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Making Translation Visible: Interpreters in European Literature and Film

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Making Translation Visible: Interpreters in European Literature and Film

by

Robin Isabel Ellis

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Committee in charge:

Professor Deniz Göktürk, Chair
Professor Winfried Kudszus
Professor Mark Sandberg

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines interpreter figures in European literature and film since the Second World War, from the implementation of simultaneous interpreting at the Nuremberg Trials to the growth of the European Union and the rise of a global information economy. I approach interpreting as an embodied act of translation, and the works I analyze explore the frictions that arise when an embodied subject is employed as a supposedly neutral medium of communication. In contrast to fantasies of instantaneous transfer and unlimited convertibility enabled by digital translation technologies, the interpreter's corporeality attests to the material and culturally specific aspects of linguistic communication within larger processes of international exchange. Working against a tradition of effacement, I investigate aesthetic representations that render the interpreter's body visible, audible, and even tangible, and thereby offer new possibilities for conceiving of translation as a multi-directional encounter rather than a form of hermeneutic extraction and transfer. This approach also highlights the gendered nature of interpreting as a form of intimate, affective service work, which is further figured in relation to traditional discourses of translators as potentially duplicitous women.

Both Ingeborg Bachmann's short story "Simultan" (1968/72) and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979) employ female interpreter figures to stage the ongoing relevance of Germany and Austria's National Socialist past to the historical moments in which they originated. While the protagonist of "Simultan" experiences historical and linguistic fragmentation as an instrumentalized "language machine," Maria Braun attempts to exercise agency through sexual, economic, and linguistic exchanges that are nonetheless constrained by larger social forces. In Yoko Tawada's novella *Das Bad* (1989) and novel *Das nackte Auge* (2004), the dangers of translation as hermeneutic violence are inscribed upon female bodies, yet these bodies also hold the potential for alternative forms of translation as a shared experience of encounter. Finally, Hans-Christian Schmid's film *Lichter* (2003) positions interpreters as key points of facilitation, friction, and intimate exchange within an unstable border zone.

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Introduction
Embodying Translation, Interpreting Europe

A Pashtun-speaking asylum applicant answers a German-speaking interviewer through an interpreter. An English-speaking doctor dials into a telephone interpreting system for help communicating with a Vietnamese-speaking patient. Chinese investors are accompanied by an interpreter on a visit to an Australian mining site. An American Sign Language interpreter simultaneously interprets a graduation ceremony for deaf attendees. At the UN General Assembly, a team of simultaneous interpreters translates between the organization's six official languages.[1] Although these situations differ widely, they all illustrate the essential role of interpreters in facilitating communication across languages and cultures around the world. Whereas interpreters have traditionally been dismissed as marginal figures, this study centers on interpreters as crucial points of intersection within global networks of cultural circulation and economic exchange.

In particular, this project examines cultural representations of interpreters, asking how these figures illuminate historically specific conceptions of translation and multilingual communication. While numerous studies in socio-linguistics and linguistic anthropology have analyzed cases of real-world interpreting practices,[2] I investigate changing cultural conceptions of interpreting, translation, and linguistic mediation through the lens of literature and film. In doing so, I focus on interpreting as an *embodied act of translation*, and the texts I analyze explore the frictions that arise when an embodied subject is employed as a supposedly neutral medium of communication. Furthermore, this embodiment is always gendered; in the following chapters, I examine how modern portrayals of interpreting as a female-coded profession both engage with and question traditional discourses of gendered translation. Finally, I ask how attention to explicitly embodied and socially situated acts of translation can expand traditional understandings of interlingual translation more broadly.

Although I come to this project by way of German studies, its topic is inherently multilingual, intercultural, and transnational, and as such calls for an interdisciplinary approach. Indeed, fictional and artistic representations of interpreters are a global phenomenon and are by no means restricted to particular regions or languages. In this study, however, I focus on Europe from the postwar period to the present, utilizing the German language and German and Austrian national histories as fulcrums around which to pivot a larger investigation of translational encounters. By doing so, I engage in particular with Germany as a central space of intersections, occupations, divisions, and shifting borders within 20th- and 21st-century Europe. During this

[1] Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

[2] See, for example, Brad Davidson, "The Interpreter as Institutional Gatekeeper: The Social-Linguistic Role of Interpreters in Spanish-English Medical Discourse," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4, no. 3 (2000): 379–405; Marco Jacquemet, "The Registration Interview: Restricting Refugees' Narrative Performance," in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 2010), 133–51; Sandra Hale, "Controversies over the Role of the Court Interpreter," in *Crossing Borders in Community Interpreting: Definitions and Dilemmas*, ed. Carmen Valero-Garces and Anne Martin (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008), 99–122; Cecilia Wadensjö, *Interpreting as Interaction* (London: Longman, 1998); Moira Inghilleri, "National Sovereignty versus Universal Rights: Interpreting Justice in a Global Context," *Social Semiotics* 17, no. 2 (2007): 195–212.

time, Germany's position of centrality within Europe has taken different forms, including its geographic location in Central Europe, the profound and lasting effects throughout Europe of National Socialism and the Second World War, the status of East and West Germany as the front lines of the Cold War in Europe, Germany's position as a major destination for both economic migrants and political refugees, as well as its current leading role in the European Union. All of these have resulted in a variety of cultural intersections and linguistic encounters that continue to shape contemporary conceptions not only of Germany, but also of Europe as a space of encounter, exclusion, and exchange in an era of increasing globalization and transnational circulation. Beginning with the Nuremberg Trials, I focus on interpreters to trace intersections between discourses of translation and key political, economic, and technological developments in Europe and beyond. These include the state of multilingualism in Europe after the Second World War, the linguistic negotiations of labor migrants and refugees, the advent of digital communication technology, the feminization of the interpreting profession, the growing importance of affective labor in post-industrial economies, and the rise of the European Union as an intensely multilingual supranational institution.

Translating, Interpreting, Übersetzen, Dolmetschen

Among professionals today, the terms "translation" and "interpreting" refer to two separate and distinct processes: "translation" refers to the transfer of written text from one language into another, while "interpreting" refers to the transfer of spoken or signed utterances from one language into another. This distinction is mirrored in modern German by the terms "Übersetzung" for written translation and "Dolmetschen" for interpreting.[3] However, many translation theorists also use "translation" as an umbrella term for interlingual transfer that includes written, spoken, and signed language.[4] In German, "Translationswissenschaft" includes the study of written translation and interpreting, as well as related practices such as dubbing and subtitling.[5] However, as translation studies in English does not currently employ an equivalent third term that would serve to emphasize the central similarities of written, spoken, and signed linguistic transfer despite their important differences, I will use "translation" as such a term here. More specifically, I will use "translation" to refer to what Roman Jakobson called "interlingual translation or *translation proper*," defined as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language."[6] I will thus use the modifiers written, spoken, and signed to differentiate

[3] The distinction in German between "übersetzen" (written translation) and "dolmetschen" (oral translation) emerged in the 15th century. "Übersetzen" is an analog of the Latin term "traducere" (literally "to carry over"), which became widely used in the 15th century. "Dolmetscher" (mhd. "tolmetsche") was introduced somewhat earlier into the German language from the Ottoman "tilmadz," a variation of the modern Turkish word for interpreter, "dilmaç." *Digitales Wörterbuch Der Deutschen Sprache*, accessed July 1, 2016, http://www.dwds.de/.

[4] Franz Pöchhacker, *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2016), 12.

[5] On *Translationswissenschaft* as a discipline see: Heidemarie Salevsky, *Translationswissenschaft: Ein Kompendium*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002); Lew N. Zybatow, "Translationswissenschaft: Glanz und Elend einer Disziplin," in *Translationswissenschaft: Stand und Perspektiven*, ed. Lew N. Zybatow (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 205–31.

[6] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 139. Here "verbal" means "in the form of words," which encompasses written, spoken, and signed words. Jakobson distinguishes "interlingual translation" from two other types of translation: "intralingual translation," rewording in the same language, and "intersemiotic translation," translation between different sign systems (139).

between modes of translation. I will also use "interpreting" to refer to spoken and signed translation, in order to highlight the embodied, situated, and performance-based properties of these forms.

Whereas a translator can work on a written translation intermittently over a period of time in various locations and with the ability to research and revise, interpreting dramatically intensifies the temporally, spatially, and socially bound nature of linguistic transfer. Interpreting is carried out "in one go," either in real time (simultaneously) or immediately following a statement (consecutively). Franz Pöchhacker's definition of interpreting stresses the elements of "ephemeral presentation and immediate production": "Interpreting is a form of Translation in which a *first and final rendition in another language* is produced on the basis of a *one-time presentation* of an utterance in a source language."[7] Notably, Pöchhacker further emphasizes the aspect of "immediacy," despite the fact that interpreting is inherently a form of mediation: "Interpreting can be distinguished from other types of translational activity most succinctly by its immediacy: in principle, interpreting is performed 'here and now' for the benefit of people who want to engage in communication across barriers of language and culture."[8] While Pöchhacker arguably employs the term "immediate" as a synonym for "instantaneous," referring to the time-bound nature of interpreting, his definition nonetheless reveals a central tension intrinsic to the interpreter's role: on the one hand, the interpreter's very presence signifies the need for mediation (that the parties in question are unable to communicate with each other directly), while on the other hand, the interpreter is expected to foster a sense of direct and unmediated connection in order to facilitate this communication.

Of course, this desire for a form of mediation that provides a sense of immediacy is not unique to interpreting or translation; it has long been argued that a successful medium should obscure itself in order to provide the impression of unmediated, transparent perception.[9] Nevertheless, this tension carries a particular significance within translation studies due to the specificities of linguistic difference. Moreover, in the case of interpreting, unlike painting, photography, digital graphics, or other technical media, the medium whose presence is ignored or denied in attempts to achieve immediacy is also a human being.

Making Translation Visible

Both written translation and spoken interpreting have traditionally aimed to efface their own acts of mediation. In *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti traces the history of this self-effacement in written translation, describing how translators attempt to erase indications that a text has been translated by smoothing over elements that might seem foreign or strange to the target audience, thus providing readers with an illusion of transparency. Venuti argues against this model, contending that this domesticating practice constitutes a type of ethnocentric violence against the source culture and feeds nationalist and neo-imperialist tendencies in the target culture. Venuti calls instead for a foreignizing method of translation, in which translators highlight the translated nature of a text by foregrounding cultural and linguistic differences rather

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[7] Pöchhacker, *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, 11. Translation capitalized in original for emphasis.
[8] Ibid., 10.
[9] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 21–31. See, for example: Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture: The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, ed. and trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972); Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon, oder, Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie: Studienausgabe*, Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, Nr. 18865 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012).

than obscuring them.[10]

By focusing on interpreter figures, I take Venuti's call to increase the visibility of translators literally. I thereby extend Venuti's focus on the nexus of translation, power, and ethics into the realms of materiality, embodied subjectivity, performance, and audiovisual art. In other words, this study aims to intervene in the field of translation studies by situating translation at the material site of the human body, which is itself always embedded within particular social, political, economic, and historical constellations. Furthermore, I consider how the interpreter's embodied subject position is constructed in relation to these constellations, which both enable and limit the interpreter's agency as a linguistic mediator.

In all interpreting situations, an interpreter is perceptibly present, whether physically in the room or mediated by technology. However, like translators of written texts, interpreters utilize various techniques to efface this presence, such as matching the speaker's use of pronouns (saying "I" when the speaker says "I") or explicitly telling clients ahead of time to "pretend I'm not here." These measures can be intensified by spatial configurations, such as conference rooms where interpreters sit in the back while audience members listen to disembodied voices through headphones, or by diplomatic conventions, such as when two heads of state look at and address each other directly, even though they are relying on the whispered translations of interpreters standing behind them. As stated above, these practices align with traditional expectations of media more broadly. However, they also stem from the condition that with interpreting, the medium in question is also a human agent, who could covertly intervene or distort the message at any time. In disavowing the interpreter's physical presence, participants disavow both the mediated nature of their communication and the threat of disruption signified by the interpreter's presence. Nonetheless, this presence—whether a body at a table or a voice through a headset—continually testifies to the reality that translation is, in fact, occurring, and that it is being performed by an individual subject. While current publishing practices (e.g. not including translator names on book covers) make it relatively easy for readers of a written translation to pretend they are reading the original text, it takes more work to resist perceiving the physical presence of another person in the same room. An interpreter's physical presence thus serves as a reminder of the very cultural and linguistic differences being negotiated—and indeed, of the mediated nature of all communication. I am interested here in how artistic representations explore this foreignizing effect rather than disavowing it, and how such imagined interactions both reflect on and intervene in debates about translation and linguistic communication more broadly.

