The Power of Babel
On the Art of Translation

Alice in Zululand: Bernese Musicians on Tour in Africa p.6
Trans-Atlantic Affinity: Adolf Dietrich in New York p.38
Art in the Public Sphere: All-Purpose Masterpieces p.41
12–35 Dossier: THE POWER OF BABEL ON THE ART OF TRANSLATION

Popular figures of speech from seven language cultures illustrate our issue on translation. The tableaux were created for the issue by photographers Adrian Sonderegger and Jojakim Cortis.

Cover: “A lavare la testa dell’asino si spreca tempo e sapone.”
Italian expression.
Photo by Adrian Sonderegger and Jojakim Cortis, 2010.
German-speaking Swiss, faced by a daunting task, lapse into immobility “like a mule before a mound”, while French-speaking Romands are said to “pedal in sauerkraut” when out of their depth, and incompetent Italian-speakers from the canton of Ticino remind their compatriots of a tawny owl lurking wide-eyed on a branch. In Switzerland, consternation takes various forms, depending on linguistic region: each language has its own means to capture the vicissitudes of everyday life. Translators must find an evocative equivalent in another language, and thus effect not only a linguistic, but a cultural transfer as well.

With Moving Words, its special focus from 2009 to 2011, Pro Helvetia aims to broaden recognition of the translator’s delicate and crucial profession, bolster literary exchanges within Switzerland, and increase Swiss literature’s share of the international book market.

In Sibylle Birrer’s article in our dossier devoted to translation, you will learn how Robert Walser’s novels are adapted for a Japanese readership, and what obstacles Peter Stamm’s Agnes encountered on its journey into Farsi. But this issue of Passages does not confine itself exclusively to literary translation. For instance, Christine Lötscher has discovered which children’s books enjoy international appeal, and which do not survive the transfer, while Tobias Hoffmann explains how scripts are distilled into two-line surtitles, and how theatre can benefit from the work. Holger Fock examines the economic and political forces bearing on the market for translations, and Eugène, the Swiss writer of Romanian birth, tells of growing up in a country with four national languages, and of his first forays across the French-German linguistic divide.

Finally, photographers Adrian Sonderegger and Jojakim Cortis have “translated” figures of speech from a variety of languages into fascinatingly equivocal tableaux. Try to find the solution to these visual riddles, and guess which expressions belong together!

Janine Messerli
Managing Editor, Passages
Switzerland on Stage in Avignon

Avignon proudly calls its theatre festival the largest in the world. And while this may sound like self-congratulation, no other comparable event features as many performances a day. For three weeks in July, the unique open-air stage sees some thousand daily acts, from ad-hoc choral song and meticulously rehearsed street acrobatics to major spectacles.

For this year’s festival, Christoph Marthaler has been named associated artist. Along with Anna Viebrock, his long-standing stage designer, the prize-winning director will open the festival on 7 July with a play developed especially for the Cour d’Honneur at the Palais des Papes, where Marthaler, his 12 actors and his artistic team will rehearse and perform the play exclusively. The cultural channel Arte will broadcast the premiere live for a wider international audience.

For his second production in Avignon, Marthaler will stage Schutz vor der Zukunft (“Defence against the Future”), a theatrical and musical study of Nazi euthanasia methods that also explores the limits of contemporary medicine. Several other outstanding Swiss productions sponsored by Pro Helvetia will also appear alongside Marthaler’s two productions: Chouf Ouchouf, a new work by Zurich duo Zimmermann and de Perrot, and 1973, a performance about the Eurovision Song Contest by Massimo Furlan of Lausanne. The renowned Vidy-Lausanne Theatre will also be in Avignon, with Délire à deux, directed by Christophe Feutrier.

New Artist’s Books

They are young, talented and ambitious, and yet still basically unknown to all but a few: the artists featured by Pro Helvetia in its Collection Cahiers d’Artistes. Every one to two years, an independent jury stages a competition to choose up to eight promising proponents of the visual arts, each of whom designs an artist’s book as a showcase for his or her work. Accompanying texts by renowned experts introduce the contemporary art presented in the books. With this first publication in tow, the artists can publicize their work more effectively and more easily establish a reputation.

In 2010, almost all of the competition winners have concept art and installations in their repertoire. Vanessa Billy, Clare Goodwin and Vanessa Niloufar Safavi also work in sculpture, while Aurelio Kopainig, Fabian Marti and Guillaume Pilet all have photography in their portfolios, and installations are the specialty of Anne-Julie Raccoursier and Rudy Decelière. The Cahiers d’Artistes 2010 will be introduced as part of the Swiss Art Awards exhibition in Basel from 14 to 20 June. Applications for the 2011 series can be submitted to Pro Helvetia until 1 June 2010.

Photo below left: Dorothea Wimmer

Christoph Marthaler opens the Festival d’Avignon with a new piece.

Work by Vanessa Billy.
Pro Helvetia in China

In the summer of 2008, Pro Helvetia launched its Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations programme, and this autumn it will open a permanent office in the Middle Kingdom. Since the launch of the China programme, over 60 Swiss-Chinese projects have been carried out: from digital art and experimental music to literature and ballet, and even the culture of food. Just how much energy this cultural exchange has been generating can also be discovered here in Switzerland: Timelapse, an exhibition of digital art from China and Switzerland, will be showing at the Centre PasquArt in Biel until the end of May, and the Chinese-Swiss festival Culturescapes will open in Basel in September before travelling to 20 other Swiss cities.

Pro Helvetia’s focus on China has not only initiated cultural exchange with the People’s Republic but also established ties with a network of reliable partners. In order to put these ties to use after the programme ends, the Board has decided to make the temporary Shanghai office permanent, and to have the new liaison office run by a small local team. It will continue fostering connections, of great importance in China, with an eye to gaining access to the Chinese art market for Swiss artists, and using presentations in Switzerland to provide information about the booming Chinese art scene.

Seven Decades of Change

The Swiss Cultural Foundation can now look back on seventy years of existence, and five young historians from the Universities of Fribourg and Zurich have taken this as an occasion to study the history of Pro Helvetia from a variety of perspectives. Their new book, *Zwischen Kultur und Politik – Pro Helvetia 1939 bis 2009* (“Between Culture and Politics – Pro Helvetia 1939 to 2009”), shows Pro Helvetia developing over the years from an apparatus of nationalist ideology into a foundation cultivating cultural exchange with the entire world.

In 1939, the Swiss Federal Council founded Pro Helvetia as a means to *geistige Landesverteidigung* (“intellectual national defence”). Switzerland was at enormous risk from the outside world, and the Council used culture to shore up patriotism and foster national cohesion. The study examines the history of an institution over the course of seven decades as well as the coterminous transformation of Switzerland’s self-image. Pro Helvetia’s mandate was gradually transformed under the pressure of such external factors as the Cold War, the revolts of 1968, the fall of the Berlin Wall and, finally, globalization. It expanded its activities into the Eastern Bloc, established ties to developing countries, and replaced the representative art of cultural diplomacy with contemporary work, often quite critical. In response to political and social developments, Pro Helvetia has repeatedly adapted its concept of culture, opening its sponsorship to jazz, comics, pop music and new media, most recently even returning to the folk culture that had been its original beat.

At the end of 2009, the Swiss parliament passed the law on the promotion of culture, calling among other things for Pro Helvetia to make further reforms and take on new tasks. The foundation’s complexion will thus continue to evolve.

*Zwischen Kultur und Politik – Pro Helvetia 1939 bis 2009*, eds. Claude Hauser et al., Zurich: NZZ Libro, 2010. The publication is available in German, French and Italian.
Alice in Zululand

By Gugu Ndlovu (text) and Suede (photos)

In line with the evening’s “Alice in Zululand” theme, a pack of playing cards has been scattered on the metal steps leading up to the entrance of Arts on Main, a neo-urban centre in downtown Johannesburg. Originally built as a liquor warehouse in 1925 and recently made over, Arts on Main now accommodates creative and artistic events – attracting an unconventional Bohemian crowd. Tonight, as I enter its Wonderland atmosphere, I am following our Swiss visitors Filewile to their first encounter with the South African music scene.

Johannesburg’s Central Business District was once the epicentre of sub-Saharan industry and a pearl in the pocket of the white-minority apartheid regime. The area housed multi-national corporations, but was largely off limits to the Black South African Nationalists who only entered it as labourers and cleaning staff. In 1994 South Africa became a democracy, and the former tenants of these great structures have moved further North to Sandton City, leaving the city centre an abandoned shell of its former glory. Mostly home to slumlords, transient workers and illegal immigrants, it is only recently as part of an urban re-
newal process that a few brave developers and a smattering of artistic types have made it their mission to revitalize downtown.

**Hipsters and dandies in downtown Johannesburg**

We find Masello, our Mad Hatter hostess for the evening, clad in a black corset with a flared mini skirt and a ridiculously tall hat over a red “Annie” wig. She weaves amongst the spectators offering sips of *mgomboti* (traditional African beer) from a clay pot. At the bar, a man in the leopard print accessories of a Zulu warrior orders a drink while beside him a girl in pink bunny slippers has her cigarette lit by the Queen of Hearts. A rainbow of eccentric urban denizens sways to the sounds of local electro-sonic-soul Rastaman Johnny Cradle. Seated on the floor a few metres in front of him are Filewile’s founding members, Andreas “Dustbowl” Ryser and Daniel “Dejot” Jakob, with Joy Frempong, their recently acquired Swiss-Ghanaian vocalist. They are fresh off the plane from the East African leg of their tour of the continent, sponsored by Pro Helvetia Cape Town.

