

2010 – 2011 Colloquia

April 20, 2011—Transatlantic Bible Translation: Word Made Fresh?

For the last lunchtime colloquium of the 2010-2011 semester, Stephen Prickett, Regius Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Glasgow and Honorary Professor of the University of Kent at Canterbury, visited UNCG to lead a discussion titled “Transatlantic Bible Translation: Word Made Fresh?”

As a continuation of his larger lecture on the King James Version made the night before, Professor Prickett focused on particular problems in Bible translation as subsets of translation generally. Professor Prickett's central claim was that while translators may seek to remain faithful to an original text, translation inherently involves a process of interpretation, which inevitably alters the text itself. This alteration stems from the cultural assumptions that translators bring to their projects, so that their translations at times highlight or even create tensions within Biblical texts. In particular, Professor Prickett noted the following tensions: 1) because there is no Hebrew word for “nature” – even mundane phenomena like the rising of the sun were considered acts of God – there can be no concept of miracles, in the modern sense of violating natural law; 2) in the story of Elijah and the “still small voice” in I Kings 19:12, the original Hebrew text describes the voice using an oxymoron – “a thin voice of silence” – but the variations of “still small voice” used by modern translations avoid the paradox; 3) when working with Luke 2:13-14, the 1611 translators found the original description of “heavenly soldiers” or a “heavenly army” politically problematic, so they chose the non-military phrase “heavenly host” in its place. In each case, faithfulness to the original texts requires that the translator preserve the paradoxes and tensions that may well be intentional on the original writers' part.

Professor Prickett noted three approaches to Bible translation, which offer differing solutions to these problems. Those who advocate Complete Equivalence attempt a word-for-word translation, regardless of the text's relevancy to the culture for whom the Bible is being translated. As Professor Prickett observed, this approach can result in some oddities: English Christians, surrounded by snow, singing about water in the desert, or those in South America reading parables about camels and the “eye of the needle.” Conversely, advocates of Dynamic Equivalence argue that the Bible should be relevant to the readers for whom it is translated, and therefore willingly alter potentially irrelevant passages. As with Complete Equivalence, Dynamic Equivalence can have its problems: Professor Prickett mentioned a primitive tribe for whom pigs were the sole form of livestock, which resulted in passages about “pigs being separated from pigs” (not “sheep from goats”), and Christ being called “The Pig of God.” Finally, some modern believers refuse to address these problems by insisting that the English King James Bible is the final and only perfect manifestation of God's Word.

In closing, Professor Prickett posed several questions towards the attendees, which prompted a vigorous ongoing discussion. Attendees discussed the emotional attachments some readers have

to a particular translation, the way a completely equivalent translation can alter the host culture, and the differences between Protestant and Catholic approaches to the 10 Commandments.

February 7, 2011-- Cosmopolitan Literacy

At the February 7 Atlantic World Research Network Lunchtime Colloquium, Professor Christian Moraru of UNCG's English Department led a compelling discussion of "Cosmopolitan Literacy"—a discussion very much informed by his new book from the University of Michigan Press, *Cosmodernism*. Dr. Moraru argued that literacy today, in the U. S. and elsewhere, requires a more global approach. He critiqued cosmopolitanism's classical notions and practices as largely culturocentrist and presented a new, difference-grounded kind of cosmopolitanism that revolves around our inescapable relation to others—culturally, spatially, and so on. In changing the approach to cosmopolitanism, Dr. Moraru emphasized a shift of understanding away from a model centered on the limiting concept of the nation-state to a model that uses a broader perspective, e. g., by placing (in American literature, for instance) the fiction of William Faulkner in a Caribbean framework. This kind of perspective offers a new way to view humanistic study in relation to the larger world, such as redefining the meaning, standards, and methodology of English composition by considering what happens to American English worldwide today.