Importantly, an interpreter's physical presence is also always gendered, which intersects with tensions of visibility and invisibility in a number of ways. Historically, translation has often been coded as female: in contrast to the stronger, generative, male-coded author of the original text, the female-coded translator is figured as weaker, derivative, submissive, and reproductive.[11] Over the course of the 20th century, the actual interpreting profession also became increasingly feminized; today, women outnumber men approximately 3:1.[12] Although interpreters in the early part of the 20th century were primarily male, the profession was transformed by an increase of women in the workforce and by changing views of interpreting as service work. Similar to the feminization of clerical work in the first part of the 20th century, interpreting became a socially

[10] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
[11] Simon, Sherry, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
[12] Pöchhacker, 164.

acceptable occupation for young, intelligent, and linguistically talented women beginning in the 1940s. Unfortunately, the widespread social phenomenon whereby a profession loses prestige as more women enter it applies to interpreting as well.[13] Interpreters have not been regarded as virtuosic stars in their own right since the largely-male cadre at the League of Nations during the interwar period; instead, both conference interpreting and community-based interpreting have become increasingly regarded as service professions, as supporting roles, and even as care-taking work. Studies have shown that numerous traits traditionally coded as feminine are associated with the role, including politeness, interpersonal skills, subservience, intuitiveness, invisibility, flexibility, a lack of ambition, an ability to multitask, and verbal fluency.[14]

Imagined Interpreters, Mediated Bodies

While most existing scholarship on fictional depictions of interpreters has focused on whether or not they accurately depict the working conditions of real-life professionals,[15] I engage with these figures as poetic representations, as imagined bodies, and as constellations of social, political, and aesthetic discourses. While economic considerations usually prevent real-world translators and interpreters from challenging audiences with the type of intensely foreignizing translations recommended by Venuti, fiction allows for a fuller exploration of the confrontations and destabilizations that the translation process can generate. By "fleshing out" questions of translation with the concrete figure of an embodied interpreter, writers and filmmakers can articulate the disruptive potential of the translator's mediating position, while also illuminating the various power structures and social norms that construct and constrain it. Through these figures, writers and filmmakers can engage explicitly with historical discourses about translation as a transgressive practice, with gendered and sexualized metaphors of fidelity and betrayal, with tensions in perceptions of presence and absence, as well as with the possibilities and limitations of linguistic communication more broadly. Conventions and beliefs can be staged, examined,

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[13] Robin Setton and Andrew Dawrant, *Conference Interpreting: A Complete Course* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016), 359; Donna Crawley, "Gender and Perceptions of Occupational Prestige," *SAGE Open* 4, no. 1 (January 1, 2014); John C. Touhey, "Effects of Additional Women Professionals on Ratings of Occupational Prestige and Desirability," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 29, no. 1 (1974): 86–89; Asaf Levanon, Paula England, and Paul Allison, "Occupational Feminization and Pay: Assessing Causal Dynamics Using 1950–2000 U.S. Census Data," *Social Forces* 88, no. 2 (December 1, 2009): 865–91.

[14] Ingrid Kurz, "Causes and Effects of the Feminization of the Profession of Translating and Interpreting. Thesis by Christa Maria Zeller," *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 1 (1989): 73–74; Franz Pöchhacker, *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, 164; Rachael Ryan, "Why so Few Men? Gender Imbalance in Conference Interpreting," accessed July 1, 2016, http://aiic.net/page/7347/why-so-few-men-gender-imbalance-in-conference-interpreting/lang/1.

[15] See Klaus Kaindl and Ingrid Kurz, eds., *Wortklauber, Sinnverdreher, Brückenbauer? DolmetscherInnen und ÜbersetzerInnen als literarische Geschöpfe* (Vienna: Lit, 2005); Klaus Kaindl and Ingrid Kurz, eds., *Helfer, Verräter, Gaukler? Das Rollenbild von TranslatorInnen im Spiegel der Literatur* (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2008); Klaus Kaindl and Ingrid Kurz, eds., *Machtlos, selbstlos, meinungslos? Interdisziplinäre Analysen von UbersetzerInnen und DolmetscherInnen in belletristischen Werken* (Vienna: Lit, 2010); Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzel, eds., *Transfiction Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014); Dörte Anders, *Dolmetscher als literarische Figuren: Von Identitätsverlust, Dilettantismus und Verrat* (München: Martin Meidenbauer, 2008); Sabine. Strümper-Krobb, *Zwischen den Welten: die Sichtbarkeit des Übersetzers in der Literatur* (Berlin: Weidler Buchverlag, 2009).

and called into question, while new possibilities for conceiving of translation can also be explored.

By considering films as well as literary texts, this project also enables a comparative analysis of each medium's potential to represent, perform, and reflect on acts of embodied translation. Both literary and filmic representations of interpreting involve multiple layers of mediation, but each offers different possibilities of perception, address, and self-reflection. Both constitute forms of "remediation," in the broad sense defined by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin as "the representation of one medium in another."[16] Like ekphrasis, literary and filmic representations of interpreting explicitly mediate another form of mediation. These representations differ somewhat from the new media like video games and graphical user interfaces that Bolter and Grusin are most interested in; neither the films nor the literary texts that I survey here appropriate, repurpose, or refashion linguistic interpreting. Instead, they seek a mode of mutual illumination through intersections of technical and human forms of mediation. Like other media, both film and literary texts oscillate between immediacy, the traditionally dominant logic of mediation in Western representation, and hypermediacy, immediacy's "alter ego" that foregrounds and even celebrates processes of mediation.[17] I am interested here in hypermediacy as a counterpoint to immediacy, in the ways that films and texts call attention both to themselves as media and to their representations of interpreting as a form of mediation at the same time, as well as the ways that immediacy itself can be staged and called into question.

Poetic texts offer a unique space of experimentation precisely because they are constituted by the very medium they seek to represent and reflect on, namely language.[18] Literary representations of embodied acts are not conveyed through direct auditory and visual perceptions as they are with film; instead, they are invoked and imagined through written language. Although filmmakers have developed numerous techniques for representing the fantastic, the paradoxical, and the ordinarily impossible, literature nonetheless remains freer from material constraints; its limits are the limits of language itself. The possibilities of such freedom are exemplified by Yoko Tawada's surrealist texts such as *Das Bad*, which merges bodies, subjectivities, and acts of physical and linguistic violence with remarkable fluidity. Similarly, Ingeborg Bachmann's use of multiple languages, free indirect discourse, and other strategies of linguistic slippage and fragmentation in her short story "Simultan" evokes a dizzying simultaneity of European history, individual memories, physical perceptions, and linguistic disorientation.

Film, on the other hand, allows for a fuller exploration of audiovisual and spatial elements. At the most fundamental level, filmic depictions of interpreters literally make translation both visible and audible. By addressing the visual, auditory, and haptic senses, film can represent the corporeal production of language in different ways than literature does. Film studies also provide a wealth of frameworks through which to approach questions of presence, absence, embodiment, and disembodiment. Additionally, because interpreting and performing are both heavily shaped by qualities of "here-and-now-ness," performance studies also offers

[16] Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 45.
[17] Ibid., 34.
[18] The materiality of literary texts has rightly received renewed attention in recent years, with many of Yoko Tawada's beautifully designed and illustrated books featuring prime examples for consideration. Nonetheless, I would still assert that language is the primary medium constituting the vast majority of literary texts.

insights into relevant phenomena such as co-presence between performers and audience, enactment and citationality, and the time-and-space-bound nature of performance.

As I have indicated, my wider interest is the embodied and situated nature of all human-based linguistic translation, of which interpreters are only the most concrete and exemplary manifestations. Therefore, although this study focuses primarily on representations of spoken language interpreters, I also consider other forms of translation, including metaphors of translation related to physical presence and embodied actions. In literary and cultural studies, the term "translation" is also often used more broadly to refer to cultural processes of transition and transformation. The concept of "cultural translation" put forth by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, in which experiences of migration and cultural difference give rise to sites of contestation, hybridity, and new possibilities, has been particularly influential over the past two decades.[19] In the following study, I seek to account for multiple modes of translation, transmission, and transgression, but always through the lenses of linguistic specificity and embodied experience.

Third Figures and Third Space

As a conceptual figure, the interpreter belongs to a category theorized in German cultural studies (*Kulturwissenschaft*) as "Figuren der/des Dritten." In particular, two edited volumes have contributed to elucidating the critical potential of such figures: *Figuren der/des Dritten*, published in 1998, and *Die Figur des Dritten*, published in 2010. Both approaches inform my analysis of interpreters as mediating figures who occupy a space of tension between inclusion and exclusion, clarification and disruption, presence and absence. Both volumes are also influenced to different degrees by Homi Bhabha's concept of a "Third Space of enunciation," which I will also consider in relation to my project below.[20]

Figuren der/des Dritten is inspired by a convergence in the 1990s of poststructuralist, postcolonial, and gender theory, which prompted widespread interest in ambivalent figures that challenge and destabilize binary oppositions. For editors Claudia Breger and Tobias Döring, the figure of the third is produced by culturally constructed dichotomies.[21] While third elements frequently call these differentiations into question, opening room for new possibilities, they do not resolve the oppositions that produce them. "So oszilliert das 'Dritte' stets zwischen den Oppositionen, die es durchkreuzt, und bezeichnet einen Versuch, binäre Denkstrukturen zu überwinden, während es doch unweigerlich auf sie bezogen bleibt."[22] As a third figure moving between two or more languages, cultures, and subject positions, the interpreter generates multiple forms of uncertainty and instability that extend in various directions. Like Michel Serres's figure of the parasite, which transmits but also disrupts, interpreters generally aim to clarify communication, but their presence can also distort it.[23]

Breger and Döring's emphasis on the structures of power inhabited, constituted, negotiated, and sometimes subverted by third figures is also important to my analysis. As objects

[19] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 301-335.
[20] Ibid., 54.
[21] Claudia Breger and Tobias Döring, "Einleitung: Figuren der/des Dritten," in *Figuren der/des Dritten: Erkundungen kultureller Zwischenräume*, ed. Claudia Breger and Tobias Döring (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 1.
[22] Ibid., 3.
[23] Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

of investigation, third figures illuminate the complex, historically specific power relations in which they are embedded. Indeed, the various contributions to *Figuren der/des Dritten* highlight the importance of carefully situating objects of analysis within their specific historical and discursive contexts. By taking a similar approach to cultural representations of interpreters in Europe from the postwar period to the present, I seek both to illuminate the role of interpreting in the shifts and convergences of this period as well as to underscore the historically situated nature of all acts of translation.[24]

The significance of interpreters as third figures within this particular historical time period is supported by Albrecht Koschorke's introduction to the more recent volume, *Die Figur des Dritten*, in which he argues that third elements took on new relevance over the course of the 20th century due to epistemological ruptures and major changes in social structures.[25] Koschorke explains that the classical Western episteme was fundamentally binary and that third elements generally functioned as transitional phenomena helping to bring about a higher unity, as in Hegel's dialectical model. In fact, binary oppositions were usually hierarchical (good/evil, God/world, etc.), so that either element functioned metonymically to invoke a larger unity. In the 20th century, however, theoretical and social models of synthesis or resolution became increasingly impossible within the heterarchical and polycentric societies of modernity. Hierarchical, totalizing systems of thought were rejected in favor of plurality, openness, and indeterminacy. Within the 20th century's permanent epistemological state of exception, ambivalent third elements took on a prominent role: "Die Störfaktoren von gestern haben sich, zum Guten oder zum Schlechten, in aktive soziale Operatoren von heute verwandelt."[26] Unlike earlier states of exception such as carnival, which were temporary, 20th-century concepts like "hybridity" are now central organizing facts of social existence: "[Das Konzept] versteht 'Zwischen-Sein' auf allen soziokulturellen Ebenen vielmehr als Signum einer paradoxen, weil nicht mehr normierbaren 'Normalität' der (Post-)Moderne."[27] At this historical moment, figures of thirdness such as the trickster, the messenger, the parasite, the romantic rival, the cyborg—and of course, the interpreter—take on new theoretical, social, and cultural importance.