Filewile was born in 2003, although Ryser and Jakob were at the time already established figures on the music scene. “In the beginning it was just us and our laptops – two mobile street musicians with a sound system made from an old car battery.”

“In the beginning it was just us and our laptops – two mobile street musicians with a sound system made from an old car battery.”

A Swiss-Mozambican duet

As the headlining act at tonight’s event, the Filewile quartet are visibly relaxed from their time in Tanzania, soaking in Johannesburg’s Afro-alternative scene and looking forward to their performance, when the room is suddenly flooded in red light. Dressed in a comfortable yellow fleece jumper and loose-fitting trousers, Joy Frempong tenderly cradles the microphone. I am enamoured of Joy’s unruly Afro, her quirky dance moves and casual attire. She has transformed the South African crowd’s perception of a female performer. There are no risqué dance moves, no glimpses of bare leg or buttock shakes: she manages to convey her sexuality with nothing more than her voice. Closing her eyes, she captivates the crowd and segues smoothly into “One Space Town”. Her voice is sultry and strong, and those old enough are reminded of Grace Jones while others think of a member of the cabin crew making a safety announcement. As her long body sways to the music, Joy’s flip-flopped feet step skilfully among the tangled snakes of electronic cable wired to the band’s unique array of equipment. Mago, Daniel and Andreas create a playful ambience on the bass guitar and keyboards. Just three songs in and with an unfamiliar sound, they have made a connection with the audience, all nodding heads and couples beginning to dance.

A cry of recognition is heard as local vocalist Pedro Da Silva Pinto joins the four onstage to sing a duet specially penned for tonight’s performance. Pedro is known for his work with 340mls, a South African reggae dub band whose members came from Mozambique to attend university and wound up as major players on South Africa’s Afro-funk soul music scene. The crowd, already sympathetic, are loving Pedro’s guest appearance and they flock to the musicians afterwards to ask questions and purchase Filewile’s album *Blueskywell*. I watch Andreas as he distributes CDs from a large duffel bag, and see the excitement in his face. “Sometimes we play and it’s like we’re background music,” he says excitedly, “there is no reception whatsoever from the audience. But travelling all this way for this audience and the collaboration with Pedro was definitely worth it.” Pedro echoes Andreas’s enthusiasm: “I’ve never worked with this kind of sound and I enjoyed the anything-goes feeling that Joy creates with the lyrics.” He is captivated by the band’s technology and innovative approach, and I realize how important the exchange has been for him,
opening him up to a completely new universe of sound and production. “I’m really looking forward to trying some of this new material with my band,” he adds.

Musicians sans frontières
The strains of “Sea-Lion Woman, Sea-Lion Woman” fill the tiny shop as Joy sings a musical tribute to Nina Simone. The small space is crammed, but it is also possible to enjoy the performance through the shop’s French windows, open to the sidewalk. The early afternoon session gives the audience a chance to listen intently. Later Filewile meet Zimbabwean musician Tongesai Machiri, who is very curious about their equipment, and his brother Chimurenga, with whom he performs as Innerchi. Chimurenga invites them to listen to some of the duo’s music in his 1982 4-door Datsun Sedan parked in front of the shop.

Chimurenga, who made his first guitar out of an old cooking-oil tin, is of a school of musicians searching for modern equipment to develop their sound. Modern instruments and programs can be difficult to come by in South Africa, which affects the way local music evolves and makes it difficult for musicians to compete at an international level. Artists who can afford it go abroad to give their albums a better sound, and are therefore excited by the
chance to learn about new developments in music production in encounters with foreign colleagues.

“I love their sound,” says Chimurenga. “It has a lot of experimental stuff, it gives it more depth and sophistication. I want to learn how to add that to my music.” Innerchi’s music is based on principles similar to the Swiss band’s, while at the same time reflecting the brothers’ own, uniquely Zimbabwean experience and featuring the distinct sound of the mbira, a traditional instrument. “It would be good if we could work together in the future,” says Andreas, handing Chimurenga the group’s contact details, “but we’d need to have a lot more time and a studio set-up because I think an instrumental collaboration would be a bit more complicated than just playing with a guest vocalist.”

Artist, label owner, spokesperson and merchant all rolled into one

A 12-hour car ride (including three hours spent at the Lebombo border crossing) takes the group from South Africa into neighbouring Mozambique. In Maputo, the capital, a place that echoes a past of communism and civil war in its street names and the charred skeletons of blown-out buildings, the old train station is a landmark, a stunning architectural monument to the Portuguese colonial era and the pride of many Mozambicans. We are asked to lunch by the French consul at a trendy restaurant that once served as a waiting room for passengers. As we struggle over the Portuguese menu Andreas gives me some exciting news: their single, “Number One Kid”, was among the top 100 on Swiss airplay charts earlier that week.

Later he tells me about some of the frustrations of the business. “I had long chats with Pedro about the music business, and he was telling me exactly the same stories I’ve heard from artists around the world. The music industry and radio stations take no risk in developing new artists or ideas; they keep to the same boring stuff year after year. So it’s not easy to become successful with new ideas and styles, we have the same problems in Europe. It’s been a very long and difficult road to get Filewile this far in terms of radio play because our music doesn’t follow hype and trends.”

Andreas’s business approach is hardly different from that of the vendors on African streets: eschewing the world of stiffs in suits, sterile boardrooms and the formulaic offerings in music stores, he is in-your-face persistent and doesn’t hide behind the music. Label head, artist, publicist and distributor rolled into one, Andreas wears many hats, not unlike his counterparts in the African music industry.

The last of the spring blossoms perfume the air over the city and the light of
a full moon glows on the faces of the shy Maputo crowd, who seem to be hiding behind cocktail glasses and cigarette smoke. At Encontrarte, the CCFM (Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano), Filewile are headlining tonight's cultural celebration. A lone dancer emerges from the shadows of the crowd in a trance of pure enjoyment, and it is only halfway through the set that the rest of the crowd join in, quite possibly regretting their initial wariness as they call for an encore at the end of the show. The dancer runs up on stage and presents his scarf to Joy, who shakes his hand graciously and shouts “Thank you Mozambique!”

“I was scared to come to South Africa,” Andreas admits later, a dying cigarette in his hand, as we watch the band pack up. “The world media has painted a very negative image. Travel and experience of a place definitely influence the texture and sound of music, but to honestly harmonize with it I think you have to understand the context in which it was created, even if it is like Alice travelling to Zulu-land.”

www.filewile.com
www.prohelvetia.org.za

Gugu Ndlovu is a freelance writer who lives in Johannesburg with her husband and three young children. Born in Zambia to a Canadian mother and Zimbabwean father, she is grateful to have been blessed with so many windows through which to look out at the world.

Maven, style-guru and all-round Renaissance man, Suede lists photography among his many activities.
What’s it like reading Swiss author Robert Walser in Japanese? How does an immigrant manage in a quadrilingual country riven by a linguistic divide? And what market forces drive the production of literary translations? Our dossier presents various facets of a cultural transfer across language lines: read about the obstacles to translating children’s books and dramatic works, and guess the expressions photographers Adrian Sonderegger and Jojakim Cortis have staged as this issue’s illustrations. Solutions on page 35.
对牛弹琴
Chinese expression
→ p. 35
he view would be breathtaking: a row of snowy mountain peaks, a glimpse of the valley beyond, Lake Zurich glittering in the autumn sun. But the blinds here are tightly drawn. There is work to be done, with no distractions. How to translate a text that takes complicated twists and turns and executes precise flourishes, only to dissolve into nothingness? How to transfer that very nothingness—the core of the narrative—into a new linguistic framework that is equally complex but held together by a completely different set of grammatical rules?

At the Translation House Looren, five translators are spending an entire afternoon brooding over a short text by Robert Walser, the microgramme “A Kind of Cleopatra”. They discuss, deliberate, sigh; occasionally they even laugh. As anyone familiar with Walser knows, reading his texts generates a certain idiosyncratic pleasure. Translating them can set loose a roller-coaster ride of mingled euphoria and despair. For this reason, the five men and women are particularly grateful for the opportunity to spend a week at the Translation House Winter Academy, where they can discuss their work and exchange ideas about the constant challenges it raises. Each of them is working on a prose project slated for publication: Robert Walser, the best-known insider’s tip of Swiss literature, is currently being translated into Catalan, Hebrew, Danish, American English and Japanese.

Walser rediscovered

Swiss literature does exist outside the country’s borders: albeit in a discreet and modest way, but available nevertheless in an estimated 50 languages. Not much is known about print runs, publishing conditions, funding opportunities or translators’ lifestyles, but research commissioned by Pro Helvetia will soon provide more details. One thing is sure: year after year, not only are new publications translated into numerous languages, but classics like the work of Gottfried Keller, Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch are newly translated as well. This is increasingly the case for Walser, too. After a period of oscillation between obscurity and rediscovery, he now tops the twentieth-century canon. Walser’s texts are world literature “made in Switzerland”—although that label no longer plays a role in literary or academic reception, which has long moved away from national categories and instead focuses on linguistic or cultural spaces. “For readers in the USA, Robert Walser is simply a German-speaking author,” shrugs Susan Bernofsky, the American translator of Walser’s microgrammes. “That he was an influence on Franz Kafka, or that his contemporary Walter Benjamin often referred to him, as did Susan Sontag and W.G. Sebald later on: that is important for the reception of Walser’s work.” The other translators have had similar experiences in their own linguistic regions. Only those who bother to read the fine print would know that Walser was actually Swiss.

