

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 260

Fall 2015

Tuesday 3:30 – 6:20pm

Phelps 6206C

Literary Translation: Theory and Practice

Professor S. J. Levine

Office/hours: Phelps 4331; Thursday 1-3pm

Required Text: READER

(Alternative Copy, UCEN)

Recommended:

S.J. Levine, *The Subversive Scribe:*

Translating Latin American Fiction.

Lawrence Venuti, ed. *Translation Studies Reader* (2nd edition).

Translation Theory Topics:

- 1) Translation as domesticating or foreignizing practice: bring the text to the reader, or the reader to the text (Schleiermacher).
- 2) Translation's invisibility & the hierarchical categories of "translation" and "original" vs. the concept of the original as "work-in-progress" and of translation/or re-translation as a "mode of writing" and a stage in the creative process.
- 3) Critical examination of normative terms, i.e. "literal" vs. literary translation, fidelity vs. infidelity.
- 4) The history of translation (studies): diverse cultural /national/ ethical/ theoretical views toward translation through the diachronics of history.
- 5) Transcultural challenges: literary allusions, transposing colloquial speech, regionalisms, language-bound poetic forms such as the sonnet or the haiku.
- 6) Ideological perspectives on appropriation and reception.

Translation Practice as Didactic Methodology

1) to develop acquisition of language skills, improvement of writing skills, as well as comprehension of translation as an art.

2) to provide model for the study of literature, in both national and comparative (or world lit) contexts.

Course Work:

1) weekly discussion of essays and analysis of translations

2) brief oral presentations of the weekly readings.

3) translation workshop: each student will translate a short text to be presented and discussed in class.

4) The final paper (8-10 pages double-spaced) will be a few pages of the translation accompanied by an introduction to present and analyze the text's context and its specific linguistic, cultural and stylistic difficulties.

CLASS SCHEDULE

September 28: Introduction:

October 6: "Fidelity": Literal vs Literary Translation

Read: Susan Bassnett-McGuire, "Central Issues"

Schleiermacher, Friedrich, "On Different Methods of Translation"

Jakobson, Roman, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation"

Discussion Points:

1) Are literal translations possible? Are they "faithful" or unfaithful translations?

2) If a translation reads as if it could have been written in the target language does it fail to render the 'foreign' aspects of the source language and text?

3) Is translation communication or interpretation? is equivalence possible?

October 13: The Original as a Draft.

Read: Jorge Luis Borges, "Some Versions of Homer"

"Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote"

George Steiner, On "Pierre Menard" from After Babel

Discussion Points:

1) The reader determines the "fidelity" of a translation.

2) Is "Pierre Menard", as Steiner claims, a theory of translation?

3) Translation Studies as a branch of Comparative Literary Studies.

Oct 20: Literary Translation as Creation and Literary Criticism

Read: Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator"

J.L. Borges, "Translators of the 1001 Nights"

S.J. Levine, "Borges on Translation" [R]

Discussion Points:

- 1) What can we infer as Walter Benjamin's central insight with respect to translation?
- 2) Translation as "polemical tool" in Borges' essay.
- 3) Borges' essay pertains to the history of translation studies: why and what does his approach accomplish?