Like Breger and Döring, Koschorke also considers the complex relationship of the third element to the pairs that it triangulates. For Koschorke, the third element has no position of its own, but puts the two differentiated sides into relation with one another, simultaneously connecting and separating them. Indeed, a central theoretical contribution of the third is to focus attention on acts of differentiation themselves: "Differenztheoretisch entstehen 'Effekte des Dritten' immer dann, wenn intellektuelle Operationen nicht mehr bloß zwischen den beiden Seiten einer Unterscheidung oszillieren, sonder *die Unterscheidung als solche* zum Gegenstand und Problem wird."[28] In fact, the articulation, questioning, and reassertion of difference is also

[24] Andre Lefevre and Susan Bassnett's edited volume on *Translation, History and Culture* played a significant role in widely introducing historical considerations into the field of translation studies. See in particular, Andre Lefevre and Susan Bassnett, "Introduction: Proust's Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights. The 'Cultural Turn' in Translation Studies," in *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. Andre Lefevre and Susan Bassnett (London: Pinter, 1990), 1–13.
[25] Albrecht Koschorke, "Ein neues Paradigma der Kulturwissenschaften," in *Die Figur des Dritten: Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Paradigma*, ed. Eva Schopohl et al. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 9–34.
[26] Ibid., 10.
[27] Ibid., 14.
[28] Ibid., 11.

central to Homi Bhabha's theory of a "Third Space of cultural enunciation," which I will now discuss in relation to the interpreter as a third figure.

As mentioned above, both *Figuren der/des Dritten* (1998) and *Die Figur des Dritten* (2010) are indebted to Bhabha's work in various ways, including in their vocabulary of thirdness. Reflecting the significant impact of Bhabha's work on cultural scholarship in the 1990s, the Third Space figures more prominently in the introductory chapters of *Figuren der/des Dritten* as a framing concept; in *Die Figur des Dritten,* which has a wider topical scope, it is presented as one of many theories of thirdness. In particular, Doris Bachmann-Medick's contribution to *Figuren der/des Dritten* raises questions about the applicability of the concept of a Third Space to cultural encounters and negotiations outside of a postcolonial context.[29] In general, I have reservations about the undifferentiated application (or appropriation) of postcolonial theory to contexts unrelated to colonial history, which would include the case studies discussed in this dissertation. I also seek here to go beyond the generalized valorization of liminality that has characterized some of the less nuanced responses to Bhabha's seminal theories. Nonetheless, a closer examination of Bhabha's formulation of a Third Space, which is in fact rooted in linguistic difference and the split nature of all speaking positions, has persuaded me that in this particular instance, returning to Bhabha's Third Space is quite relevant to my investigation of interpreter figures. Although he develops his account of cultural enunciation within an explicitly postcolonial context, Bhabha also asserts that it applies to "any cultural performance" and "all cultural statements and systems."[30] I would also add that many of the translation theorists whose work informs my concern with the power dynamics of linguistic translation —from Gayatri Spivak, Lawrence Venuti, and Emily Apter, to Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre—are directly or indirectly engaged with postcolonial theory.

Bhabha's model of a "contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation"[31] can help to illuminate the interpreter's mediating position as a performative act, which articulates cultural and linguistic difference while simultaneously calling any stable boundaries into question. At the same time, particular scenes of interpreting enacted by embodied individuals, whether real or imagined, help to concretize the enunciator's split subjectivity, which remains unconscious and only indirectly represented in Bhabha's account. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that cultures are never discrete, unified, or stable, but are instead continually articulated and renegotiated through processes of signification and claims of authority. He then locates the reason for the fundamental ambivalence and uncertainty of cultural difference in the instability of language itself. To do so, he draws on Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance*, which posits both the instability and endless deferral of meaning through a chain of linguistic signifiers:[32]

> The reason a cultural text or system of meaning cannot be sufficient unto itself is that the act of cultural enunciation—the *place of utterance*—is crossed by the *différance* of writing. [...] It is this difference in the process of language that is crucial to the production

[29] Doris Bachmann-Medick, "Dritter Raum. Annäherung an ein Medium kultureller Übersetzung und Kartierung," in *Figuren der/des Dritten: Erkundungen kultureller Zwischenräume*, ed. Claudia Breger and Tobias Döring (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 19–33.
[30] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 53–55.
[31] Ibid., 55.
[32] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3–27.

> of meaning and ensures, at the same time, that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent.[33]

This central instability of language and culture, which is manifested in articulations of cultural difference, is particularly apparent in acts of cultural and linguistic translation. Although Bhabha is better known for his interest in "cultural translation," the above passage makes clear that this phenomenon, too, is rooted in language.

In his analysis of the act of cultural enunciation, Bhabha further draws on Jacques Lacan's model of the speaking subject, which is always split between the grammatical "I" of the statement (*énoncé*) and the unconscious subject of the enunciation.[34] This split, which is inherent to all linguistic communication, is in fact dramatized through the act of interpreting, in which the interpreter repeats the grammatical "I" of the original speaker's statement, while supposedly remaining separate from the subject of enunciation. At the same time, the interpreter's physical presence signifies the slippery negotiation between two or more culturally and historically specific positions of address:

> The linguistic difference that informs any cultural performance is dramatized in the common semiotic account of the disjuncture between the subject of a proposition (*énoncé*) and the subject of enunciation, which is not represented in the statement but which is the acknowledgment of its discursive embeddedness and address, its cultural positionality, its reference to a present time and a specific space. The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation.[35]

Interpreters can thus be understood to perform articulations of cultural difference, which further highlight both the central and highly ambivalent status of interpretation (i.e. the production, ascription, or contestation of meaning) to acts of linguistic translation. In their acts of cultural and linguistic mediation, interpreters generate, mobilize, occupy, and embody a Third Space, which "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation" by which meanings are produced, negotiated, and contested.[36] In particular, fictional interpreters can draw attention to, and even embody, the political, institutional, and historical positionalities that establish particular spaces of communication and exchange.

By focusing on the possibilities—both real and imagined—generated by the frictions of interlingual encounters and embodied communication, I seek also to work against the enduring paradigm of translation as a process of inevitable loss. Rather than asking what is lost in translation, I ask what new avenues—of thought, creation, cultural exchange, linguistic practice, and social interaction—translation can open up. In exploring the possibilities of translational encounters and thinking beyond limited models of translation as (an inevitably incomplete) transfer, it is also fruitful to consider translation as a mode of linguistic intervention and a type of performative speech act—asking, in other words, what a translation does, what it enacts, and what its effects are. Interpreters, as agents and intervenient beings, provide excellent case studies

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[33] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 52–53.
[34] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink a.o. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 677.
[35] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 53.
[36] Ibid., 55.

through which to explore translation in and as action. With this study, I thus join theorists such as Sandra Bermann, Maria Tymoczko, Emily Apter, Michael Cronin, Yoko Tawada, and Homi Bhabha in aiming to extend current conceptions of translation further beyond linear models of hermeneutic extraction and transfer.

Performing Translation: Beyond Translation as Extraction

In the European tradition, hermeneutic interpretation and translation theory are historically intertwined. This relationship is indicated by the multiple meanings of the word "interpret," which include a) explaining a text's meaning, b) translating from one language into another, c) rendering the unintelligible understandable, and d) performing or realizing a work of art such as theater or music. The foundations of both modern translation theory and modern general hermeneutics can be located in the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher. While the longer European tradition of textual interpretation is rooted in Greek philosophy (e.g. Aristotle's *On Interpretation*) as well as Jewish and Christian biblical exegesis, Schleiermacher is generally regarded as the first to propose hermeneutics as "the art of understanding" in a broad sense, rather than within the specialized realms of legal and biblical texts. Schleiermacher's theories of understanding and translation both build on Johann Gottfried Herder's view that each language shapes its speakers' thinking in unique and culturally specific ways.[37] Schleiermacher asserts that within a single, shared language, we understand each other because we have conventions for associating certain thoughts with formulations in language, which Schleiermacher calls "die Rede" (often translated as "discourse").[38] However, when a thinker wishes to express original thoughts for which no linguistic conventions exist, "he himself requires the art of discourse to transform them into expressions that afterwards require exposition."[39] In other words, interpretation is the attempt to grasp the thought at the base of discourse. When it comes to translation between languages, the specificity of each language means that a gap exists between the concepts expressed in each language, which translation must then attempt to bridge. Schleiermacher famously argues that there are two fundamental ways to do so: "Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him."[40] While readers and publishers in most parts of the world currently favor the latter method, Schleiermacher's concept of a foreignizing mode of translation has influenced numerous translators and theorists, including Walter Benjamin and Lawrence Venuti.

Schleiermacher thus emphasizes and values the specificity of individual languages, arguing that they can never be fully commensurate with one another, but that they can intersect and influence each other in ways that open possibilities in multiple directions. However, a number of subsequent models of translation have built on a narrower understanding of the link between translation and hermeneutic interpretation, portraying translation as the extraction and

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[37] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache: Text, Materialien, Kommentar*, ed. Wolfgang Pross (München: C. Hanser, 1978).

[38] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Wolfgang Virmond, vol. 4: Vorlesungen zur Hermeneutik und Kritik (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 466–467.

[39] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "The Hermeneutics: Outline of the 1819 Lectures," in *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 86.

[40] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating," *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 49.

transfer of meaning from one language into another. George Steiner's model of "Hermeneutic Motion" attempts to account for the complex theories of Schleiermacher and Benjamin by proposing a four-part model of translation made up of the following stages: trust, aggression, incorporation, and restitution.[41] However, the second move of aggression, which is "incursive and extractive," in fact aligns with a simplistic view of translation as a straightforward extraction and transfer of meaning: the translator crosses into foreign territory, takes possession of meaning, and brings it back home as a prize.

In contrast, a number of translation theorists, including Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Spivak, insist on attending to the materiality and rhetoricity of language in the translation process, which is, in fact, always both spatially and temporally situated.[42] In *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht argues that works of art produce both "meaning effects," which have to do with conceptual content that calls for interpretation, and "presence effects," which appeal to the senses and are central to lived experience.[43] As a subject whose material presence plays an instrumental role in linguistic mediation, the interpreter offers a fruitful site through which to investigate the "presence effects" of translation. As an embodied and performative act, interpreting goes well beyond the extraction and transfer of meaning. Indeed, the interpreter's body can exhibit a material stubbornness, functioning as a mode of resistance to expectations of extraction and transfer and instead highlighting the material, bodily, and performative aspects of linguistic communication.

In "Performing Translation," Sandra Bermann approaches translation as performance in multiple senses of the word: as an action that a translator does, as a staging of this action for an audience, and as an enactment or interpretive iteration of a source text.[44] Drawing on theories of performativity by J.L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler, Bermann emphasizes the citational quality of language that always exceeds and undermines a writer or speaker's intentions.[45] She argues that "by bringing within its scope this 'other text' with its clearly different language(s), conventions, and historical context, translation dramatizes the encounter with alterity that exists to a more limited extent in every instance of language use."[46] Bermann further highlights Butler's more recent work on translation and translational encounters as a model for ethical and political action, "one founded on an encounter with alterity that reduces any sense of sovereign selfhood as it prompts transformative productions of language, subjectivity, and power."[47] If translation stages such encounters, interpreting carries the potential to intensify them further, as negotiations of selfhood and otherness are embodied and enacted as shared—sometimes antagonistic, sometimes intimate—experiences at particular points in time

[41] George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Open Road Media, 2013).
[42] Jacques Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?," trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (2001): 174–200; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 369–88.
[43] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).
[44] Sandra Bermann, "Performing Translation," in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 285–97.
[45] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
[46] Bermann, "Performing Translation," 290.
[47] Ibid., 295.

and space.