But such superficial phenomena are not central to these translators’ work. They all struggle with the daily challenges of translation, the microscopic work on a text’s structure and the style that emerges as a result. Of course the possibilities depend partly on the grammar and conventions of the target language in question. But this afternoon’s work on the brief text passage makes clear to what extent every translation resembles a dance on the margins, and profits from this kind of encounter. In this solitary profession, exchange with others is a boon.

Irony in ideograms

Fuminari Niimoto is Professor of German Language and Literature at Tokyo’s only women’s college. His ‘day job’ not only supports him and his family, it also finances his work on a five-volume Robert Walser publication in Japanese. That literary translation doesn’t pay the rent is a global reality. Nevertheless, Japan is “an active import country for literature,” Niimoto explains, unlike the English-speaking world, where translations make up a mere 2 to 4 percent of publications. In addition, German-language literature—in particular by authors like the above-mentioned Kafka, Benjamin and Seebald—is traditionally well-loved and widely read. Walser, however, remains largely unknown. In the 1970s a few texts were translated, but these early attempts were of doubtful quality—anathema in a country like Japan, where the translator enjoys great authority and respect, and criticism of translation is practically non-existent. Fuminari Niimoto says it anyway. He belongs to a younger generation of scholars interested in a more open and nuanced approach to the challenges of translation.

Niimoto hopes that Walser’s work will attract a lot of interest in Japan. “Japanese literature is weak when it comes to inventing great fiction. That is why a lot of foreign fiction is translated into Japanese. On the other hand, short forms, which make up a large part of Walser’s oeuvre, are very popular.” In addition, the Japanese have such a realistic understanding of life in Europe that there is little need for intercultural explanation. Niimoto is dedicated to helping Walser’s works find their way to Japanese
This year the first volume, the novel Jakob von Gunten, will hit the Japanese book market in Fuminari Niimoto's translation. The first printing of 1500 copies is very modest by Japanese standards. Not at all modest, however, are the standards Niimoto brings to his work as a translator. As languages, Japanese and German are diametrically opposed – and then there is the use of Japanese and Chinese characters instead of the Latin alphabet. But it is precisely these differences that Fuminari Niimoto tries to exploit in all their aspects, in order to convey Walser's irony and ambiguity in his own language. “In Japanese, for instance, there are nine different variants for the word 'I'. This allows me to render the play of Walser's auto-fiction in a complex way. And I can also try to transpose his wordplay into the visual play of ideograms.

“Working on Walser’s texts challenges me to invent the Japanese language anew, which is wonderful and hellish at the same time.”

The censor board must have its say

Literary texts travel with their translators. It is rare, however, that translators set off with a confirmed publishing contract. Mostly they are experts in their particular domain (literary scholars with a penchant for research) or extremely knowledgeable amateurs who have dedicated themselves to a foreign literature.

Mahmoud Hosseini Zad can testify to the balancing act between discipline and creativity. For over thirty years he has been a passionate translator of German literature into Farsi. His readers in Iran are as curious and receptive about translations as Niimoto's in Japan. In Iran, too, the “art of translation” is highly respected – if unprofitable. “Here many people choose their

Moving Words – Support for Translation from Pro Helvetia

With its special focus Moving Words, the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia has made translation a priority for the three-year period 2009–2011. Moving Words aims to increase exchange between the language areas within Switzerland and to expand the position of Swiss literature on the international book market. With the help of 2.4 million Swiss francs of additional funding, the programme will help increase the quantity and the quality of literary translations in Switzerland, and make the public more aware of translation as a profession. Pro Helvetia’s partners in the field include: the Translation House Looren, the University of Lausanne’s centre for literary translation (Centre de traduction littéraire, CTL), and the Swiss writer’s union (Verband Autoren und Autorinnen der Schweiz, AdS), which also represents Swiss translators.

By contributing to translation and production costs, Pro Helvetia hopes to motivate international publishers to launch book series for Swiss literature. The main focus is on English, Spanish and Arabic-speaking countries. Fiction, non-fiction, children’s and youth literature are to receive equal support. Within Switzerland, Pro Helvetia is now merging support for publishing and translation. Swiss publishing houses are to commit, for a period of two years, to publishing at least two books from another linguistic region.

Of course translation cannot be promoted without promoting the translators themselves. Applications for project grants for translators are now being accepted on an ongoing basis. Thematic workshops and symposia, on topics such as “Surtitles in the Theatre”, “Translating the Landscape”, and the work of Lukas Bärfuss and Robert Walser provide translators with opportunities for discussion and exchange. In order to support the younger generation, Pro Helvetia has launched a mentoring project for newcomers, the Young Translators Partnership. The project’s most recent success is the trilingual edition of Arno Camenisch's Sez Ner (Éditions d'en bas), translated by Camille Luscher under the supervision of Marion Graf, the eminent translator of Robert Walser.

For further information: www.prohelvetia.ch

Translated from the German by Marcy Goldberg
“Gdyby babcia miała wąsy to by była dziadkiem”

Polish expression
→ p. 35
books according to the translator rather than the author,” he explains. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad’s flawless German, learned at university in Germany, enables him to earn his living as a lecturer and translator. He is an experienced and highly respected ambassador between Farsi and German. He never takes on commissioned assignments, but autonomously selects the works to be translated out of the flood of new releases, based on his own instincts. When we speak, he has just returned home from his day’s work as a translator at the German Embassy in Tehran. The transcontinental telephone connection is accompanied by much crackling and hissing. His work on Peter Stamm’s *Agnes* is long finished, he explains in fluent, nearly accent-free German. But the Iranian censor board, which monitors all literary publications, had ordered the removal of a short passage. “Fortunately not much needs to be reworked,” says the translator matter of factly. He explains: “The passages that are censored are never political. Forbidden are sensual, erotic descriptions. Pornography—” and with this word the connection breaks off.

It takes quite a while to get re-connected. Hosseini Zad acknowledges that the censor board’s existence does present an intellectual challenge. But under no circumstances should translators practice advance censorship in their own heads. And then he praises Peter Stamm’s language, and the link between style and subject in *Agnes*. Farsi, “a deeply poetic language,” is particularly well-suited to convey the novel’s mood.

He too greatly appreciates the opportunity for exchange, both with the author himself and German-speaking culture in general. It is of no importance to him whether an author is Swiss, German or Austrian. What interests him are the tone, the style and the subject matter. Fortunately he is always able to find a publisher for his translations: in Iran there are two publishing houses specializing in German-language literature. With Persian modesty, he denies that this “publishing guarantee” might be the result of his impressive translation credentials.

Mahmoud Hosseini Zad’s translation of *Agnes* is slated for publication in Iran in spring 2010, together with a collection of Peter Stamm’s short stories. The short texts were translated by his colleagues some time ago, but the collection had been blocked by the censor board for two years. Now the publisher will launch both books together, as a little “Peter Stamm campaign”. And who will provide the publicity? For Hosseini Zad it goes without saying: “With translations of interviews and other PR material, my colleagues and I will of course do whatever we can.”

Back in Switzerland, at Translation House Looren. How to translate Robert Walser’s neologism “Echtheitskuss” or, even more challenging, “Ungekränzeltheitsausdruck”? [The translator of this article hazards “kiss of authenticity” and “unail-ing expression”.] These translators could certainly make things easier for themselves by choosing a different Swiss author. But they work outside of economic constraints or national stereotypes. They are interested in the German language, and in outstanding works of literature that could attract readers in their own language, provided their translations are successful. That is why translators in the global marketplace, in which German language literature can only occupy a relatively small space, are both the medium and the message. There is probably no better way to be an ambassador for literature and culture.

Sibylle Birrer is a scholar of German literature and history. Based in Bern, she is a freelance literary critic and specializes in the promotion of literature.

Translated from the German by Marcy Goldberg
man standing 7.5 millimeters tall and sporting a penis has prevented a German children’s book from being published in the United States. The Munich illustrator refused to let her drawing be altered,” the German Press Agency (dpa) reported on 12 July 2007. That particular Munich woman, Rotraut Susanne Berner, is one of the most successful illustrators in the German-speaking world. Her picture books about the seasons, large-format board books featuring busy scenes and without text, have had great success worldwide. The penis in question is part of a tiny nude sculpture in an art exhibition in the book about winter. There is so much to see on the page that it is easy to miss the mini-penis. But that is a European perspective, as the negotiations between Berner and the children’s book publisher Boyd Mills Press showed. In the United States, libraries systematically boycott all children’s books with the word “fuck” in them or with too much naked skin. Which topics are taboo is different than in Europe, and American publishers are quick to obey the unwritten rules. Katja Alves, an editor at NordSüd Verlag in Zurich, which publishes simultaneously in German, French (Editions NordSud) and English (NorthSouth Books), is well aware of the problem – naked children are just not possible in American children’s books (except for books about the body). Still, Berner’s Winter Book did finally find an American publisher willing to take a chance, no doubt largely because of how successful the illustrator’s books have been in Europe.

“We have to satisfy the taste of grandmothers”

In children’s books, literature and pedagogy meet; they always express both a society’s image of children and its value system, in their texts as well as in their pictures. With varying degrees of artistic freedom, both reflect – or at least address – the social norms communicated to children. With texts, translation and editing can bridge cultural differences, smooth them out, or even at times make them invisible. But pictures can only be retouched a little. Pictures confront their viewers nakedly, so to speak. For children, whose gaze is not yet as strongly determined by categories and stereotypes as that of adults, illustrations offer room for the imagination to roam.