October 27: Choose and discuss texts to translate

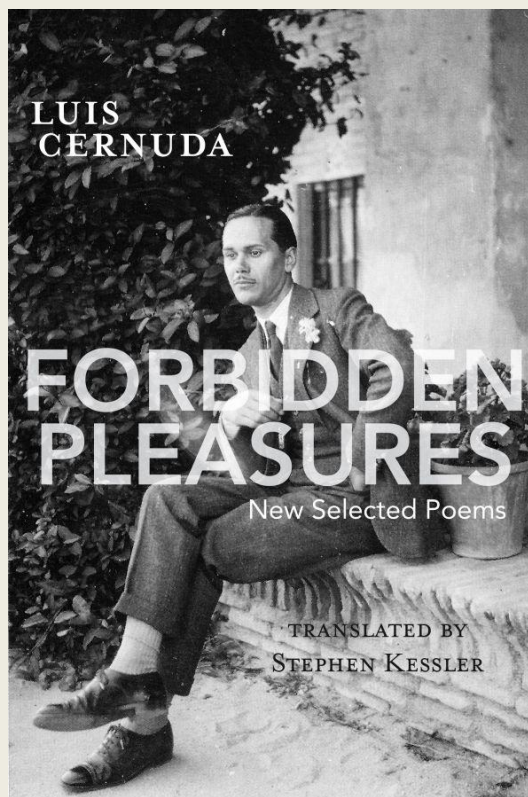
Each student will not only practice translating a brief text/excerpt from fiction, drama, essay, or a poem (no comic strips or children's stories) which will be presented and discussed by the group. Each graduate student will be assigned an undergraduate student to mentor in this process (to be explained).

The final paper will be either 1) a final draft of this translation plus critical introduction, or 2) a translation critique/analysis of a published translation or translations: for example, analyze and compare two or more translations of a poem or a short story, and evaluate the versions from the point of view of their linguistic accuracy as well as interpretative and cultural perspectives.

Each student brings 1-2 page translation with original (enough copies for class). We will make a schedule of presentations.

Nov 3: Guest

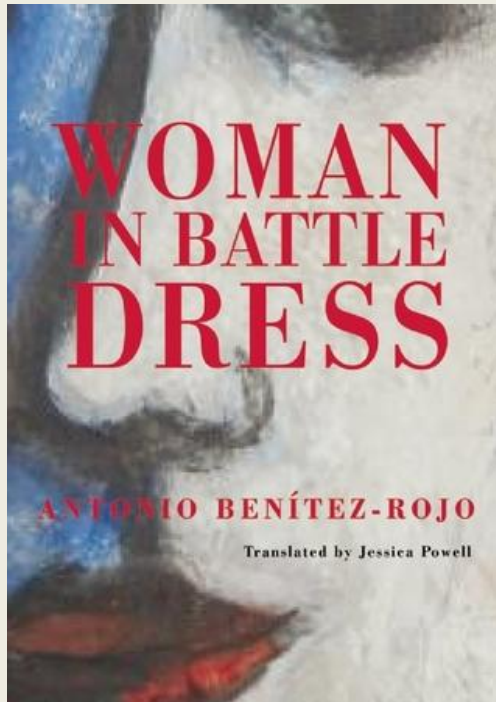
Translator: Stephen Kessler (poet) presents and discusses with the class his latest translation, Luis Cernuda, **Forbidden Pleasures**. Cernuda is a major Spanish poet of the 20th century.



Workshop begins: bring your one page translation with original (enough copies for class).

Nov 10-17: Workshop:

Student presentations: Brief 5 minute introduction of chosen text and author: presentation should include relevant contextual background and discussion of examples to show principal problems you have encountered in the process, whether lexical, cultural, stylistic or formal (e.g. poetic forms).



Dec. 1: Conclusions & Guest presentation by UCSB graduate Jessica Powell of her newly published translation *Woman in Battle Dress* (City Lights, San Francisco, 2015).

Final Papers due: 8-10 pages:

- 1) translation: 4 pages max.;
 - 2) analysis and discussion of translation problems: 4-6 pages.
- ALL WRITTEN WORK PRINTED, DOUBLE-SPACED.

Recommended Bibliography (brief selection)

- Susan Bassnett McGuire, *Translation Studies*, 3rd edition. (Routledge)
- Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation*
- Suzanne Jill Levine, *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (1991), 2nd edition (Dalkey Archive Press, 2009)
- Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity & the Politics of Transmission*.
- George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. (1975)
- Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2004).
- E. Weinberger & Octavio Paz, *Nineteen Ways of Translating Wang-Wei*
- Daniel Weisbort & A. Eysteinsson, eds., *Translation-Theory and Practice: a Historical Reader* (2006).