Sign language interpreters most obviously employ their bodies in communicative displays before audiences, but in fact all interpreting contains aspects of presentation and performance. Like actors on a stage, interpreters also employ their bodies to "enact" the words of others, and they convey ideas and emotions that may not be their own. With both theatrical performance and interpreting, the iterability of language—its ongoing repetition with a difference—is staged with heightened intensity. Also like the body of a performer, an interpreter's body is always (at least) doubly encoded, as both a vehicle of culturally encoded signs and as itself in its actual, visceral, material presence before an audience.[48]

Global Flows and Embodied Frictions

Embodiment is also central to my analysis of interpreters as mediators who both facilitate and impede transnational circulation and global exchange. Both their individual material presences and the shared spaces of co-presence generated through acts of translation enact and alter various connections around the world. Here I draw on Anna Tsing's concept of "friction" as "the grip of worldly encounter" through which aspirations for global connection are enacted.[49] In her study of globally circulating claims of universality, Tsing argues that global connections are in fact generated and enacted through the "sticky materiality of practical encounters."[50] Rather than unimpeded global flows, Tsing emphasizes the productive friction of specific intersections, which she further describes as "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference."[51] Such friction is not merely a synonym for resistance; it can disrupt, but it can also propel forward, generating new possibilities of transnational circulation.[52] I argue that the interpreter—an embodied subject employed as a neutral medium of communication—constitutes a unique point of friction within the transnational flows of today's information economies. In other words, as a site of friction between languages and cultures, the interpreter is where the rubber of linguistic specificity meets the road of global exchange.

Attending to interpreters as loci of the cultural and material specificity of languages is particularly important at a time when the advances in digital communication technologies allow information to circulate around the globe faster than ever. Michael Cronin argues that the rise of digital communication has profoundly influenced our contemporary understanding of translation, leading to a "regime of advanced convertibility."[53] The flexibility of digital code seems to promise instantaneous transfer and unlimited convertibility—that given the right tools and procedures, anything can potentially be translated into anything else. Ongoing advances in machine translation, such as the still clunky but rapidly improving Google Translate, further

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[48] Philip Auslander, *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 90.
[49] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 4.
[52] Ibid., 6. Importantly, Venuti also demonstrates how translation can function to both maintain and disrupt international power relations of dominance and dependence. He emphasizes the centrality of translation to colonialism as well as to more recent "neocolonial projects of transnational corporations," while at the same time exploring the potential of translation as mode of resistance. Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 158.
[53] Michael Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

support an instrumental view of translation as the transfer of informational content, enabled by an underlying equivalence between languages. From an economic perspective, translatability plays a crucial role in global commerce, enabling transnational flows of capital, goods, services, labor, information, and people. In other words, many of us are both socially and economically invested in a model of smooth interlingual transmission. At the same time, the widespread use of mobile and digital communication technologies such as cellular phones, email, and text messaging suggest an increasing prevalence of disembodied communication in general.

However, despite the universalizing ideal of a fluid stream of transnational communication facilitated by digital technology, complex multilingual interactions across cultures currently still require human mediation, which inevitably involves some form of presence, whether physical or virtual. The crucial role of embodiment in interpreting is particularly highlighted by sign language interpreting, but it also pertains to the spoken language interpreter's ability to hear, process, contextualize, understand, translate, and produce spoken language, while also conveying tone, gesture, footing, and cultural context. While the interpreter's body could be regarded as the medium through which language—itself another medium—is transmitted,[54] I conceive of a subject's reception, processing, and generation of language as intertwined with that person's embodied state. Indeed, language is inherently corporeal, produced by embodied subjects situated within particular material contexts. At the very least, we still need fingers to type on a keyboard, vocal chords to produce speech, skin to perceive tactile signing, or eyelids to blink at computer interaction tools, and all of us rely on our physical brains (located within our bodies) as well as our entire experiences as embodied beings to process this information. And while some digital technologies may facilitate a sense of disembodied communication, others offer expanded possibilities for experiencing embodiment; for example, webcams and video chat function to transmit a sense of physical presence, while virtual reality headsets and bodysuits are explicitly designed to interact with bodily perception.

Mark Hansen emphasizes the body's central role in interfaces with digital media and virtual reality: "What is truly novel and promising about contemporary consumer electronics is not the possibility they open for creating ever more immersive illusory spaces, but rather the expanded scope they accord embodied human agency."[55] For Hansen, the body functions as the "enframer" or "processor" of digital information,[56] and more broadly, as the basis for phenomenological experience, which "has *always* been conditioned by a technical dimension and has *always* occurred as a cofunctioning of embodiment with technics."[57] Such a "cofunctioning of embodiment with technics" can be clearly observed in the practice of simultaneous interpreting, which requires both technical equipment and a human interpreter. Interpreters make use of digital tools such as glossaries and terminology databases, and remote interpreting via videoconferencing or telephone is also becoming increasingly common. In the following chapters, I will discuss how such interfaces between human interpreters and technology have been intensified by the movement from analog to digital communication technology. The same

[54] In the sense of Marshall McLuhan's assertion that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium." Here the interpreter's body would be conceived of as a corporeal channel through which language is transmitted. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 23.
[55] Mark B. N. Hansen, *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media* (New York; London: Routledge, 2006), 4.
[56] Ibid., 21.
[57] Ibid., 9.

questions of visibility, embodiment, and agency that were brought into focus by the original IBM Hushaphone Filene-Finlay simultaneous interpreting system invented in 1926 persist today; however, the expectations of global connection and the frictions generated by the intersection of digital information flows with the interpreter's ongoing embodiment have increased significantly. At the same time, as in many other industries, digital technology has increased the mobility and flexibility, but also the precarity, of the interpreter's labor.

Un/translatability?

Because interpreting is inflected by the material, cultural, affective, and performative dimensions of interlingual communication, the interpreter serves as a site to examine the cultural and material specificities of language that resist easy transmission in a time of advanced convertibility, considering these as productive possibilities to be explored rather than roadblocks to be smoothed out on the "global information superhighway." In this line of questioning, the limits of translation become fruitful grounds of investigation; which words, culture-specific concepts, or linguistic formulations resist or defy translation? Barbara Cassin, editor of *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, defines an untranslatable as "a word that never ceases (not) to be translated": that which continually calls out for translation, is continually and imperfectly translated, and continually demands re-translation.[58] Emily Apter similarly writes of "the noncarryover that carries over nonetheless, or that transmits at a half-crocked semantic angle."[59] More broadly, Jacques Derrida states, "In a sense, nothing is untranslatable, but *in another sense*, everything is untranslatable; translation is another name for the impossible."[60] In instances of untranslatability, differences between languages and their words are revealed, as are the historical development and cultural specificity of each language. Cassin cautions against the assumption of universals in philosophy, which, she points out, uses particular words in particular languages. Returning to Tsing's argument, we may desire and aspire to global universals, but these attempts always occur within and are shaped by local specificity. In response to postnational presumptions of "universal translatability or global applicability" within the discipline of comparative literature, Apter proposes a "translational humanities whose fault-lines traverse the cultural subdivisions of nation or "foreign" language, while coalescing around hubs of irreducible singularity."[61] In this dissertation, I focus on interpreter figures as mobile, intersectional hubs of singularity (concretized in the singularity of an individual body in both time and space), through which the productive tensions of interlingual mobility and opposition can be further explored and through which particular modes of global connectivity can be both enacted and resisted.

From Post-War to Post-Wall

In terms of historical scope, this study begins with the end of the Second World War due to the importance of this period for the interpreting profession as it is practiced today. With the implementation of simultaneous interpreting at the Nuremberg Trials, simultaneous interpreters made a highly publicized debut on the world stage. The foundation of international, multilingual

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[58] Laure Cailloce, "Linguistic Diversity: Food for Thought? Interview with Barbara Cassin," *CNRS News*, September 1, 2015, https://news.cnrs.fr/articles/linguistic-diversity-food-thought.
[59] Emily Apter, "Untranslatables: A World System," *New Literary History* 39, no. 3 (2008): 587.
[60] Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; Or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 57.
[61] Apter, "Untranslatables: A World System," 584.

institutions such as the United Nations and the European Coal and Steel Community following the war was accompanied by the establishment of numerous interpreter-training institutes in Europe and around the world, and interpreting of all kinds became increasingly professionalized. In this dissertation, I trace developments in aesthetic representations of interpreters from 1945 through the Cold War to the globalized present, asking how these figurations reflect historically specific attitudes about linguistic mediation and how such cultural conceptions have evolved over time.

Of course, interpreters have existed for as long as speakers of different languages have been interacting; historical evidence of interpreters dates back to ancient Egyptian writings from the 26th century B.C.[62] However, the modern conception of the professional interpreter is relatively recent, emerging during the First World War and developing further after the Second. In 19th-century Europe, French was considered the language of diplomacy, and most European political representatives used French to communicate with each other directly.[63] However, a major shift occurred due to the involvement of the United States in the First World War and the rise of U.S. political, economic, and cultural influence. In the peace negotiations at Versailles, Woodrow Wilson insisted on English as a second and equal language, and in 1919, the League of Nations was established with both English and French as official languages.[64] At this point, both written translation and spoken interpreting became crucial elements of international politics, and consecutive interpreting began to develop into the form used today.

Until the 1920s, interpreting was primarily done on an ad hoc basis, and a distinction between written translation and spoken interpreting was rarely made; it was assumed that if you could do one, you could do the other, too.[65] However, with the establishment of the League of Nations, institutions including state departments and universities began planning more formal training for interpreters. At the same time, the small group of mostly male conference interpreters who worked at the League of Nations became known as virtuoso performers with big personalities. This was partly due to the way consecutive interpreting was practiced; diplomats would give speeches up to an hour long, which interpreters would then "reconstruct" or "perform" (inventions, additions, and embellishments were common) in the other language for the same length of time.[66]

After the Second World War, a renewed emphasis on international communication and cooperation in order to prevent future wars increased both demand for professional interpreters and their visibility. Postwar Germany, occupied by four countries with three different national languages, was the site of numerous interlingual exchanges, including the Nuremberg Trials. These trials introduced not only a new type of interpreting but also a new kind of interpreter: it

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[62] Dörte Andres, *Dolmetscher als literarische Figuren: Von Identitätsverlust, Dilettantismus und Verrat* (München: Martin Medienbauer, 2008), 42. The ancient Greeks, ancient Persians, and ancient Romans also employed interpreters in various forms, as did numerous other ancient cultures around the world.

[63] The 1878 Congress of Berlin, for example, was conducted almost entirely in French, despite the fact that Prussia had won the recent Franco-Prussian War. However, the status of French during this time period did not go uncontested; for example, the final accord of the Vienna Congress of 1815 states that the use of French at this Congress was not to serve as precedent, and that all parties reserved the right to use Latin, the previous traditional language of European diplomacy. Wolfram Wilss, *Translation and Interpreting in the 20th Century: Focus on German* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), 4-5.

[64] Ibid., 29.

[65] They are actually two distinct forms of language processing, requiring different cognitive functions and skills. Ibid., 30.

[66] Andres, *Dolmetscher als literarische Figuren*, 80.

was found that established professional consecutive interpreters were not well suited to the new method of simultaneous interpreting; instead, younger multilingual men and women in their 20s and 30s were recruited for their flexibility and ability to tolerate intense strain. At the same time, many of these individuals had acquired their multilingual proficiency due to displacements caused by the war and by Nazi persecution, whether as refugees, prisoners in camps, or military personnel. In fact, some simultaneous interpreters had to translate testimony describing the same atrocities that had been committed against their own families. Overall, the interpreters of the Nuremberg Trials were associated with youth, innovation, and talent on the one hand, and gravely serious historical importance on the other. They also heralded the entry of women into the profession, which became steadily feminized in the ensuing decades. Many interpreters at Nuremberg were subsequently recruited to the newly formed UN, where they were associated for a time with an air of glamorous international jet-setting. Shortly thereafter, machine translation research began to be funded intensively by the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War, which contributed to an instrumental view of languages based on their fundamental equivalency.

In the years since 1945, the development of professional interpreting, as well as its popular image, has been intertwined with processes of globalization. As globalization has accelerated, key issues such as translatability, visibility, ideals of neutrality, and interfaces with technology have become intensified. From an economic perspective, as the global circulation of capital has increased and the global presence of multinational corporations has expanded, the need for interpreters has grown as well. While the use of English as a *lingua franca* for international business is currently widespread, it is by no means sufficient to fulfill the goals of most companies with an international presence. Furthermore, the growing influence of numerous types of international organizations, such as NGO's, international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank, in addition to the UN and the EU, have all increased the necessity of mediation to facilitate interlingual and intercultural communication.