How German Can You Get: Washing up en famille

How can picture books for children be translated into other cultural contexts? According to a study, animal fables can be understood internationally, but ordinary accounts of everyday life are very hard to translate across cultures. And geography also determines which topics are taboo.

By Christine Lötscher

But that is hardly important at all in the children’s book market, for readers of the right age for picture books do not buy any themselves. It is the adult eye picture books aim to catch. The Bulgarian translator Lilja Ratcheva sums it up: “To sell picture books, we have to suit the taste of grandmothers.” In fact, young people may well be drawn in by unusual pictures. For example, at the Basel book fair in 2009, children had the chance to meet the Tanzanian picture-book author John Kilaka – and were clearly fascinated by how full of energy, shining colours and playful African animals his books are. Such experiences make it all too tempting to believe that images are universal.

Animal fables can be understood internationally

But is there such a thing as a universal language of pictures? Hans ten Doornkaat, programme director of Atlantis, a picture-book publishing house in Zurich, and the grand old man of German-language picture-book publishing, avoids talk of universality, but admits “there is an ‘internationality’ in many fable-like stories”. The great international successes in the world of picture books – Guess How Much I Love You, by Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram (published by Candlewick in English and by Sauerländer in German), Hans de Beer’s series about the Little Polar Bear and Marcus Pfister’s Rainbow Fish books (both published by NordSüd in German and NorthSouth in English), Eric Carle’s The Very Hungry Caterpillar (published by Philomel in English and Gerstenberg in German) – are all culturally neutral, which ten Doornkaat sees as the decisive factor in their success. For him, two prerequisites have to be met: the protagonists must be animals, and the background may be only minimally defined. Ever since Aesop, stories with animals have been understood as polyvalent models for developmental tasks and conflicts, while telling the same stories with human characters tends to demand a more concrete, culturally specific setting and is only partially viable across cultural divides. So cultural transfer stands or falls with reduction: that is, with the lacunae in a book. The more of your own culture you can read into the pictures, the more compatible the book will be.

Urs Gysling, the publisher of NordSüd in Zurich, has also observed that while some picture books find an international audience, others are immediately deemed inappropriate for intercultural transfer: “The more a book addresses ‘ordinary’ everyday themes, and the more humans it involves, the harder it gets.” Alves men-
The example of fathers with beards and glasses, which French readers immediately identify as German. Francine Bouchet, the publisher of La Joie de Lire in Geneva, has also noticed distinctions between what is expected of illustrations in the French-speaking world and of those in the German-speaking world: “Some illustrations are too everyday, and hence too ‘German’ for the French-speaking world – for example, when a family is shown washing up together, especially if the scene features somber colours.” In France and in French-speaking Switzerland, picture books are supposed to have advanced, cutting-edge graphics – which, Bouchet admits, is also a matter of fashion.

The same problems come up with the transfer of pictorial languages from Eastern European countries, which have their own strong and innovative illustration traditions. A recent workshop organized in Split by the Traduki network (to which Pro Helvetia belongs) focused on the exchange of children’s literature between Eastern Europe and the German-speaking countries, highlighting how people from different cultures do different things with pictures. In both directions, it is easier to translate texts than pictures: “Our Bulgarian pictures are just too sunny for the gray north,” says Ratcheva. In turn, picture books from the German-speaking world seem “too European”, both in their focus on the everyday lives of the characters and in their advanced aesthetics. Bouchet was in Split as a representative of Swiss publishing, where she also noticed differences between east and west in what is expected of pictures, differences that make translation difficult. The Eastern European tradition draws a great deal on painting; most illustrators are artists who also paint. In the German-speaking countries, the picture itself is only part of the art; the incorporation of the pictures into the overall design is just as important, with typography playing an essential role.

But a book needs more than aesthetics to be successful: power in the marketplace, distribution channels and a publisher’s image all play a role. La joie de lire is expected to have challenging illustrations, while NordSüd has a reputation for more conventional pictures. To Alves, conventionality is most important in Christmas books: “Christmas cannot be re-invented; you have to fulfill the conventions.” This is true in France, the United States and the German-speaking world. The editors of NordSüd, Editions NordSud and NorthSouth Books regularly meet to discuss books compatible with all three markets. “Where we quickly find a common denominator is with traditionally beautiful illustrations, like Maja...
Dusikova’s for Heidi,” says Gysling. “Nostalgia can also be effective, if it is really well done, like the new book by Bernardette, The Smallest Snowflake.” With Marcus Pfister, who had his greatest international success with The Rainbow Fish, Gysling notes that it is above all his traditional watercolour technique that was effective. His more recent illustrations, which have been seen as overly technical and computer-generated, have not been as successful internationally.

“We want to see what we already know”

Picture books by authors and illustrators from the southern hemisphere are hard to publish in the European market, but that is the goal of NordSüd’s Baobab series. Helene Schär, the founder of the Baobab Children’s Book Fund who is now retired, thinks the problem derives from our visual habits: “We want to see what we already know.” The axiom is resoundingly proven in the picture-book market, where illustrations from other cultures rarely find room in German-language publishers’ programmes. With a great deal of hard work, Baobab has been able to develop an audience as a niche publisher whose readers are ready to have new visual experiences. By now, critics eagerly await Kilaka’s books, with their playfully stylized world of African animals. Perseverance has paid off.

In the globalized world, says Schär, it is not easy to find artists untouched by the west’s aesthetic standards. The Baobab Children’s Book Fund has taken up the cause of finding alternative, independent forms of pictorial communication.

Bouchet also sees it as a publisher’s task to change readers’ visual habits and to make sure that visual languages keep developing. For her, images of childhood are the basis of our visual habits, and they vary from culture to culture: French society, for example, challenges children with more adventurous, more artistic illustrations than German-speaking society does. “The pedagogical caution of the Germans is not actually necessary,” says Bouchet, “children are used to dealing with things they don’t understand, and they have their own strategies for doing so. So we should not be afraid to give them pictures that are too much for them.”

Reaping the benefits of cultural difference

The Australian author, comic-book artist and illustrator Shaun Tan has made the strangeness of encounters between culturally created images a theme of his works. In a mixture of comic and collage, his new picture book The Lost Thing creates a surreal space and tells a story of coming across something unfamiliar in an alienated, pointlessly hyper-technologized world: while walking on the beach, a boy finds a thing, halfway between a fantastic creature and a bizarre coffee pot (but even that is a cultural classification). The boy does not understand the creature, but he still makes friends with it. Tan thus illustrates what post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha calls the “third space”, the hybrid interstices where cultures meet. Here, a difference that can never be completely overcome is not seen as a problem, but exploited instead. In such books, a globally accessible alternative to the simplistic animal babies of the international market may be emerging. It’s no wonder that children’s book scholars from all corners of the earth have been studying Tan’s work, and gently put into new contexts. “We should not always take up the same position,” says Leitess, “what we need is openness.”

Bibliography:
John Kilaka, Amazing Tree (NorthSouth, 2009)
Shaun Tan, The Lost Thing (Orchard Books, 1999)

Christine Lütscher is a literary critic in Zurich. She works at the Swiss Institute for Youth and Media (SIKJM).

Translated from the German by Andrew Shields
"To be left holding the baby"

English expression.
→ p. 35
“Avec des ‘si’ on mettrait Paris en bouteille”
French expression
→ p. 35
As the years passed, everyone got used to the arrangement. All except our friends, who would be astonished at such small-scale linguistic cohabitation when visiting us at home.

* 

At the age of 13 I experienced an epiphany. A French television station was showing La Folie des Grandeurs, a hilarious comedy with Louis de Funès and Yves Montand. The story is set in Madrid, at the Spanish royal court. Yves Montand, a simple valet, is in love with the Queen, a beautiful Bavarian with hair the colour of acacia honey who doesn’t speak a word of French. On the advice of the malevolent schemer played by Louis de Funès, Yves Montand passes himself off as Don César, Count of Garoña, in order to get close to the Queen. Although the ruse is initially successful, Yves Montand is too honest to go through with it and decides to confess all to Her Majesty. They arrange to meet in the garden, where they sit on either side of a thuya hedge. Their dialogue goes like this:

**Yves Montand**: If anything is *verboten* it’s what I am doing. Deceiving you. Making you think I am somebody else. Accepting favours from the King although I am nothing but a… 

**The Queen**: *Was sagen Sie? Ich verstehe nicht.* (What are you saying? I don’t understand.)

**Yves Montand**: It’s like this. My name is not César, it’s Blaze. I am a valet.

**The Queen**: *Aaaaah! Valais! Valais! Swiss, you are.*

**Yves Montand**: What do you mean Swiss? What Swiss?! 

From which I deduced the universal rule of international bilingualism: “All those who cannot understand each other’s language inevitably end up in Switzerland.”

* 

It was lucky for me that, when I was 14, Nena entered my life by way of her song “99 Luftballons”. While her video, which features multicoloured flares above a nondescript landscape, cut a fairly shabby figure alongside the gala productions of a Michael Jackson, there were some proper explosions towards the end. And most important of all, Nena was totally cute. All the boys in my class were in love with her, and one of them, whose father was a German-speaking Swiss, translated her lyrics for us, with their cool rhyme on the peculiar sound ich: “Hast du et-was Zeit für mich / Dann singe ich ein Lied für dich” (Have you got some time for me? If so I’ll sing a song for you). I could make out the words “Kriegsminister” and “Benzinankauf”. But although I was extremely proud of myself, it would prove ticklish to work those particular terms into a chat with a hypothetical Bernese chick… 

* 

At the age of 22 I finally discovered the other side of the earth: that is, German-speaking Switzerland. My girlfriend, from the canton of Valais, was doing a year’s internship at a Basel architecture firm, and it dawned on me that after nine years of instruction in German (at primary school and college) I was unable to formulate the
most basic utterances – such as I like tea better than coffee. Instead, Wir sprechen deutsch, the preferred method of language learning whose very name is fraudulent, had littered my head with archaic curios like “Herr Ober, bitte zahlen” (I say, my dear fellow, would you be so kind as to bring me the bill so we can settle up).