Dr. Moraru addressed new definitions and understandings of today's knowledge. In our world, knowledge is shaped by a global perspective already; we know in relation to others because we are learning cross-communally. Communities drive our knowledge because they necessarily present intersections and crossroads. If we fail to study our special fields in relation to others, the knowledge we gain is limited in value, while global problems like the ozone layer or possible climate change are best addressed from a global perspective. By expanding our perspective, the content of knowledge expands. Understanding French and French culture now requires going well beyond France's current territory. Also, the study of movements like Modernism cannot be contained or restricted to any one location.

The full-group discussion furthered the theoretical and philosophical issues stirred by the topic. Discussion issues ranged from the role of media in the formation of today's knowledge to the place of a dominant culture within this new cosmopolitan understanding, the contrast between postmodernism and "cosmodernism," and how the concept of self fits into cosmopolitanism.

November 12, 2010 - Transatlantic Aviation: Flight of Fancy?

At the November 12th Atlantic World Research Network Lunchtime Colloquium, Professor Keith Debbage of UNCG's Department of Geography offered a practical and compelling presentation entitled "Transatlantic Aviation: Flight of Fancy?" Dr. Debbage addressed the issues facing transatlantic airlines, particularly the gridlock at major airports like La Guardia, LAX, and Heathrow. Of particular concern was the scarcity of "slots" - the spaces for planes to land and

take off at these airports, which have become highly sought commodities among the airlines. Although various solutions to the problem have been explored - for example, Airbus is designing a A380 model jet which features 650 seats and Boeing is designing the 787, which would be advantageous for regional airports - Dr. Debbage focused on slot regulation. Where US airports distribute slots on a first-come/first-served basis (except for the New York and Washington DC slot controlled airports), EU airports rely on regulations first established by the International Air Transport Association that includes administrative rationing through independent slot coordinators. Dr. Debbage distinguished between primary trading, in which the independent coordinators assigned slots to particular airlines and secondary trading, in which airlines barter their slots between one another. Secondary trading has been a controversial issue among European airlines: in 1999, the UK high court affirmed the legality of the practice, despite the European Commission's reluctance to do so until 2008.

Dr. Debbage also addressed other methods for accessing scarce slots. These include Strategic Alliance Networks - the Star, Oneworld, and Sky Team strategic alliances - which now dominate the worldwide airline industry and account for nearly 70% of available global seat miles. The cooperation between these Alliances ranges from shared marketing at the lowest end of involvement to minority ownership at the highest. The 2008 US-EU "Open Skies" agreement also seeks to give more access to these slots, changing Heathrow from an airport regulated by the Bermuda II US-UK aviation bilateral - in which only British Airways, Virgin, American Airlines, and United were allowed US to Heathrow access - to an "open skies" airport, in which any airline can buy a slot. However, Dr. Debbage noted that this access was still limited by the prohibitively high costs of these slots, as demonstrated by Continental Airlines' recent \$50 million purchase of a slot pair on the Newark-Heathrow route.

Full group discussion during and after Dr. Debbage's presentation was varied and filled with personal anecdotes, which illustrates the practical element of this issue. Questions ranged from issues of pricing and the airlines' financial crisis, the recent anti-trust immunity granted to the Strategic Alliance Networks, and the rationale behind Heathrow's resistance to mixed-mode runways.

October 21, 2010 - Beyond the Wayback Machine: Preserving the Digital Archive

At the October 21 AWRN Lunchtime Colloquium, Dr. Katherine Skinner, Executive Director of the Educopia Institute spoke about current and future concerns in the preservation of digital archives during her presentation "Beyond the Wayback Machine: Preserving the Digital Archive."

Digital archives have helped make huge strides in academic scholarship while also creating new concerns about the preservation of archival material. Digital archives have increased access to research materials, enabling scholars to conduct their research more quickly and easily and resulting in scholarship that is also widely available through digital, particularly online, sources.

In addition, digital archives allow for the representation of huge data sets within summative research tools, such as a map representing millions of captives in Emory University's Transatlantic Slave Trade Database. But as time goes by and technology advances, numerous problems arise with digital sources: files begin to disintegrate, programs become obsolete, files are accidentally deleted, and computer viruses destroy files. While these digital archives have met the need for access, they are also unstable and, ultimately, unreliable for the future.