As both conference and community interpreting have become more widespread, interpreters have at times grown more visible and at other times less visible. On the one hand, simultaneous interpreting is no longer an exciting new practice over which most journalists are likely to marvel. On the other hand, however, the intensity and simultaneity of this embodied act of translation resonates powerfully with many of today's globalized, fast-paced, multi-media experiences. Indeed, over the past several decades, the prominence of interpreters as central characters has increased in films and literary texts from around the world. Sydney Pollack's Hollywood thriller *The Interpreter* (2005), starring Nicole Kidman, is perhaps the most well-known case of this recent visibility; further examples include Tom Tykwer's film *Heaven* (2002), Javier Marias's novel *A Heart So White* (1992), and Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Bad Girl* (2006).[67] In these and other works, the interpreter functions as a potent figure of globalization, intersectionality, mobility, multiplicity, and polysemy.

This increased interest in interpreter figures over the past two or three decades is in part a symptom of what Yasemin Yildiz has termed our current "post-monolingual condition."[68]

[67] A few additional examples are Suki Kim, *The Interpreter: A Novel* (New York: Macmillan, 2003); Ronald Harwood, *Interpreters: A Fantasia on English and Russian Themes* (Oxford, UK: Amber Lane, 1986); Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013); Alain Fleischer, *Prolongations* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).

[68] Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

According to Yildiz, multilingual practices have always been present in Europe but have been frequently obscured by the dominant monolingual paradigm that developed with the rise of the modern nation state. However, due to various forces of globalization including greater mobility and increased possibilities for communication, multilingualism has become more visible, more able to contest the dominant monolingual paradigm, and more capable of opening up new spaces of linguistic, social, and political possibility. In Germany, two major factors contributing to the increased visibility of multilingual practices have been economic migration and Germany's central role in the process of European integration. At the local level, community interpreters in courtrooms, hospitals, and other social services are receiving more attention and specialized training, reflecting a greater awareness of multilingual community needs. On the supranational level, the EU has grown to include twenty-four official languages. Multi- and transnational corporations rely on interpreters and translators to conduct business in the multilingual European market, which has been profoundly impacted over the past two decades by both the end of the Warsaw Pact and the implementation of the borderless Schengen Area. Yet the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people across much of Europe is often far from smooth, and the interpreter, as an embodied site of translation, constitutes a point of productive friction or potential resistance to these idealized flows.

More recently, the refugee crisis in Europe has caused some European borders to be refortified and others to be hotly debated. The material realities of embodiment and co-presence are brought sharply to the fore by refugees risking their lives in crowded, inflatable boats to cross the Mediterranean, and by people erecting fences to keep others from physically crossing into their national territory. Xenophobia and Islamophobia are racialized and projected onto the bodies of migrants. Many refugees currently fleeing Syria are first and foremost seeking physical safety, i.e. a physical space where their bodies can exist without harm. In such situations, debates about the risks and potentials of digital communication flows might seem secondary to physical needs such shelter, food and water, medical care. Surely, attention to global flows of actual, individual people should take precedence over global flows of information? Yet in fact, the two are inextricably intertwined. One of the few possessions many refugees carry with them is a smartphone, which enables them to use maps with GPS, to share information about prices, traffickers, routes, and conditions ahead, and to remain in contact with their families. Indeed, "the need to communicate can seem as dire as the need for basic supplies," and in some cases, access to electrical outlets and Internet connections is valued more highly than food.[69] Digital translation tools are also being mobilized to assist refugees; in Germany, such initiatives include the free Langenscheidt Arabic-German online dictionary, Google Translate's enlistment of volunteers to expand its Arabic-German capacities, and smartphone apps such as "Deutsch für Flüchtlinge" and "Ankommen." At the same time, however, these digital tools have not replaced the need for qualified human interpreters. The majority of asylum applicants rely on interpreters to communicate their claims during their official hearings, and the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees continues to seek interpreters for Arabic, Kurdish, Dari, and Farsi. As a number of articles and reportages make clear, the interpreters currently in the global spotlight are

[69] Patrick Witty, "See How Smartphones Have Become a Lifeline for Refugees," *Time*, October 8, 2015, http://time.com/4062120/see-how-smartphones-have-become-a-lifeline-for-refugees/.

those working with refugees arriving in Europe.[70] Here, too, they operate as points of friction amongst intersecting flows of people, languages, and information.

Case Studies from Literature and Film

The individual works I have chosen as case studies here are in many ways representative of a widespread cultural trend: over the course of the 20th century, and particularly in the past several decades, interpreters and translators have increasingly figured as central characters in works of fiction written in multiple languages and filmed or performed around the world. This increased global interest in and, in many cases, identification with translators and interpreters can be understood through a variety of lenses related to experiences of globalization, multilingualism, mobility, migration, and fragmented modernity. It can be attributed to increases in actual experiences of linguistic translation and interpreting due to economic globalization and the related phenomena of faster travel and more powerful communication technologies. Translation can also function as key metaphor of the postmodern individual "in a globalized and centreless context, evoking the human search for a sense of self and belonging in a puzzling world full of change and difference."[71] In a similar view, "because of the vagueness and instability of his location between poles that are no longer stable in themselves, the translator has become an icon of the fluidity and multiplicity of modern culture."[72] For writers, the topic of written translation also allows for a unique form of meta-reflection on questions of authorship, originality, and authenticity.[73] In this respect, Jorge Luis Borges can be regarded as having initiated a literary focus on the topic of translation itself in 1939 with his story "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote." Interpreters, as I have outlined above, only began to receive widespread recognition as professionals following the Second World War. As such, representations of interpreters in works of fiction have steadily increased in the decades since then. Of particular significance in more recent decades has been the shift to a focus on interpreters as central characters, as exemplified by Sydney Pollack's 2005 *The Interpreter*, rather than more marginal ones, as in Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 *Contempt*. I would also note that in contrast to written translation, representations of interpreting tend allow for a closer exploration of inter-subjective relationships and shifting social configurations.

Rather than give a broad overview of this global phenomenon, as Dörte Andres does in her comprehensive survey *Dolmetscher als literarische Figuren*, I have chosen to focus my investigation based on the historical, theoretical, thematic, and medium-specific interests outlined in this introduction. I have selected the following case studies due first and foremost to their artistic merit as challenging and exciting engagements with language and embodied communication. Beyond this, I have limited my study to literary and filmic works produced since 1945, situated (although by no means exclusively) in Europe, involving the German language, and engaging with questions of gender, embodiment, and affective labor. By doing so, I hope to more fully engage with examples of locally, historically, and linguistically specific frictions in

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[70] Virginia Kirst, "Die gefährlich große Macht der Asyl-Dolmetscher," *Welt Online*, November 27, 2015, sec. Wirtschaft, http://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article149354382/Die-gefaehrlich-grosse-Macht-der-Asyl-Dolmetscher.html.

[71] Dirk Delabastita, "Fictional Representation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (New York: Routledge, 2009), 111.

[72] Sabine Strümper-Krobb, "Spaces of Translation," in *Crossing Borders: Spaces Beyond Disciplines*, ed. Sabine Strümper-Krobb and Kathleen James-Chakraborty (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 25.

[73] Strümper-Krobb, *Zwischen den Welten: die Sichtbarkeit des Übersetzers in der Literatur*, 27.

intersection with global discourses of translation, mobility, and exchange. Furthermore, I seek to offer a productive example of an intersectional, interdisciplinary approach to translation studies through a materially situated figure of global convergence.

Because figurations of interpreting as gendered, embodied, and affective labor recur throughout the case studies of this dissertation, I begin in Chapter One by establishing a framework through which to approach these issues in the chapters that follow, which are ordered chronologically. I discuss how gendered and sexualized metaphors of translation intersect with the more recent feminization of the interpreting profession, and I examine figurations of fictional female interpreters as prostitutes, which both manifest and question sexualized discourses of translation, intimacy, and betrayal. Further, I situate female interpreters as mobile mediators in relation to other "global women" who migrate for employment as nannies, maids, nurses, and sex workers.[74]

In Chapter Two, I consider how the Second World War and its numerous political and economic consequences shaped conceptions of the interpreter role in Europe and beyond. The first full-scale implementation of simultaneous translation at the Nuremberg Trials played an important role in these developments, as did the founding of the UN and other international organizations. The modern interpreting profession thus grew out of a direct response to the crimes of National Socialism, in the same way that the new internationalism of institutions like the UN, the IMF, and the European Coal and Steel Community also pointed back to the destruction of war. At the same time, however, the political demands of the Cold War resulted in a silencing of these recent histories in Western Europe, even as they persisted in the form of central absences within new models of international exchange. In Ingeborg Bachmann's short story "Simultan," which takes place in Italy in the mid-1960s, an Austrian simultaneous interpreter attempts to repress her awareness of recent fascist history by remaining on the surface of a globalized swirl of languages. However, when she is confronted with her personal relationship to the German language and Austria's Nazi past, she is forced to recognize the echoes of historical trauma that continue to structure the Western European internationalism of the Cold War period.

In Chapter Three, I analyze Rainer Werner Fassbinder's use of an interpreter figure in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979) to revisit the early postwar period from the perspective of the late 1970s. Like Bachmann, Fassbinder was also concerned with disavowed continuities of fascism into the present, particularly with respect to the Federal Republic of Germany. As a central filmmaker in the New German Cinema movement, Fassbinder participated in debates about the cultural conservatism of bourgeois West German society and the veiled authoritarian tendencies of the West German state. In *Maria Braun*, Fassbinder looks back to the immediate postwar years as a missed opportunity to break with a history of authoritarian repression that had instead continued after the war under the guise of democracy, leading in the 1970s to the political turmoil of leftist terrorism and the West German government's repressive response. Amidst a heteroglossic examination of history as multiple and sometimes contradictory stories about the past, the prominence of the English language in the film highlights both the American occupation in West Germany and the American-oriented model of free-market capitalism, a major component of the West German "economic miracle." Within this context, Maria Braun's role as an interpreter highlights her efforts to negotiate these political and economic shifts and her attempt to shape her own story in the face of powerful social and historical forces.

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[74] Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Holt, 2004).

Chapter Four examines two literary works by Yoko Tawada that together engage with changing European cultural and political configurations in the years before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe beginning in 1989. *Das Bad*, published 1989, looks back to shared Japanese and European traumas of the Second World War from the perspective of a Japanese woman living in West Germany who works as an interpreter. Although she is physically assaulted by the language of others, her body resists its instrumentalization as a channel of linguistic transfer, indicating the possibility of a corporeal counter-discourse. *Das nackte Auge* (2004) revisits many of the concerns expressed in *Das Bad* about the potential violence of hermeneutic inscription. In this postcommunist, postcolonial novel, a young Vietnamese woman visits the GDR but is kidnapped to West Germany shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. She ends up spending the next decade in France as an undocumented immigrant, taking refuge in films starring Catherine Deneuve and ultimately disappearing into the screen. As Tawada stresses the political significance of physical presence within an intermedial realm of film, writing, and spoken language, she expands on questions of embodied translation and silencing raised in *Das Bad*.

My fifth chapter also engages with the shifting borders of Europe after the Cold War, with particular attention to the rise and eastward expansion of the European Union. Through my reading of Hans-Christian Schmid's film *Lichter* (2003), I argue that fictional interpreters serve as imagined sites for negotiating questions of affiliation, belonging, access, and exclusion, revealing tensions between the free movement allowed within the Schengen Area and the guarded borders of "Fortress Europe." Through an analysis of the film's two interpreter characters, I examine the crucial role that language and translation play in the construction, enactment, negotiation, and crossing of social and political borders; I further ask how their embodied acts of translation are linked to other acts of border crossing and what kinds of friction these cross-border movements generate.

To conclude, I situate the interpreter's corporeal presence within the digital flows of the current global information economy and ongoing advances in machine translation. Through Matthias van Baaren's short film *Die Falten des Königs* (2011), I consider communication interfaces between humans and technology in light of Mark Hansen's emphasis on the body's role as an "enframer" of digital information.[75] In contrast to fantasies of instantaneous transfer and unlimited convertibility enabled by digital translation technologies, I argue that the interpreter's corporeality continues to attest to the material and culturally specific aspects of linguistic communication within larger processes of international exchange.

[75] Mark Hansen, *Bodies in Code* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9.

Chapter One
Working Women: Interpreting as Gendered, Bodily, and Affective Labor

In Yoko Tawada's 1989 novella *Das Bad*, the protagonist-narrator makes a startling comparison: "Eine Dolmetscherin ist wie eine Prostituierte, die sich an Besatzungssoldaten verkauft; von den einheimischen Männern wird sie gehaßt."[1] In this analogy, issues of national identity, gendered labor, linguistic betrayal, and sexual transgression converge. While it might seem extreme to compare interpreting to sleeping with a conquering enemy for pay, Tawada in fact engages here with traditional discourses linking translation to female treachery.