* In 1997, at the age of 28, I was part of a taskforce headed by Pipilotti Rist to dream up what was then still known as the “2001 National Exhibition”. For her part, however, inspired by the modish binary language of IT, Pipilotti quickly decided to give the event a new moniker: Welcome to Expo.01! Her crew comprised designers, graphic artists, sculptors, curators, anthropologists, IT specialists and writers from all regions of Switzerland. Alas, my German was slightly less fluent than a saucepan’s, and my colleagues were scandalized at my inability to express myself in the language of Goethe. One of them suggested it was due to my arrival in Switzerland at the advanced age of 16; I saw no reason to disabuse him of this erroneous belief, so delighted was I to have been furnished with an honourable excuse.

I recall one particular meeting at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, at which the other discussants, a curator and a physics professor, had to speak in English so that I could follow the conversation. Shame on me: I had obliged my compatriots to plan the Swiss national exhibition in English!

* At such moments of linguistic despair, I think of my hero, an exceptional Swiss. Yes indeed, I am acquainted with a fellow Helvetian who can speak all four official languages of our lovely little confederation. Born in Zurich in 1968, he studied painting at the University of Art and Design Lausanne. Every summer he visits his grandmother in the canton of Grisons. With his wife, a Venetian, he speaks only Italian. His name is Daniel Frank. He really exists. And if the Federal Office of Culture had any imagination, it would create the OQE (Order of Quadrilingual Excellence) and present it to him.

* When I was around 30 years old a book of mine appeared in Paris, where I was stupefied to hear my publisher say I sounded like a “closet Belgian”. Come again? He explained that I spoke like a guy from the Belgian capital trying to pass among the French. I told him he had the wrong “B”: I was born in Bucharest, not Brussels. But he was not to be dissuaded, and insisted that my closet Belgian accent was audible when I spoke to him.

To be fair, Belgians and French-speaking Swiss do indeed share a bizarre custom as far as the French are concerned: we call the number after 79 “huitante” (eighty) instead of “quatre-vingts” (four twenties)…

* In 2001, still a non-bilingualist, I took the radical step of moving to Basel. It was hard going at first, what with having to prep for phone calls with a dictionary. Fortunately, as time passed the German tongue found its way to my door, and in 2004, on the occasion of the publication of one of my books (in French), I was thought worthy of an interview in the Basler Zeitung. Seated on the terrace of the Kunstmuseum I recounted my literary preferences and my autobiography to a journalist, for 45 minutes, in German. The next day I bought a copy of the newspaper and read my remarks auf deutsch. It was almost like science fiction.

Nevertheless, in 2004, since I earn my bread by writing, I was forced to return to the French-speaking part of Switzerland to find gainful employment.

* How many French languages does the French language comprise? I began by learning Swiss French. Next, as a side-effect of riding the TGV to the capital, I learned Parisian French. You don’t say “il y avait beaucoup de monde” (there were lots of people there) but “c’était blindé” (it was jampacked); you aren’t “riche”, you’re “pété de thunes” (lousy with clams). At university I studied philosophy, and can thus speak some of the relevant jargon, with its “eu égard à” (in view of), “l’étant en tant qu’étant” (being qui being) and “thématiques connexe” (contingent thematics). I also studied art history, a field in which what ordinary mortals call a “femme couchée” (reclining woman) is known as an “odalisque”, and “damier sur le sol” (outdoor chessboard) is referred to as a “système perspectif accompli” (perfect perspectival system). My brother, who is a physician, tells me he never says “je me souviens” (I remember), but rather “je procède à l’anamnèse” (I engage in a process of anamnesis). Likewise, no doctor would dream of saying “j’ai oublié” (I forgot) instead of “j’ai scotomisé” (I scotomized). In other words, A la recherche du temps perdu (Remembrance of Things Past) in medical French would be Anamnèse d’une scotomisation (Anamnesis of a Scotomization).

All in all I speak seven or eight different Frenches. As well as a threadbare German, a tissue of lacunae that nevertheless allows me to converse with my acquaintances in Berlin, or receive friends from Vienna in my home.

As a matter of fact, I suspect there are hundreds of alternative Frenches, including those of the biologists, the linguists, the mathematicians and the adolescents. We are wealthy: in our lovely little confederation, hundreds of French languages cohabit, and as many different German tongues as well.

Author, columnist and playwright, Eugène has written full-time since 1996. His play Rame was produced at the Théâtre de Vidy-Lausanne in 2008. Eugène leads a writing workshop at the Swiss Literature Institute in Biel/Bienne.

Translated from the Frenches by Rafael Newman
“Perlen vor die Säue werfen”

German expression → p. 35
When Umberto Eco argued that the language of Europe was translation, he meant that while the pidgin English which serves as the lingua franca of the “Globish” (Global English) generation can promote communication, it does nothing for mutual understanding. True comprehension requires more profound cultural exchange and therefore access to foreign cultures. That vital task has always been facilitated by literary translation; yet in Europe, no species of cultural endeavour receives less support. Nevertheless, the continent’s literature market – and with it the number of translations – has been growing ever since the 1950s. According to UNESCO surveys, the number of translations produced in Europe has roughly doubled since the end of the 1960s. That number is, however, unevenly spread across the various languages. English dominates the market. The number of translations from English has risen steadily in almost all countries since the mid-sixties, but the other major languages (German, French, Russian) have experienced a marked decline, as have the minor languages. Only translations from Dutch and the Nordic tongues have held steady or increased.

**English – the dominant language culture**

The markets where translations from English are most dominant actually mirror the general development in popular culture since World War Two – one that began with Coca Cola and chewing gum, jazz and rock ’n’ roll, continued in the film and entertainment industry, and then spread from music to literature. Licence trading by literary agents, which came to Europe from the US in the 1950s, has caused a further contraction of the international market. Most licences are no longer purchased direct by publishers, but instead brokered by literary agents, the majority of them based in New York, London and Zurich. They are heavily influenced by anglophone culture and concerned with profits rather than cultural education; titles that promise little financial gain do not feature in their catalogues.

Only a small proportion of English-language literature comes from the UK. North America is a major source. So too is the Commonwealth: many authors from former British colonies – from Salman Rushdie to Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga – write in English, whether or not it is their mother tongue.

So while a great many works are translated from English into other languages, the English-speaking world imports little foreign-language literature. One reason for this is the sharp contraction of the British and American book markets. In both, the abolition of price agreements has led to a dramatic fall in the price of books. The book trade and publishers alike are seeing their profit margins squeezed, and this is leading to a process of concentration. In both sectors, the bestsellers dominate at the cost of diversity. A further factor is the centrality of the “event” in contemporary culture: the media and press (and even the major cultural journals) focus readers’ attention on the small number of top titles that make it into the various bestseller lists or are shortlisted for the major literary prizes. This further increases the pressure on publishers to finance their programme with a small number of titles. As a result they steer clear of translations, because the lack of state support and subsidies in the UK and US tends to make these relatively expensive.

**Eking out a living**

In fact, the shortage of professional literary translators – especially those working from the “minor” languages – is not limited to the English-speaking world. A glance at fees is enough to reveal why: there is not a single European country in which the income from literary translation is sufficient to live on. In most countries, literary translators produce an average of 1,000 to 1,200 manuscript pages a year. There are two conspicuous extremes: Spain and the Netherlands. In Spain, owing to low pay and comparatively high living costs, translators turn out twice as much, while their Dutch colleagues get through “only” 600 to 800 pages a year, thanks to a state fund that often doubles the amount they receive. This has a significant influence on quality, especially for the more challenging literary works. In the Netherlands and Scandinavia, standards are generally regarded as very high; in Spain and many Eastern European countries, complaints about poor quality are common.

One reason why literary translators are generally badly paid is that insufficient money is generated in the European book markets. The expansion of digital formats (online archives, e-books, books on demand) over the coming years will further accentuate the price pressure on books. If no further funds are made available for translations and translators, a whole sector could break away. With publishers no longer employing editors for the minor languages and literatures, and agencies focusing almost exclusively on the sale of licences from the major literatures, literary translators – especially from the less widely spoken languages – have an ever more important role.

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**The Harry Potter Code**

The bookseller’s trade and the publishing world are under the knout of the bestseller list, while literary variety doesn’t even get a look in. What is more, the market is awash in products of the Anglophone world. Concreted efforts to promote translation could reverse this trend – yet few countries seem prepared to make them.

By Holger Fock
as mediators. How else can a Portuguese publisher be expected to find out about an outstanding novel from Latvia? It’s another reason to give translators particular consideration when promoting literature.

