

Translation and the Literary Imagination

BA Advanced Course

Instructor: Maya Klein

Fall 2019-20

Class will be held on Tuesdays 12-14

Office Hour: Tuesday 11-12 (by appointment)

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Course Description

This course aims to familiarize students with major theoretical texts in the field of translation and their relevance for literary studies. We will address the various theoretical frameworks and map out key concepts in the discourse of translation such as “fidelity” “invisibility” “domesticating” “foreignizing” “untranslatability” and the hierarchy of source and translated texts.

In addition to our theoretical readings, we will be examining 20-21st century literature and film that takes up translation and translators as a theme and/or demonstrates a performance of translation. Our class discussions will address the politics and ethics of translation and issues such as intertextuality, gender, cultural assimilation, the body and pain.

We will read two works by writers who are also translators: Cynthia Ozick’s “Envy: Or Yiddish in America” (1969) and J.M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980).

Important

Waiting for the Barbarians will not be available on moodle. Copies of the book can be found in the library on limited loan. Students who plan to order the book online must do so in advance.

Requirements

Attendance and participation is required.

Students are expected to read the material before class and must be prepared to engage thoughtfully with the texts in our class discussions.

Written response

During the course of the semester students will have one writing assignment, comprised of a short response (1-2 pages) to a theoretical text or one of the literary works we will be reading. All written responses must be completed in the course of the semester. Short written responses will not be accepted after the last class. In addition, we will be doing several in-class writing assignments.

Grade:

Attendance and participation 20%

Written Response 10 %

Midterm Exam 30%

Final Paper 40 %

Syllabus

October 29: Mapping Out the Field: From Rhetoric to Translation in the Western Tradition.

November 5: 19th Century German Literary and Philosophical Traditions.

Reading: Schleiermacher, Friedrich. "On the Different Methods of Translating" (1813)

November 12 : Semiotics, Philosophy, Translation: The Afterlife of the Text or the Transfer of Cognitive Data?

Readings:

Benjamin, Walter. "On the Task of the Translator"(1923)

Jakobson Roman. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (1959)

November 19: The "Cultural Turn" and The Invisibility of the Translator

Readings:

Bassnett, Susan. "The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies" in *Constructing Cultures* (1998)

Venuti, Lawrence "Invisibility" in *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995)

November 26: Les Belles Infidèles Gender, Fidelity and Faith

Readings: Lori Chamberlin "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation" (1998)

Seidman, Naomi. "The Translator as Double Agent" in *Faithful Renderings* (2006)

December 3: Translation, Memory, Cultural Heritage

Readings: excerpts from Brodzki, Bella. *Can These Bones Live?: Translation, Survival, and Cultural Memory* (2007)

Cynthia Ozick "Envy; or Yiddish in America" (1969)

December 10: Ozick as Writer and Translator

Reading: Cynthia Ozick "Envy; or Yiddish in America" (1969)

Hellerstein, Kathryn. "The Envy of Yiddish: Cynthia Ozick as Translator" (2012)

December 17: The Ethics of Translation, Untranslatability and Power

Readings: Berman, Sandra, Introduction: *Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation* (2005)
Apter, Emily. Excerpts from *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013)

December 24: Introduction to J.M Coetzee

Reading: *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Chapters 1-2)

December 31: Allegory and Translation

Readings: *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Chapters 3-4)

Attridge, Derek. "Against Allegory: *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Life and Times of Michael K.*"
from *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (2004)

January 7: Intertext: Coetzee, Kafka and Torture

Reading(s): *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Chapters 5-end)

Kafka, Franz. "In the Penal Colony" (optional)

January 14: Translation, Violence and the Body in Pain

Reading: Shamma, Anton. "Torture into Affidavit, Dispossession into Poetry: On Translating
Palestinian Pain" (2017)

Coetzee, J.M. "Into the Dark Chamber, The Novelist and South Africa" (1986)

January 21: Translation and Film: Excerpts from *The Great Dictator* (1940) *Dances With Wolves*
(1990) *Babel* (2006).

Reading: Cronin, Michael. "Translation Howlers: A Night at the Opera to Borat" in *Translation
Goes to the Movies* (2009).