Depicting translation pejoratively as a feminine act is one way that writers have historically responded to the ambiguities and uncertainties generated by translation. In recent decades, however, many artists and translation theorists have also celebrated the open qualities of translation as a space of possibility and creativity. The works I consider in this study engage critically with traditions of representing translators as potentially duplicitous women; by focusing on the embodied labor of female interpreters, they offer alternative approaches to conceiving of gendered translation. As interpreting has become largely associated with female service work, these approaches also call attention to the historical and material conditions of translation as part of a global service economy.

In this chapter, I examine gendered and sexualized figurations of translation and interpreting in order to provide a historical and theoretical framework for the chapters that follow. Chapters Two through Five all focus on works featuring female protagonists whose embodied experiences of interpreting raise questions about visibility, agency, and communication in relation to the labor of individuals who identify or are identified as women. These intersections of gendered language and labor are further heightened by figurations of female interpreters as prostitutes, which occur in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979) and Hans-Christian Schmid's *Lichter* (2003), in addition to *Das Bad*. In this chapter, I situate these figurations within a longer tradition of linking translation to prostitution, while also considering how the intimate position of speaking as the extension of another person renders the interpreter simultaneously servile and powerful.

The understanding of gender that I employ is based primarily on the work of Judith Butler, who argues that gender identity is produced through a stylized repetition of acts.[2] Drawing on Michel Foucault's theory of discursive practices, J.L. Austin's concept of performative language, and Jacques Derrida's work on iterability,[3] Butler asserts that gender functions as a script of discursively constructed social norms, which individuals repeatedly enact and reproduce. Gender, in other words, is not something that one is or that one has, but

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[1] Yoko Tawada, *Das Bad*, trans. Peter Pörtner (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 1989), Ch. 3. This edition is not paginated, so I indicate chapter numbers instead.

[2] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 140.

[3] See, among other writings by these authors, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

something that one does, repeatedly over time. Crucially, Butler's anti-essentialist view does not imply free choice—that one can simply choose which gender one wishes to perform on a given day, for example. Instead, subjects are constituted and legitimated through preexisting social structures such as gender, and they are compelled to repeat these norms in order to be recognized as "culturally intelligible subjects."[4] For Butler, the human social agent is "the *object* rather than the subject of constitutive acts."[5] Nonetheless, although our performative options are limited by broader social practices and historical discourses, their necessary repetition also opens up space for slippage, difference, resistance, and subversion:

> The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *dis*continuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this "ground." The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction.[6]

Discourses of translation as gendered can thus be seen as part of a larger historical matrix of gender norms that are discursively established and discursively propagated. The realms of fiction and artistic creation are, of course, also shaped by and intertwined with these normative historical discourses, but they can also offer opportunities to examine them critically, to call them into question, and to explore and extend the gaps that emerge through the repetitions of performance. At the same time, translation itself is a paradigmatic instance of such a space of potential; translation is always a repetition with a difference and thus holds the potential to open up new possibilities for intervention, resistance, and creation.[7]

Translation as Gendered and Sexualized

The representation of translation as feminine has a long tradition in Europe, based on widespread cultural attitudes as well as specific historical practices. From the Middle Ages onward, the translation of religious and secular texts provided opportunities for women to participate in realms of literary production and public expression, from which they would have otherwise been excluded.[8] At the same time, translation has long been culturally coded as female due to the presumption of its inferior status in relation to original authorship.[9] For example, in the preface to his popular 1603 translation of Michel de Montaigne's essays into English, John Florio wrote that "all translations are reputed females" because both are necessarily defective.[10] In contrast to the generative, authoritative, male-coded author of the original text, the female-

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[4] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 198.
[5] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," *Theater Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519.
[6] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.
[7] Ibid., 140; Luise von Flotow, "Preface," in *Translating Women*, ed. Luise von Flotow (Ottawa, Ontario: University of Ottawa, 2011), 10.
[8] Margaret Patterson Hannay, *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985); Simon, Sherry, *Gender in Translation*, 37–80.
[9] Lori Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," in *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).
[10] John Florio, "The Epistle Dedicatorie," in *The Essayes*, by Michael de Montaigne, trans. John Florio (Menston, UK: Scolar Press, 1969), sig. A2r.

coded translator is often discursively figured as weaker, secondary, and derivative.[11] As Lori Chamberlain argues, this binary model aligns with the widespread valuation of productive work (seen as masculine) over reproductive work (seen as feminine). Within this paradigm, originality and creativity are represented in terms of paternity, and struggles over authority are often expressed in terms of establishing paternity and legitimacy. As Chamberlain notes, such struggles can arise in reaction to the inherent ambiguity around the authorship of a translated text, in which the work of both original author and translator are merged. In response, gendered metaphors of translation are frequently employed in attempts to assert authority (figured as paternity) over a translated text.[12]

This perceived need to establish the legitimate father of a translated text aligns with the further characterization of translations—and women—as sneaky and deceptive. In this view, the original text is "natural, truthful, and lawful," while the translation is "artificial, false, and treasonous."[13] Indeed, the attribution of passivity to both women and translations contains the possibility of its own subversion: writers and readers fear that the translator will only seem to submit to the original, but will instead actually betray it. Through discourses of fidelity and betrayal, translation also becomes sexualized; such sexualization is particularly apparent in the French expression "les belles infidèles," which stems from the maxim that translations, like women, can be either beautiful or faithful, but never both. In this line of thought, gendered discourses of translation and fidelity are mapped onto the binary of faithful wife or promiscuous mistress.

As Chamberlain points out, the mobilization of gendered metaphors in the struggle over authority can also be seen in the cases of translators and theorists who attempt to reverse the model described above; by refiguring themselves as male conquerors, seducers, guardians, and protective fathers of a female original text, they depose the male-coded original author and take his place of male authority.[14] Such gendered and sexualized positioning is apparent in George Steiner's influential hermeneutic model of translation with its four steps of initial trust, aggression (described as "appropriative penetration"), incorporation (i.e. domestication), and restitution.[15] Thankfully, most theorists, translators, editors, and reviewers no longer use such overtly sexist language. Nonetheless, ideas about translation as gendered and sexualized continue to circulate as metaphors, cultural references, and fictional figurations. As Chamberlain also notes, Steiner explicitly equates sexual intercourse and linguistic interaction, stating: "Eros and language mesh at every point. Intercourse and discourse, copula and copulation, are sub-classes

[11] Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation."
[12] Ibid., 57–58.
[13] Ibid., 58.
[14] Ibid., 58-67. In an analysis of fictional texts by Italo Calvino and Moacyr Scliar, Rosemary Arrojo demonstrates the persistence of this model, in which the male translator vies with the male author for possession of the female-coded text, despite Roland Barthes' proclamation of "The Death of The Author" and Michel Foucault's reduction of the role to a filtering function. Rosemary Arrojo, "The Gendering of Translation in Fiction: Translators, Authors, and Women/Texts in Scliar and Calvino," in *Gender, Sex and Translation: The Manipulation of Identities,* ed. José Santaemilia (Manchester, UK; Northampton, MA: St. Jerome, 2005), 81–96; Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–148; Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al (New York: The New Press, 1998), 205–222.
[15] Steiner, *After Babel*. Steiner's description of aggressive penetration followed by an attempt at amends brings to mind a date-rapist cooking breakfast for the woman he raped the night before.

of the dominant fact of communication."[16] Steiner is by no means alone in equating sexual intercourse and linguistic discourse, and this characterization persists across a variety of cultural representations.[17] Moreover, questions of translation or linguistic exchange across difference are often staged by depicting sexual contact.

Feminist Interventions

Since the 1980s, feminist translation theorists such as Lori Chamberlain, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Barbara Godard, and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood have raised questions about gendered translations and translation theories, the visibility and agency of female translators, the exclusion and erasure of female voices, the particularity of gendered and cultural subject positions, and translation as a form of activism. These theorists were inspired by the work of writers such as Hélène Cixous, Adrienne Rich, Luce Irigary, Nicole Brossard, and Verena Stefen, who asked how women could find new ways of writing, speaking, and expressing themselves in languages that have traditionally functioned as institutions of patriarchal oppression.[18] Feminist translation theories recognized the per formative nature of language, proposed methods of interventionist translation, called for the retranslation of influential texts and the rediscovery of forgotten female authors and translators, and considered how culturally specific gender differences might be translated into cultural spheres where other constructions of gender differences prevail.[19] In a reframing of traditional notions of fidelity and betrayal, translational intervention was valorized as both a form of resistance and an opening up of new possibilities. A number of translators and theorists celebrated the "hijacking," [20] "womanhandling,"[21] and "subversive"[22] rewriting of texts that employed oppressive, patriarchal language and promoted misogynist views.

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[16] Ibid., 38. Steiner further equates sexual/physiological and linguistic "ejaculation," thus again reserving the site of the speaking subject for men. (After Babel, 1975, pg. 39)

[17] For examples, see Russell Ganim, "Intercourse as Discourse: The Calculus of Objectification and Desire in the Novel and Film Versions of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*," *Neohelicon* 30, no. 1 (2003): 209–33; Corinna Kahnke, "Intercourse as Discourse in Alexa Hennig von Lange's Relax," *Studies in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature* 35, no. 1 (2011): 40–55; Carla Kaplan, *The Erotics of Talk: Women's Writing and Feminist Paradigms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Charles Burack, *D.H. Lawrence's Language of Sacred Experience: The Transfiguration of the Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 21–22; Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 73.

[18] Luise von Flotow, *Translation and Gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism"* (Manchester, UK; Ottawa, Ontario: St. Jerome; University of Ottawa, 1997), 8–12.

[19] See Susan Bassnett, "Writing in No Man's Land: Questions of Gender and Translation," *Ilha Do Desterro A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies* 28 (1992): 63–74; Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-Belle et Infidèle: La Traduction Comme Pratique de Réécriture Au Féminin/ The Body Bilingual* (Montreal: Éditions du Remue-ménage, 1991); Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney, *Translating Slavery*, 2nd ed. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2009); Hannay, *Silent but for the Word*.

[20] Luise von Flotow, "Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories," *TTR : Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 4, no. 2 (1991): 78–80.

[21] Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation," in *Translation, History, Culture*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevre (London: Pinter, 1990), 94.

[22] Suzanne Jill Levine, *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (Minneapolis: Greywolf, 1991).

In the translation of all kinds of texts, the translator was elevated to the status of co-author. Along with an emphasis on the translator's visibility came the explicit acknowledgment that translator always translates from a particular subject position. By "immodestly flaunt[ing] her signature,"[23] the feminist translator "destroy[s] the illusion of transparency, underlin[es] the differences between two cultures and their linguistic systems, and insist[s] on translation as an act of reading and writing by a specific historical subject."[24] To describe the process of self-reflexive, conditional, and continually provisional translation, Barbara Godard coined the term "transformance" in order to "emphasize the work of translation, the focus on the process of constructing meaning in the activity of transformation, a mode of performance."[25]

Beyond its many specific interventions, I believe the most important outcome of feminist translation theory thus far has been the embrace of the possibility and productivity inherent to translation. Rather than viewing translation as an inevitable loss to be mourned, translation opens new avenues of creative possibility and new spaces of complex relationality. As Chamberlain points out, translation is so overcoded and overregulated precisely because it threatens to disrupt categories and regulations essential to the maintenance of existing power structures. Translation reveals the instability inherent to constructions of authorship and calls traditional models of ownership, artistry, production, and reproduction into question.[26] More recently, translation scholars such as Luise von Flotow and Sandra Bermann have returned to Butler's theory of performativity to consider its further implications for translation studies, as discussed in the introduction. Von Flotow, for example, reminds us that both gender and translation have been shown to lack a solid grounding in an authenticating original, and calls for further exploration of intersections "between the contingency of meaning that translation performs and the contingency of gender that notions around performativity promote."[27]

Intimacy Issues and Slippery Subjectivities

Referring to the translation of literary texts, Gayatri Spivak asserts that "translation is the most intimate act of reading" and that the translator must "surrender herself to the linguistic rhetoricity of the original text."[28] She further describes this surrender as erotic, its purpose to facilitate a love between the original and the translation that allows the boundaries of language to fray and that holds "the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay."[29] In Spivak's formulation, this intimate surrender is figured positively as a precondition of ethical, non-hegemonic translation. From a conservative position, however, such destabilization of the boundaries between Self and Other through the intimacy of translation presents a threat to guard against.