**Fashions and vogues**

Literary translation is subject to fashions and vogues too, as can be seen in entertainment and genre literature. Certain authors are increasingly surrounded by a media circus. Phenomena such as the Harry Potter books and the novels of Dan Brown, with the concomitant deluge of film adaptations and merchandise, or Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy attract almost the entire attention of critics, the book trade and readers, while everything else is totally ignored. Literature now finds itself dominated by the same market mechanisms as the media and music industries. No literature market can swim against the international tide; the celebrated literary prizes such as France’s *Prix Goncourt* and the German Book Prize have long since followed the same rules. Yet fads and crazes are not just a feature of genres such as the detective story, fantasy or the historical novel: they also affect countries and languages. In the German-speaking world, for example, the 1970s were the era of Latin American literature, with the successful authors of magic realism; these were followed in the early eighties by the “Tuscan faction”, which focused interest on Italian literature. In the late eighties it was the turn of the French, as their nation celebrated the bicentenary of its revolution. Finally, in the 1990s, French literature was succeeded in turn by its Dutch counterpart, and then by the writing of the Nordic countries, especially Norway and Sweden.

**Focusing on countries to promote literature**

It is impossible to plan or forecast these market movements, but they can be influenced, reinforced or exploited. One way of doing this is through wide-ranging support for translations, such as is practised in the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway and, to a lesser extent, France, Spain and the German-speaking countries (Germany through the Goethe Institute’s Inter Nationes programme, Switzerland through Pro Helvetia).

Another option is to create events that turn the spotlight onto a particular literature. The Frankfurt Book Fair has been doing this for many years by inviting a guest country. The concept is also being copied by other fairs such as the Salon du Livre in Paris. In the years when Poland and Hungary were the guests, translations of Polish and Hungarian literature increased dramatically, though they reverted to former levels thereafter. It’s therefore vital for the guest country to maintain long-term assistance for its literature after such events – because if it doesn’t, the effect soon evaporates.

Exemplary in their support for their own literature are the Dutch, with their state-funded Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature. Literature from the Netherlands enjoyed a resurgence back in the 1980s, thanks partly to authors such as Harry Mulisch and Cees Noteboom, and partly to greater backing for translations: the policy saw three times as many translations into French receive support in the 1990s as in the 1960s. It’s a similar story with translations into German. The Netherlands’ appearance as guest country at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1993 and the invitation for eleven Dutch authors to the *Belles étrangères* readings in France in the same year led to the breakthrough, with Dutch literature finally achieving international recognition.

**Intercultural dialogue and the preservation of cultural diversity in Europe require greater support for both translations and translators.**

There is not a single European country in which the income from literary translation is sufficient to live on. Systems of subsidies must be used to fill the gaps left by the market. The main focus should be on promoting translations and translators from, and into, the smaller languages.

Holger Fock has been translating French literature into German for twenty-five years, and has been the recipient of various honours, including the 2009 recognition award from the Zug translation scholarship. He is a Vice President of the European Council of Literary Translators’ Associations CEATL.

Translated from the German by Geoffrey Spearing
“Dar vinavant il Peder nair”

Rumantsch expression
→ p. 35
A race is on in the polyglot world of the globalized theatre festival: ambitious organizers see themselves as artists, and are vying with each other to acquire an individual and unmistakeable signature. The familiar canon alone cannot provide it, so they fly around the globe visiting the major events and showcases, buying up promising productions on every continent. Today it is not just the major, long-established festivals such as Avignon, Edinburgh and Vienna that have a large international section; regional events such as Neue Stücke aus Europa, a biennial held in Wiesbaden and Mainz, are also positioning themselves as international theatre hubs.

So the issue of how to make foreign-language productions accessible to a domestic audience is becoming increasingly important. In an interview with the trade journal Theater heute Manfred Beilharz, founder and head of Neue Stücke aus Europa, indicates that the biennial either simultaneously translates every piece or uses surtitles. For a festival such as this, where the focus is very much on theatrical works, the approach may seem entirely unremarkable; yet until well into the 1990s festival visitors – in the German-speaking countries at least – were expected to follow a performance in a language such as Arabic with nothing more than a handout giving a brief synopsis of the content to guide them.

Handouts, simultaneous translation or surtitles?

Regular visitors to Zurich’s Theater Spektakel will be all too familiar with these handouts; they were standard issue until quite recently. But their shortcomings became clear early on, as Werner Hegglin, the manager of the Theater Spektakel charged with technology, recalls: in 1990 a Chilean theatre group were performing a text-heavy production. Spectacular; it was performed with surtitles in Geneva, but without them in Zurich. This proved a complex process, as the surtitles created for a guest performance in Toulouse had to be adapted and the translator flown in specially to project them live. Alya Stürenburg’s justification for this is that audiences in Geneva are less prepared to accept English-language theatre without translation aids than are their counterparts in Zurich.

Ease of understanding means sacrificing literary quality

The increasing popularity of surtitles is partly due to a simple fact: they are cheaper than simultaneous translation. The technology has come on by leaps and bounds. Beamers – once large and unwieldy – have become cheaper and easier to use. Expensive, high-performance LED systems are now available. Importantly too, “composing” the surtitles requires nothing more complex than the PowerPoint program that is installed on almost every computer. Many independent groups now carry their translation equipment with them. However, surtitling still costs money. The translation still has to be paid for, and someone has to be on hand at every performance to project the surtitles live.

But while technical considerations are no longer a real obstacle, aesthetic concerns persist. It seems likely that there is a direct relationship between the familiarity of surtitles and an audience’s willingness to accept them. Unlike theatre-goers in Germany, for instance, those in Switzerland have grown up reading film subtitles and have developed techniques for listening to the original voice while at the same time scanning the subtitles for information about the content. Yet this mindset does not explain the value attached to surtitles in France – or indeed the high quality that translation theorist and surtitler Yvonne Griesel has noted there. The explanation is more likely to be the privileging of the word and of literature within the complex semiotic system of theatre.

Surtitles, though, require a very pragmatic translation, and this inevitably comes at the cost of literary quality. To package the text in readable chunks (ideally of two lines) and give them a sensible rhythm, compression is unavoidable. Zurich surtitler Dora Kapusta estimates that roughly a third of the original text is lost when producing surtitles. Spectators with some grasp of the language being spoken on stage may conclude from reading the surtitles that the translator is not up to the job. Few if any of them are likely to be aware of the specific requirements for surtitles.

Gian Gianotti, head of the Theater Winterthur, Switzerland’s largest guest performance theatre which includes English and French-language plays in its rep-

A Virtue of Necessity

Surtitles are to the theatre what subtitles are to the cinema. Without such written aids to understanding, many an international performance could find itself without an audience. But the downside is a loss of attention, and of poetry.

By Tobias Hoffmann
ON THE ART OF TRANSLATION

Yvonne Griesel cites the productions of Ariane Mnouchkine’s Théâtre du Soleil, and in particular *Le Dernier Caravansérail*, as shining examples of this. Here, the surtitles were always projected close to the spot where the actor who was currently speaking was standing, or made play with font sizes and typefaces. Dora Kapusta points to the Sad Face / Happy Face trilogy by the Belgian Needcompany which also used different font sizes, as in the speech bubbles familiar from comics. But only groups who are sure of their place on the international festival circuit are willing and able to employ such integrated solutions.

On the cultural periphery – away from big cities and generous culture budgets – surtitles remain rare. The Swiss canton of Ticino is one example of this. Manuela Camponovo, one of the canton’s best-known theatre critics, has the impression that invitations are primarily issued to foreign-language troupes that specialize in the theatre of movement and the body, with text that is either sparse or easy to understand.

In the major cities, by contrast, initial attempts are being made to take surtitling a step further and turn the tables, as it were, by translating the local language for the foreigners. Once or twice a month, the Schaubühne in Berlin puts on performances of its repertoire with English surtitles – a gesture towards the many English-speaking visitors and residents of the German capital. Given the large number of multinational companies that maintain bases in Zurich, it’s an idea that might well find favour here too.

Tobias Hoffmann majored in theatre studies. He has been writing theatre reviews and articles for various newspapers and magazines, including the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, for nearly twenty years.

Translated from the German by Geoffrey Spearing

Elegant use of surtitles: scene from *Le Dernier Caravansérail*, performed partially in Farsi
In 1996, Dora Kapusta took the plunge and surtitled a theatre performance for the first time. The production was Robert Lepage’s seven-hour work *The Seven Streams of the River Ota*. A few years later Kapusta, a qualified translator, set up her own company specializing in theatre surtitling and film subtitling. In her diploma thesis at the Zurich University of the Arts, she also examined whether surtitles can be more than simply an aid to comprehension, and actually become an aesthetic element of theatre in their own right.

Dora Kapusta, your most recent commission in November 2009 took you to the Spielart festival in Munich, where you were responsible for surtitling Beatriz Catani’s *Finales*. What was it like surtitling a piece that contains so much text?

A student from the Instituto Cervantes translated the entire work from Spanish into German. But then someone from the festival programme group realized that she could not produce surtitles, because surtitling is a very specific form of translation. That’s when they approached me. They sent me a DVD of the performance, and I began cutting down the text. The main task is to match the text to the rhythm of the performance, and that takes a number of days.

What happens at the technical level once the surtitles have been produced?

My first step is to write a technical rider in which I set out where I have to sit and what technical equipment I need. I offer the complete package, which is quite unusual: I translate, I convert everything into PowerPoint, and I know how to use a beamer. Of course, when I’m setting everything up someone else needs to be on hand, for instance to hang the screen higher or lower.

Then we have a run-through. The DVD I see has often been made during a dress rehearsal. If the premiere was some time ago, changes may have been made to the text and the rhythm. The performers have to do the run-through anyway, to practise their entrances and exits in a new theatre. But they often don’t speak the words with the right rhythm; they’re just going through the motions. For me, the normal rhythm is crucial. On the other hand, you can hardly expect an actor in his eighties like Michel Piccoli to commit himself totally throughout a two-hour rehearsal and then perform for another two hours in the evening. In that case, I have to rely on the DVD and pray that nothing has changed.