In order to preserve these digital files, scientists-many actually literal rocket scientists-have developed a plan for the maintenance of archives into the future. The most important aspect of this plan requires archivists to record as much information as possible-including description, structure, system requirements, year of creation, etc.-about each digital file so that the files can still be used in the future. In addition, archivists must note connections between records and collections.

Due to the delicacy of digital archives, we must begin to question who will be responsible for preserving the archives for scholarly and public access. There are currently three types of preservation repositories: centralized repositories, community-based services, and vendor services. The trouble with vendor services rests in the limitations placed on access; such databases as JSTOR charge fees for access. Vendor-based preservation services also may not take care to preserve everything when money and space become problematic. The ideal situation is for libraries to control preservation, making access free and easy for the public, but salary and space issues may make this situation impossible.

During discussion the group covered other options such as is Iron Mountain, a vendor that serves many communities; built for banking industry, it provides back-up of content stored away from desktop. But Iron Mountain doesn't do preservation and has no curatorial services, simply providing article storage. NIH-funded storage, while promising, runs up against federal budget cutting, as does the highly desirable idea of national libraries like the British Library and the Library of Congress investing in long-term storage as the depositories of record.

So what's more expensive: building more physical space to house more hard copies, or hiring more digital preservation staff to maintain data into the future? The ideal would be a digital preservation world that resembles the great research archive libraries-free use as long as you promise not to destroy something. What will be the status of the digital content in 400 years? This doesn't sound silly if you talk to a Shakespeare scholar who spends time with documents that old for his or her research. Ultimately, space and cost factors lead to questions about guaranteeing funding in the future. Our hope would be to have access in present that is better than any print access and have this great access into the future.

September 14, 2010—Sounding Sustainable

In a first for the AWRN Lunchtime Colloquium, the September 14th presentation by Aaron Allen—Assistant Professor in the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance—featured live music, performed by UNCG graduate student and cellist Leigh Rudner.

Ms. Rudner's performances served to demonstrate the differences between various woods used for musical instruments, distinctions which formed a major part of Dr. Allen's presentation, "Sounding Sustainable." Noting the important role woods played in the quality of culturally respected musical instruments, Dr. Allen discussed the importance of two types of wood: Italy's Italian Spruce, found in the Italian Trentino region of Val di Fiemme, and the pernambuco, or pau brasil, from Brazil. The latter wood, despite its importance for both the local Brazilian economy and for the luthiers who craft these instruments, faces possible extinction due to mismanagement and exploitation. Pernambuco can only be found in the Mata Atlântica, the Atlantic coastal forest of Brazil, which is currently under threat of disappearance. Although several factors have contributed to this threat – including various farming operations, slash-and-burn agriculture, and the rapid expansion of local major cities – bow makers are the most public face of the threat and, as a result, have worked to be more responsible.

Conversely, the cultivation of the Italian Spruce in the Panveggio provides an example of sustainable forestry. For centuries, cultural institutions and the particular topography of the Panveggio have protected its resources, despite past attempts by the Republic of Venice further to exploit the forest. Since the 12th and 13th centuries, the land within the Val di Fiemme has been held in communal ownership and under the stewardship of the vicini, who make decisions concerning the forests through general assemblies or governing councils. Furthermore, the forest has gained a certain mythic quality, with luthiers boasting that their instruments are fatto di Fiemme, or "made of" or "from Fiemme." Despite the remarkably rare circumstances under which an Italian Spruce tree can yield suitable materials for an instrument, these protectors have helped the Panveggio avoid the dangers facing the Mata Atlântica.

After Dr. Allen's main presentation, he offered a further history of Venetian dealings with forestry and geography, and also answered questions from the attendees. In closing, the attendees were treated to two more selections played by Ms. Rudner.