The potential for such intimacy in translation is further heightened when it occurs as an explicitly embodied act; depending on the context, interpreting can be both physically and emotionally intimate. Whispered interpreting (*chuchotage*), whereby an interpreter sits very close to a client and whispers translations into her ear, is perhaps the most obvious example of

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[23] Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation," 94.
[24] Flotow, *Translation and Gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism,"* 40.
[25] Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation," 90.
[26] Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation."
[27] Flotow, "Preface," 3.
[28] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Lawrence Venuti, "The Politics of Translation," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 372, 377.
[29] Ibid., 370.

physical intimacy. More broadly, although interpreters do not always share the same physical space as their clients, they are always embedded within a shared social situation. Medical interpreters frequently translate intimate questions and answers, as do interpreters working with journalists, researchers, and lawyers.

Moreover, interpreting can give rise to a shared subject position, which in many ways constitutes a particularly intense form of intimacy. As a medium, an interpreter is asked to efface her own subjectivity in order to serve as the extension of another person.[30] Yet interpreters often find themselves negotiating between a professional ideal of distanced neutrality and a sense of identification with the people whose thoughts and feelings they convey. In a telling example, the standard practice among professional interpreters is to match the speaker's use of pronouns. If, for example, Ms. Smith says in the source language, "I am angry," the interpreter will say in the target language, "I am angry," rather than reporting, "Ms. Smith says she is angry," or "Ms. Smith is angry." This practice is intended to make the communication feel as immediate as possible, with the interpreter functioning as a clear channel through which the speaker sends her message directly to her interlocutors. However, this repetition with a difference also destabilizes the signifier "I" and complicates the ideal of clear transmission. One might ask to what extent the interpreter not only identifies with but also performs the role of Ms. Smith in uttering her words, "I am angry"? If the goal of interpreting is the transfer of meaning, the interpreter is required to convey not only Ms. Smith's words but also a sense of her affective state; to what extent must the interpreter embody Ms. Smith's feelings of anger in order to perform and convey their degree to her listeners? Furthermore, a listener familiar with the practice of interpreting will be able to attribute the interpreter's utterance to Ms. Smith, but this requires a certain disavowal of the everyday practice in which a person who utters the word "I" refers to themselves. Depending on the situation, this disavowal may remain incomplete, holding open the possibility of more than one referent.

Both this slippage of subjective boundaries and the perceived excess of the interpreter's physical presence raise the possibility that the interpreter could overstep the boundaries of her assigned role. Dependence on an interpreter for communication places clients in a vulnerable position. Even when an interpreter ostensibly occupies a subservient role, her linguistic knowledge and access to all sides of a communicative exchange place her in a position of power. Indeed, an interpreter could commit an act of betrayal right in front of you, and you would remain unaware of it, because your only access to the language in which the betrayal is taking place is through the unfaithful interpreter herself. The intimacy of having another person speak and act as an extension of yourself can further increase this sense of vulnerability. Although people may attempt to manage feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty by ignoring the interpreter's involvement completely, the interpreter's physical presence continually thwarts such attempts. In this way, interpreting situations can heighten concerns about translation as a betrayal of trust, as well as the articulation of these concerns in terms of sexual betrayal. In some cultural expressions, gendered metaphors of translators as treacherous women are further amplified in figurations of translators and interpreters as prostitutes.[31]

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[30] See McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

[31] In general, I support the use of the term "sex worker" rather than "prostitute," as a way to resist stigmatization, acknowledge professionalism, and emphasize labor within an industry. Nonetheless, much of my analysis deals precisely with traditional, stigmatized conceptions of prostitution, and so I refer to "the prostitute" as a metaphorical, imagined, and constructed figure.

Translation and Prostitution: "A Metaphorics of Mutability"

In Europe, the comparison of translation to prostitution as an expression of disapproval dates back at least to the sixteenth century. In debates about translating texts from the refined Latin language into vernacular German, detractors referred to prostitution in their criticism of such translations as the debasement, perversion, and profanation of the original texts.[32] The English translator John Florio defends himself against similar accusations in the preface to his 1603 translations of Montaigne, in this case accusations that he is "prostituting" Montaigne's work by making it "common"—i.e. easily and widely accessible to less educated people who cannot read French.[33] Conversely, in John Marston's 1605 comedic play *The Dutch Courtesan,* a customer at a brothel derides a prostitute by comparing her to a translation, declaring, "Thou art as false, as prostituted, and adulterate, as some translated manuscript."[34] And in 1684, Wentworth Dillon, the Earl of Roscommon, recorded his contempt for indiscriminate translators motivated by economic necessity: "I pity from my Soul unhappy Men/Compelled by Want to prostitute their Pen, /Who must, like Lawyers, either starve or plead, /and follow, right or wrong, where Guineas lead."[35]

Of course, comparison to prostitution has long been employed as a general insult to various occupations (lawyers continue to be frequent targets). The comparison implies that a person has sold out their moral, artistic, or other values for commercial gain, putting herself at the service of another for pay. Indeed, Dillon's criticism aligns with countless other uses of the metaphor to criticize artists who are swayed by financial gain rather than "staying true" to their artistic visions—here, too, prostitution functions as a charge of infidelity. Despite the widespread usage of comparison to prostitution as a form of disparagement, I believe that attending to figurations of translation as prostitution allows for the productive study of a particular convergence of discourses, particularly in more recent incarnations of this figure. These include discourses about translation and fidelity, but also about national identity, linguistic and ethnic cohesion, and the status of women in the modern workforce.

Historically, figurations of translators and interpreters as prostitutes have often embodied suspicions of unfaithful translation. More recently, such figurations have been employed to question and indeed move beyond limiting discourses of fidelity altogether. In many cultural contexts, linguistic translation has also been viewed as a form of transgression, particularly in relation to sacred texts.[36] At the same time, the translator or interpreter's linguistic flexibility is

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[32] Erich Straßner, *Deutsche Sprachkultur: Von der Barbarensprache zur Weltsprache* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995), 57.

[33] John Florio, "To the Curteous Reader," in *The Essayes*, by Michael de Montaigne, trans. John Florio (Scolar Press, 1969), sig. A5r. When his imagined interlocutor asks, "Why but who is not jealous, his Mistresse should be so prostitute?," Florio answers by maintaining the text's metaphorical femininity but insisting on its purity: "Yea but this Mistresse is like ayre, fire, water, the more breathed the clearer; the more extended the warmer; the more drawne the sweeter."

[34] John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. David Crane (New York: Norton, 1997), IV,iii,6-8. For analysis of Marston's extensive engagement with Florio's translations of Montaigne, including the comparisons of translation to prostitution cited here, see William M. Hamlin, "Common Customers in Marston's Dutch Courtesan and Florio's Montaigne," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 407–24.

[35] Wentworth Dillon, "An Essay on Translated Verse," in *English Translation Theory, 1650-1800*, ed. T.R. Steiner (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 82.

[36] John Florio, "To the Curteous Reader," in *The Essayes*, by Michael de Montaigne, trans. John Florio (Scolar Press, 1969).

also conflated with the prostitute's sexual promiscuity; both engage in "intercourse" with multiple partners, including many who are "foreign" or otherwise unknown. Furthermore, interpreters cross national, cultural and linguistic borders on a regular basis; sexual transgression could be regarded simply as the logical extension of the transgressive potential inherent to the interpreter's role. Whether such transgression is desired or feared, tropes of prostitution—the quintessentially transgressive profession—provide a way of engaging with its possibility. Additionally, through reference to the intensely physical and often intimate nature of the prostitute's work, aspects of physicality, intimacy, and the body's function as a site of economic exchange can be explored in the interpreter's work as well.

A prominent example of this figuration can be found in the popular Mexican imagination of La Malinche. La Malinche (also called Malintzin, Doña Marina, or *La Lengua*—the tongue) was a native woman who served Hernán Cortés as an interpreter, advisor, and mistress, thereby playing a key role in the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire. She is often portrayed as a traitor to her people and derided as a treacherous whore who sold them out to the Spanish. As a legendary figure, her linguistic betrayal, which aided the conquest of an empire, is inextricably linked to the sexual betrayal of her intimate relationship with Cortés; she is also known as *La Chingada* (the fucked one)—the humiliation of Cortés's conquest expressed in sexual terms. At the same time, however, her sexual union with Cortés and the mixed-race son it produced are central to the creation myth of the Mexican nation. An extremely complex figure, she is both repudiated and celebrated as the mother of the mestizo people.[37] Since the 1970s, a great deal of scholarship in the fields of women's studies, Latina/o studies, and Chicana/o studies has interrogated her mythical status as mother-whore and has sought to emphasize the historical realities of her social position.[38] In actuality, she was sold into slavery at a young age and lived in several indigenous societies, which contributed to her multilingual abilities. Given to Cortés as a slave, she drew on her abilities as a linguist, mediator, and strategist in order to survive despite numerous constraints.

In addition to La Malinche, a number of other Native American women who acted as interpreters and guides for men involved in colonialist enterprises have also been historically figured as "translators, traitors, mistresses, and whores."[39] These women include Pocahontas and

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[37] See Octavio Paz, "The Sons of Malinche," *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, 1985, 197–208.

[38] See, for example, Sandra Messinger Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (University of Texas Press, 1991); Martha J. Cutter, "Malinche's Legacy: Translation, Betrayal, and Interlingualism in Chicano/a Literature," *Arizona Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 1–33; Rolando Romero and Amanda Nolacea Harris, *Feminism, Nation and Myth: La Malinche* (Arte Publico Press, 2005); Adelaida R. Del Castillo, "Malintzin Tenépal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective," in *Essays on La Mujer*, ed. Rosaura Sanchez and Rosa Martinez Cruz (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Center, 1977), 124–49; Norma Alarcón, "Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-Vision Through Malintzin/ or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table; Women of Color Press, 1983), 182–90; Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enriquez, *La Chicana. The Mexican-American Woman* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Norma Alarcón, "Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism," *Cultural Critique* 13 (1989): 57–87.

[39] Ric Knowles, "Translators, Traitors, Mistresses, and Whores: Monique Mojica and the Mothers of the Metis Nation," in *Siting the Other: Re-Visions of Marginality in Australian and English-Canadian Drama*, ed. Marc Maufort and Franca Bellarsi (Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2001), 247–66. See also

Sacajawea, who have often been figured in white American histories as sanctioning and legitimating the white appropriation of American lands, and who, like La Malinche, also had children with their white partners.[40] Their figuration in multiple cultural histories, including Native American, mestizo, but also white American and European histories, builds on "associations involving translation and faithfulness (or lack of it), associations that link cultural mediation with variations on linguistic, representational, racial, and sexual impurity—including, of course, *métissage* and hybridity—and conflating, more or less explicitly, translation, miscegenation, and cultural betrayal."[41]

As the legends and legacies of women like La Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacajawea continue to be debated and revised, literary scholar Janice Jaffe also highlights the metaphoric intersection of translation and prostitution in the 20th century work of Puerto Rican author Rosario Ferré, particularly in relation to Puerto Rico's colonial history.[42] Jaffe argues that in Ferré's writings, both translators and prostitutes are characterized by a "metaphorics of mutability."[43] She further situates these transgressive figures in relation to histories of colonialism and imperialism, with a particular focus on new possibilities for conceiving of Puerto Rican identity. However, her observations regarding translation and prostitution as similarly disruptive to established social orders and cultural forms of domination are applicable in other contexts as well. Because they have access to multiple realms of culture, language, and social experience, both prostitutes and translators are often regarded as having a certain power that must be contained, whether through social exclusion, silencing, or disavowal.

Traditionally, both prostitutes and translators have been socially marginalized (one sexually, the other linguistically), and both roles require self-effacement and a denial of personal identity. In conjunction with the translator's invisibility, Jaffe cites Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that the prostitute works "in her pure generality—as woman."[44] Both translators and prostitutes are mobile and flexible, but they also lack an authorized position from which to speak as individual subjects. They are seen as transgressors who violate boundaries and threaten existing social orders. Ferré, however, figures prostitutes and translators as agents of cultural transmission, specifically of a new vision of Puerto Rican identity. In *Sweet Diamond Dust,* the English version of her novel *Maldito Amor*, a prostitute dissolves cultural and linguistic boundaries through sexual exchange: "In her body, or if you prefer in her cunt, both races, both languages, English and Spanish, grew into one soul, one wordweed of love."[45] Jaffe argues that both prostitutes and interpreters play key roles in the dissemination of knowledge; whether sexual or linguistic, this transmission carries potential for social transformation.