**Pray That Nothing Has Changed**

Surtitling theatrical performances is a highly specialized form of translation: although it uses text, it is carried out live, and so essentially is a form of interpreting. Dora Kapusta explains how surtitling works – and lists some of the potential pitfalls.

In your diploma thesis, you repeatedly emphasize that lack of coordination before guest performances often leads to unsatisfactory surtitles. How was it in Munich?

In Munich there was no chance to clarify everything in advance, but fortunately we were able to project the surtitles onto a light background. The normal situation, whereby the surtitles are projected onto a screen above the stage, always causes problems. The complaints I get are often the same: the screen is too high up and gives people a stiff neck, or the stage lighting is so bright that you can’t read the surtitles at all.

You’re also often sitting in an uncomfortable position. I like to note down possible improvements. Sometimes I decide I want to translate a word differently, or I insert a ‘black’ – a pause – here and there.

Interestingly, the audience always assume that the surtitler is the one who has made a mistake. Many don’t realize that the surtitles are being projected live.

You project the surtitles live. What did you have to do during the three performances in Munich?

I had to be completely alert for two and a half hours during the performances. People are talking non-stop throughout this play, so I didn’t have a moment to relax. That’s very tiring. You’re also often sitting in an uncomfortable position. I like to note down possible improvements. Sometimes I decide I want to translate a word differently, or I insert a ‘black’ – a pause – here and there.

It often happens that the actors skip a couple of sentences or get something wrong. If I don’t have a shutter (a blind in front of the beamer to cover the surtitles for text that has been omitted – ed.), I have to click rapidly through the sentences that have been missed out.

Pray that nothing has changed.
Figures of Speech from Seven Language Cultures

Figures of speech lend a language its unmistakable tone. They are testimony to the wealth of a given tongue and, as soon as translation is attempted, to cultural difference as well, for most expressions cannot be rendered literally in another language, but must be replaced with similar expressions from the culture of its speakers. Below you will find the provenance of the figures of speech illustrated, as well as their meaning, and which two belong together.

A lavare la testa dell’asino si spreca tempo e sapone
Italian expression, originally from Naples. Literally: “Washing a donkey’s head is a waste of time, and of soap.” Describes a vain enterprise, a pointless attempt to bring someone around.

Chinese expression. Literally: “To play a cow the lute” – A serenade is lost on cattle, which are neither interested in the performance nor able to comprehend it, and is thus as great a waste of artistic talent as “throwing pearls to swine”.

Perlen vor die Säue werfen
Expression common in German-speaking regions as well as in many other cultures, mainly European, since it stems from the Bible. Throwing pearls to swine is a waste of something valuable on someone who cannot appreciate it, as in “to play a cow the lute”.

Gdyby babcia miała wąsy to by była dziadkiem
Polish expression. Literally: “If my grandmother had a moustache she’d be my grandfather” – An untenable condition, a mockery of logic, a patent impossibility. The French say “With ‘if’s you could put Paris in a bottle.”

Avec des “si” on mettrait Paris en bouteille
French expression. Literally: “With ‘if’s you could put Paris in a bottle” – An untenable condition, a mockery of logic, a patent impossibility. Akin to the Polish expression “If my grandmother had a moustache she’d be my grandfather.”

To be left holding the baby or to leave someone holding the baby
English expression. To foist responsibility or an unpleasant duty on someone, or as Rumanstsch speakers say “to pass someone the Black Peter”.

Dar vinavant il Peder nair
Rumanstsch expression also common in German. Literally “to pass someone the Black Peter” – To foist an unpleasant duty on someone, make someone take the blame. Refers to the card game known as Schwarzer Peter (“Black Peter”), in which the player left with that card in his or her hand at the end of the game is the loser. Akin to the English expression “to leave someone holding the baby”.

Passages thanks the following for taking part in the photo shoot:
Anita Dubis of Birmensdorf, Dominique Gorbach of Embrach, Andrea Steiner of Zurich, the Juchhof, in Zurich, for letting us use their animals, and photo models Christian, Maya, Victor, Thomas, Lars, Luise, Elisabeth, Edith and Rafael, of Zurich, as well as Juwelier Kurz, the Hotel St. Gotthard, and the Dietrich Noser cosmetics studio in Zurich.
“I want art to be poetry!”

In May this year, an exhibition on intimacy and eroticism opens its doors at the Centre Culturel Suisse in Paris. Its celebrated curator Jean-Christophe Ammann sees it as a counterblast to prevalent curatorial practice. He talked to us about the importance of the erotic in art and the role of art in society.

*Joris-Karl Huysmans’ 1884 cult novel* À rebours (“Against the Grain”) is a homage to decadence. You’ve chosen its name as the title for your exhibition at the Centre Culture Suisse in Paris. À rebours is a metaphor for a world that – in the context of the exhibition – constitutes a response to the global artistic concepts of our age, which I’m heartily sick of.

**Why is that?**

Because these concepts are designed to function in all cultural contexts. There’s an important part of our European culture that we simply can’t show outside Europe. In addition, global artistic concepts always have to do with themes – the artist is often nothing more than the illustrator for an idea that the curator has dreamt up.
Is that what most bothers you about exhibitions nowadays?

Yes, that and the didactic element. Today's curators tend to use art as a tool of education. Whole biennales are presented as a model for social pedagogy with a collective therapeutic approach. I want art to be poetry. Poetry! Art is poetry! People need poetry. It’s always been so. Instruction is a task for theology, philosophy or ethics. Not art. Art has always been poetry. And the best artists have always been poets – all the others were mere craftsmen.

And what role does this poetry play in our everyday life, in modern society?

Art is bestowed on human beings in the cradle, as a desire to shape their world. A wasp's nest is a cathedral. Thanks to our intellect, we have developed and refined the cathedral. At some point in our history we gave that desire to shape the world a name, and began talking about art and artists. Art is an absolute necessity, a necessity in the sense of poetry.

But does art really have such existential importance for us today?

It may not look that way at the moment. Right now, the existential dimension of art is rendered invisible, distorted, as if by a smoke grenade. But art is something that can never be abolished. It is synonymous with becoming a human being. One can only reduce its significance, view it as less important. There are fluctuations, undoubtedly, but basically art is an absolute necessity.

And something taken for granted, especially if you look at the number of people engaged in making art these days.

It is indeed true that the number of artists has multiplied over the last ten years. It’s up to museum staff, curators and collectors to determine how one separates the wheat from the chaff.

That choice is now largely made at the international level – at biennials, for instance, which show us what good art is. Yes, and that’s precisely the problem. The basic principle of the globalized exhibition eliminates something from our western culture. And there is no art that has, like that of the Christian west, developed such a variety of forms and styles in so short a time – roughly 1,600 years.

One area that may not be appropriate to an exhibition, depending on the context, is the erotic, the decadent – everything you bring out with À rebours.

It’s about intimacy, yes. But that is not the same as the private. Pain, desire, passion, dreams – these are things that we all share, that affect us all.

What interests you about the theme of sexuality and the erotic in connection with art?

Sexuality is the centre of every human being. It is like dropping a stone into water. The ripples form circles on the surface. I can concentrate on the outermost circles, but I can never lose or forget the centre. Artists, too, either move in the outer areas of sexuality or revolve around its centre. That is where the issue of form comes in. The nearer we get to the centre, the more important form becomes, the higher the expectations are. It’s an adventure!

You have spent the last twenty years living in Frankfurt, where you headed the Museum of Modern Art until you retired. What connections do you still have with Switzerland?

It’s an adventure!

Exhibition at the Centre Culturel Suisse in Paris

À rebours includes works by four artists: watercolours of nude female figures with a highly idiosyncratic air by Caro Suerkemper; photographs of female nudes and watercolours by Martin Eder; minute etchings depicting homoerotic sado-masochistic practices by Christoph Wachter; and hirsute fantasies in pencil and paint by Elly Strik.

The show runs from 11 May to 18 July, and will be accompanied by a public interview with Jean-Christophe Ammann. Ammann’s latest publication, Bei näherer Betrachtung. Zeitgenössische Kunst verstehen (“On Closer Examination: Understanding Contemporary Art”), which was published last year by the Frankfurt-based Westend Verlag, will appear in French this year in association with the CCSP.

For information visit www.ccsparis.com
A Transatlantic Affinity

By Andrea Köhler, New York – It is not immediately apparent what connects Pop Art painter Richard Phillips, born in Massachusetts in 1962, and Adolf Dietrich, the chronicler of village life who died in Beringen in 1957. Phillips is regarded as a prestigious figure in the post-Pop Art scene, while Dietrich’s work is generally situated somewhere between Neo-Romanticism and New Objectivity. Whereas Phillips’ portraits draw on motifs from advertising and pornography, Dietrich’s oeuvre exclusively comprises tender renderings of unspoilt nature. Yet as soon as the American begins to speak of his affinity with Dietrich, which he does both eloquently and knowledgeably, their similarities become evident at once. Now a joint exhibition has been devoted to the exegete of mass culture and the poet of the pastoral idyll.

Their backgrounds couldn’t be more different: the painter from the canton of Thurgau never left his parents’ house in Beringen on Lake Constance; the well-travelled New Yorker welcomed me to his huge loft in Chelsea, with a view of the glittering Hudson River. The studio is almost empty, and so tidy it might belong to a virtual-reality freak rather than the meticulous craftsman who inhabits it. However, Phillips does paint all his pictures by hand. “Hardly anyone is doing that these days,” he remarks. Hanging on the wall there is a reproduction of a still life with flowers by Dietrich, which Phillips is currently transposing into one of his large-format paintings.

