art Center, where she initiated a platform that activated discussions on (art-)institutional futures in light of a shifting definition of cultural labour.

Ricardo Marques and Ghazal Mosadeq

Portugal (performance)

Portugal is a collaborative piece written and performed by Ricardo Marques and Ghazal Mosadeq. Using translation as a mode of poetic production, Marques and Mosadeq have homophonically translated Persian and Portuguese words into a sonic journey between languages. In the act of translation, a poem is created, which becomes the site for transformation in sound, meaning, and, eventually, culture. The title of the work is *Portugal*, which is both the name of the country in many Latin-based languages and the word for an orange in Persian.

Ghazal Mosadeq is a writer, poet, and translator. She is the winner of the 2013 Bayhaqi Short Fiction Prize and her collection of poems *Dar Jame Ma* (2010) was shortlisted for the 2011 Khorshid poetry award in Iran. She is currently a PhD candidate at the Department of English and Humanities at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Ricardo Marques is a poet and translator based in Lisbon. He is a regular reviewer for the main poetry publications in Portugal (*Colóquio-Letras*, *JL*, and *Relâmpago*) and he is also a freelance translator (from Spanish and English). Tennessee Williams, Amy Lowell, Vicente Huidobro, and Patti Smith are among the many writers he has translated and published since 2011. He holds a PhD in Portuguese Literature and wrote a thesis on Nuno Júdice.

Andrew Goffey

Speculative Negotiations around Untranslatability (talk)

Can language – should language – constitute the point of reference for developing an account of translation and cultural exchange? This presentation will take as its starting point an engagement with the work of Barbara Cassin. Her mammoth work *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* has constituted a crucial resource for efforts, as Cassin puts it, to complicate the universal, in a language-centred framework, so as further to address the challenges of translation. In the light of Cassin's arguments, Goffey will explore a number of less familiar reference points for considering the limits of the language-cultural exchange nexus: ethnopsychiatry and analytic transference, symbolic logic and the formal-natural language relationship, institutional semiotics, and 'cannibal' metaphysics. This presentation will endeavour to set out a series of propositions addressing the operation of cultural exchanges in terms of what Goffey suggests calling 'speculative negotiation'.

Andrew Goffey is Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Critical Theory at the University of Nottingham. He is the author (with Matthew Fuller) of *Evil Media* and the editor (with Eric Alliez) of *The Guattari Effect* and (with Roland Faber) of *The Allure of Things*. He is currently writing books on the politics of software and on the work of Félix Guattari and is doing research on institutional analysis and on the materiality of information. He is also the translator of numerous works in the fields of philosophy and critical theory, including: *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism* and *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell* both by Isabelle Stengers; *Powers of Time: Versions of Bergson* by David Lapoujade; *Intimate Utopia* by Jean-Claude Polack and Danielle Sivadon; and both *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* and *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities* by Félix Guattari.

Rafa Prada

Rafa Prada is designer and visiting lecturer at London College of Communication. Founder of MADE ABROAD, his work lies in the intersection of art, design and technology, specialising in digital and editorial products. He is a member of Salon Flux London and works on social and creative enterprises.