Paintings with remarkable depth

Phillips’ first contact with Dietrich’s work was one of those moments that can create lifelong elective affinities. He was at the Kronenhalle Restaurant in Zurich with artist Peter Fischli, who took him up to the second floor to look at the paintings on display there. When they got to Dietrich’s painting “Zwei Eichhörnchen” (Two Squirrels) Phillips was immediately captivated by its intense quality. “I was very touched by the emotional depth and subtle powers of observation.” Phillips resolved to learn Dietrich’s metaphorical and design language from the inside, as it were, by copying his paintings. In 2003 he painted “Similar to Squirrels: After A. Dietrich”, a large-format copy of a reproduction of Dietrich’s “Zwei Eichhörnchen”.

The reproduction of a copy is typical of Phillips’ approach. His hyperrealism – akin to Dietrich’s method – systematically destabilizes the reality portrayed. Dietrich almost never painted directly from nature, but rather – like Phillips – from photographs. By transferring images from mass culture to the medium of painting, Phillips simultaneously introduces the theme of painting as a historical technique. This transformation acquires particular depth when Phillips transfers backgrounds from reproductions of Dietrich’s paintings, as in, for example, the oil painting “Message Force Multiplier”. A bizarre symbiosis is effected by the juxtaposition of an oddly glazed-looking American soldier’s oversized portrait with Dietrich’s wintry waterscape.

The Dietrich references in Phillips’ works certainly do not result from mechanical reproductions of reproductions. Phillips has grappled intensely with Dietrich’s work. He visited the Charterhouse in Ittingen, which houses most of Dietrich’s work, and came across pictures he believes are masterpieces of modernism. He also discovered that much of the myth surrounding the painter from Thurgau was fabricated by his dealer, who styled Dietrich a sort of “Henri Rousseau of the New Objectivity” in order to market him as a unique Swiss artist. By invoking a dialogue between the two artists’ visions, the exhibition at the Swiss Institute, curated by Phillips and Institute Director Gianni Jetzer, means among other things to address the significance of painting in this age of virtual arts.

Meistermaler (“Master Painters”), featuring works by Adolf Dietrich and Richard Phillips, is on view at the Swiss Institute in New York until 26 June. www.swissinstitute.net

Andrea Köhler is features editor and culture correspondent for the Neue Zürcher Zeitung in New York.

Translated from the German by Bill Gilonis
Founded in 1993, Corodis helps fund and promote theatre and dance productions in French-speaking Switzerland: portrait of an organization in flux.

By Marie-Pierre Genecand – A mere two, at the most three little weeks, and then it’s time to go. After months of rehearsals, what could be sadder than a production playing only six to 12 evenings, maybe not even to a full house? The only possible remedy is for it to travel elsewhere in Switzerland and abroad. This reasoning gave rise to Corodis, the commission for the performing arts in French-speaking Switzerland, a structure funded by several Swiss cantons and cities, together with the Loterie romande and, until the end of 2005, Pro Helvetia, which helped launch the venture. Its goal is to fund tours for theatre and dance productions based on their rating by a viewing committee or on advance bookings with several theatre managers. Overall, Corodis helps fund about eighty shows (one-third dance, two-thirds theatre) a year. Nonetheless, now that tours are increasingly set up prior to the initial stage production, the basic model is being readapted. Karine Grasset explains: “We have already begun increasing our non-viewing-based funds, and will soon be reviewing our entire subsidy programme.”

Promotion of the performing arts represents a field of endeavour in its own right. Over the last four years, Corodis and various French-speaking Swiss theatre associations have been publishing a brochure (circulation 180,000) listing all the tours scheduled for the upcoming shows: it appears in September as a supplement to the dailies Tribune de Genève and 24 heures and is also sent to all theatres either in French-speaking Switzerland or featuring programmes in French. In the same spirit, Corodis helps organize a day in January during which a dozen or so stage directors can present their productions to theatre managers. Karine Grasset explains: “It is up to the theatre managers to select the projects depending on their interest, and the shortlisted stage directors have twenty minutes each to convince them to produce their show.” Thus the stage is set for a show’s subsequent tour while the creative process is still ongoing.

www.corodis.ch

Marie-Pierre Genecand is a staff theatre and dance critic for the daily Le Temps and with the French-speaking Swiss radio station Espace 2 (RSR). She began her career with Geneva’s daily Le Courrier in 1998.

Translated from the French by Margie Mounier
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The Art of Happiness

Art should embellish our life, educate us, cause us to reflect – society has always had great expectations of its purveyors of culture. When it comes to selecting which art is to receive state funding, the rhetoric of aesthetics takes on particular significance, since the agents of cultural outreach and the corresponding institutions are constantly asked to justify themselves to the disbursers of public funds, and if they can’t talk the talk they come away empty-handed. The next issue of Passages devotes equal time to investigating the artist’s modus operandi and the cultural policy maker’s reasoning, and asks whether art augments the gross national product, or whether it is in fact the glue that holds our country together. Learn more about behind-the-scenes rhetoric and the essence of art when Passages hits the stands in late August.
All-Purpose Masterpieces

By Daniel Baumann — Seldom do expectations run higher than in the case of art intended for public spaces. It is somehow supposed to deliver anything and everything. As if there were such a thing as the universal, all-purpose work of art, able to simultaneously improve, integrate, beautify, provoke, provide food for thought, not disturb, be critical at all costs, not necessarily appear to be art, but certainly qualify as a first-rate artwork – because that’s an important marketing tool, and these days every neighbourhood sees itself as a potential cultural capital. The situation is complicated further by the artists themselves, for whom public art tends to be a controversial subject.

One main reason for this is public art’s proximity to representation, as a service to third parties who also want to have their say and do not wish to be disappointed. To public art clings the doubtful aura of the work made to order; it stands accused of betraying the dream of autonomy so influential to the development of art in the twentieth century. Art was to be liberated once and for all from the influence of the powers that be, to navigate autonomously between bourgeois institutions and the free market. Of course, in recent years the free market has been the place where a lot of money could be earned, without the slightest need for justification either; because, after all, nobody objects to art in the gallery or the museum.

All the more reason, then, to stay away from public art. On the other hand: what could be more interesting than the city, that unbelievably complicated, contradictory and comprehensive structure which marks people so indelibly while offering them so much freedom? The city is one of humanity’s greatest inventions. It has always been a flashpoint for societal developments. More than almost anything else, it reflects our history, our wishes and beliefs. The cities of Central Europe and North America are currently on the royal road toward ultimate perfection, reaching their zenith as fully engineered combat zones for consumerism and sterile centres of organized pleasure. What business does art have here? None, because it’s already got its museums and hardly needs the city centre as an additional showcase.

Nevertheless, works of art for the public space are still needed. The question is, however: which ones? Here there can be no standard answer, but only tough decisions made on a case-by-case basis. Before starting a project, it is advisable to ask these two sensible questions: “Is it necessary?” and “What will it accomplish?” Most of the time, the answers are clear: “No” and “Nothing”. Not that this is grounds for abstention; on the contrary. It represents a great challenge for the talented, the relentless and the bold. Because there are some persuasive examples, such as the following, all from the year 1977: Jean Tinguely’s Carnival Fountain in Basel, Walter de Maria’s Lightning Field in the desert of New Mexico, and Michel Asher’s caravan project Installation Münster. The Carnival Fountain has a function: it is a meeting place, a playground and a hangout, and provides a poetic spectacle that continuously takes on new forms. With Lightning Field, Walter de Maria transformed a no-man’s-land in the New Mexico desert into a definite space, not by tampering with its breadth and emptiness, but by transforming it into an experience. Michel Asher’s Installation Münster repeats itself every ten years, but with variations: for the duration of Skulptur Projekte Münster, the northern German city’s exhibition of public art, an ordinary camper caravan moves to a new parking space every three weeks without being recognizable as art. These three projects are completely different from one another, and yet they do have something in common: they fulfill a function and provide a meaning, because they are not artworks in public places, but art projects for public places, and they succeed at creating public space anew.

Daniel Baumann is a curator and art critic, and the head of Nordtangente-Kunsttangente, a public art project in North Basel.

Translated from the German by Marcy Goldberg
GALLERY
A Showcase for Artists

*Elvis Color B, 2006 (detail)*
Coloured pencil on paper, 85 cm × 85 cm,
by Elvis Studio

Working as a collective under the name “Elvis Studio” since 1999, Xavier Robel and Helge Reumann create large-format drawings in coloured pencil, improvisations for four hands. By turns, each artist decorates a small area of the paper with original figures and fragments, as well as enhancing what the other has drawn. The drawing thus propagates, becoming ever denser, ever wilder, at once a meticulous spatial construction and an experiment.

Xavier Robel and Helge Reumann live and work in Geneva.
“All those who cannot understand each other’s language inevitably end up in Switzerland.”

My Career as a Bilingualist
Eugène, p. 22

“There is not a single European country in which the income from literary translation is sufficient to live on.”

The Harry Potter Code
Holger Fock, p. 26

“Working on Walser’s texts challenges me to invent the Japanese language anew, which is wonderful and hellish at the same time.”

World Literature “Made in Switzerland”
Sibylle Birrer, p. 14

“Children are used to dealing with things they don’t understand, and they have their own strategies for doing so.”

How German Can You Get: Washing up en famille. Christine Lötscher, p. 18