Frances Karttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

[40] Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 282.

[41] Knowles, "Translators, Traitors, Mistresses, and Whores: Monique Mojica and the Mothers of the Metis Nation," 259.

[42] Janice A. Jaffe, "Translation and Prostitution: Rosario Ferré's 'Maldito Amor' and 'Sweet Diamond Dust,'" *Latin American Literary Review* 23, no. 46 (July 1, 1995): 66–82.

[43] Ibid., 67.

[44] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1983), 565.

[45] Rosario Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 76.

As Jaffe notes, Ferré further celebrates the creative potential of this metaphoric intersection in her essay on translating her own work from Spanish into English.[46] For Ferré, this process is a euphoric form of licentious rewriting that includes adding and omitting material. Occupying both author and translator positions, simultaneously unfaithful in her "adulteration" of the original text and faithful to herself as author/translator, Ferré disrupts the dichotomy of male writing (production) and female translation (reproduction) and instead "participates in the work's perpetual process of becoming."[47] Ferré also imagines herself as floating on canal with San Juan on one side and Washington on the other; while she wishes at first to cross definitively from one side to the other, she finds she is at home floating along "in the water of words." "Being a writer, ... one has to learn to live by letting go, by renouncing the reaching of this or that shore, but to let oneself become the meeting place of both."[48] In this image, the embodied subject functions as a site of transcultural encounter. Similarly, interpreters can be also viewed as embodying transcultural and interlingual encounters, and images of physical intimacy, connection, and exchange provide a way of manifesting these seemingly intangible processes. At the same time, such explicitly corporeal figurations of linguistic encounter serve as reminders of the fundamentally material aspects of language.

In her preference for the fluidity of the water over the clear delineation of a location on either shore, Ferré's writing resonates with that of Yoko Tawada, who repeatedly employs water imagery as part of her own "metaphorics of mutability." In her short text entitled "Ich wollte keine Brücke schlagen," Tawada resists being labeled as a "bridge-builder between cultures." As a Japanese woman who has been living and writing in Germany since 1982, she is often framed as a mediator "between two worlds." However, as Leslie Adelson has argued, such a model is in fact extremely limiting: cultures are positioned as clearly delineated and entirely separate realms, bridged by an in-between space in which immigrants, multilingual subjects, and other people with multiple identities and affiliations are forever stranded.[49] In her short text, "Ich wollte keine Brücke schlagen," Tawada literalizes a German idiom to expose the violence of forcing a single, linear, and binding perspective onto the fluid multiplicity of cultural and linguistic processes: "Das Ufer, auf dem ich stehe, wird plötzlich zu einer Hand, die eine gegen das andere Ufer gerichtete Keule hält. Es wird dadurch zu einer Bindung gezwungen."[50] Language, on the other hand, resembles the open space under the bridge, where the river flows, changes, and peacefully touches many different elements at once. In contrast to the violent construction of a permanent bridge, Tawada proposes another option: "Wollen wir einen schwimmenden Weg bauen?"[51]

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[46] Rosario Ferré, "On Destiny, Language, and Translation, Or, Ophelia Adrift in the C.&O. Canal," in *Voice-Overs: Translation and Latin American Literature*, ed. Daniel Balderston and Marcy E. Schwarz (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 32–41.
[47] Jaffe, "Translation and Prostitution," 73.
[48] Ferré, "On Destiny, Language, and Translation, Or, Ophelia Adrift in the C.&O. Canal," 33.
[49] Leslie A. Adelson, "Against Between: A Manifesto," in *Unpacking Europe*, ed. Sarah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi (Rotterdam: NAi, 2001), 244–55.
[50] Yoko Tawada, *Aber die Mandarinen müssen heute Abend noch geraubt werden*, trans. Peter Pörtner (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 1997), 65–66.
[51] Ibid.

Global Women

I will return to Tawada's poetics of fluidity in Chapter Four, but before moving through the historically specific moments of my literary and filmic case studies, I will first outline several changes that took place over the course of the 20th century and that inform more recent figurations of interpreters as working women, and, in particular, as prostitutes. Although the equation of translation with prostitution has a long tradition, this equation—particularly when involving interpreters—has also been influenced by developments such as 1) the increase of women in the global workforce over the course of the 20th century, 2) the changing status of affective labor in the shift from modern industrial economies to postmodern information economies, 3) the rapid increase in the movement of and communication between people around the world through processes of globalization, and 4) the reemergence of multilingual paradigms that threaten the monolingualism of 19th-century nationalism.

Further 20th-century examples of interpreter-prostitute figures include the protagonist of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979), discussed in Chapter Three, the protagonist of Yoko Tawada's *Das Bad* (1989), discussed in Chapter Four, and an interpreter/call-girl character in Hans-Christian Schmid's *Lichter* (2003), discussed in Chapter Five. In Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mepris* (*Contempt,* 1963), the interpreter character also has an unspecified sexual relationship with her employer, an American film producer. In all of these cases, the interpreter is imagined as an attractive young woman working for older men of high socioeconomic status. In some ways, these are variations on familiar fantasies and anxieties about promiscuous secretaries, and before that, domestic servants. But again, these tropes intersect with and are intensified by the particular complex of intimacy and foreignness associated with linguistic translation. Furthermore, they are tied not only to the increasing visibility of women in the 20th century workplace, but more recently to the growing importance of affective labor as well.

Like the interpreter, the female domestic servant, traditionally known in German as *das Dienstmädchen*, is also a mediating third figure ("Figur des Dritten") whose work is marked by a tension between presence and invisibility.[52] In the 18th and 19th centuries, as the ideal of the bourgeois family as a haven from the world and an insular unit spread throughout Europe, domestic servants oscillated between inclusion and exclusion, familiarity and foreignness. The ambiguity of this position—intimate yet often invisible—was further complicated by issues of power, social status, and sexuality. Stories of seduction as well as sexual violence were common, and novelistic depictions of *Dienstmädchen* frequently centered on the exchange of sex for social status. Furthermore, in her study of this figure, Eva Eßlinger links the *Dienstmädchen* of the 19th century to today's global care chain of female immigrant care workers.[53] These "global women," who work as nurses, maids, and childcare providers, participate in a globalization of home care as what Sabine Hess has called "Bodenpersonal der Globalisierung"[54] This "ground crew of globalization," comprised primarily of immigrant women, enables female professionals in wealthy nations to work in high-paying, globalized sectors such as finance, technology, and

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[52] Eva Eßlinger, "Das Dienstmädchen: Zum Unbewussten der Psychoanalyse," in *Die Figur des Dritten: Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Paradigma*, ed. Eva Eßlinger et al. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 241–53.

[53] Eva Eßlinger, *Das Dienstmädchen, die Familie und der Sex: Zur Geschichte einer irregulären Beziehung in der europäischen Literatur* (Munich: Fink, 2013).

[54] Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*; Sabine Hess, "Bodenpersonal der Globalisierung," *Die Zeit*, December 12, 2002, http://www.zeit.de/2002/51/Essay_Hess.

marketing by doing the informal, domestic labor that women have traditionally done at home. In other words, the "ground crew" does the mundane, locally situated work that supports the mobile, flexible labor of the higher-status "flight crew" of global professionals. The burden of the working woman's "second shift" of domestic care work is thus displaced onto poorer, frequently undocumented immigrant women, who themselves must rely on others to care for their own families in their home countries.[55]

Another lens of gendered labor through which interpreting can be approached is the feminization of secretarial work that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In North America and Europe, a number of coinciding factors led to a rapid expansion of clerical jobs, with the vast majority being filled by women in the early decades of the 20th century.[56] For Friedrich Kittler, this phenomenon was directly linked to the invention and mass production of the typewriter. According to Kittler, typescript desexualized writing, which had previously been the provenance of male authorship, and as mere word processing, enabled women to enter the realm of office work, albeit in a marginalized position.[57] On the other hand, however, the secretarial role became increasingly associated with traditionally female-gendered characteristics such as relationship management, emotional caretaking, performing organizational chores and repetitive tasks, subservience, and serving as a sexual object. During the first decades of the 20th century in particular, young and unmarried women working among men as secretaries and typists in urban settings were often associated with the emancipated, exciting, and promiscuous lifestyle of the New Woman—and, from a conservative position, with prostitution.[58] The feminization of interpreting, which took place several decades later, has followed a similar pattern of becoming simultaneously devalued and sexualized.

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[55] Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Penguin, 1989); Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work?: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour* (London: Zed, 2000); Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001). See also Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: New Press, 1999).

[56] For more on this complex historical development, see Kim England and Kate Boyer, "Women's Work: The Feminization and Shifting Meanings of Clerical Work," *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 2 (December 1, 2009): 307–40; Margery Davies, *Woman's Place Is At The Typewriter* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982); Meta Zimmeck, "'The Mysteries of the Typewriter': Technology and Gender in the British Civil Service, 1870-1914," in *Women Workers and Technological Change in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Gertjan de Groot and Marlou Schrover (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 67–96; Catherine Truss, Robert Goffee, and Gareth Jones, "Segregated Occupations and Gender Stereotyping: A Study of Secretarial Work in Europe.," *Human Relations* 48, no. 11 (November 1995): 1331–54; Sharon H. Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

[57] Friedrich A Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 186–187.

[58] Jill Suzanne Smith, "Working Girls: White-Collar Workers and Prostitutes in Late Weimar Fiction," *The German Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2008): 449–70. Such suspicions of female worker impropriety still exist in some countries, such as Pakistan, where working women take efforts to minimize the stigma against working with men by displaying "virtuous" behavior such as dressing conservatively, covering their heads, and limiting contact with male colleagues. Yasmin Zaidi, "Chaddars and Pink Collars in Pakistan: Gender, Work and the Global Economy" (Dissertation, Brandeis University, 2012).

Prostitution, if not actually the oldest profession, is likely one of the earliest forms of paid affective labor. It is also a particularly body-based and intimate form of work. The figuration of interpreters as prostitutes thus further calls attention to both the interpreter's embodied labor and the affective states generated by this labor. Affective labor, an immaterial labor of human contact and interaction focused on the creation and manipulation of affect, has traditionally taken place within the domestic sphere and has largely been viewed as women's work.[59] However, it has gained new importance in the postmodern capitalist economy, which is based largely on providing services and manipulating information.[60] Whereas information processing has become increasingly computerized, affective labor remains distinctly – and physically – human. Michael Hardt stresses the corporeal aspect of affective labor, which has also been understood by feminist analyses as "labor in the bodily mode."[61] A sense of human proximity and contact, whether actual or virtual, remains integral to affective production.[62] Affective labor plays an important role in all service industries, from health and finance to hospitality and entertainment, and in these industries "the instrumental action of economic production" merges with "the communicative action of human relations."[63]

The concept of affective labor is also one way to name the intangible work done by the interpreter in conjunction with interlinguistic translation. The translator of a written business contract performs what Robert Reich calls a "symbolic-analytical" service.[64] Interpreting for a business negotiation also requires such analytical skills, but in addition, the interpreter must attend to numerous affective issues of communication that are not easily quantified, delineated or even named. Interpreting thus combines the "symbolic-analytical" service of linguistic translation with the affective labor of coordinating and mediating social interaction across cultures. From this perspective, the interpreter's bodily presence is not merely excessive, distracting, or in need of disavowal; rather, it plays a central role in facilitating communication and exchange among people from different cultural and linguistic groups.

In emphasizing the centrality of affective labor in the postmodern capitalist economy, Hardt also points out its subversive potential. The production and manipulation of affect does not merely produce capital or generate value, it also creates networks of culture and communication and shapes communities and collective subjectivities.[65] Recalling Anna Tsing's concept of friction and Jaffe's "metaphorics of mutability," I would add that the interpreter embodies the potential for resistance to the flows of global capital production precisely because of her position amidst multiple complex relationships, both economic and simultaneously human.

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[59] Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor," *Boundary 2* 26, no. 2 (July 1, 1999): 96.
[60] Hardt, 90.
[61] Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World As Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 78-88, quoted in Hardt, 96.
[62] Of particular interest is Hardt's assertion that corporeal presence matters for affective labor even when it occurs remotely. The human contact crucial to affective production, exchange, and communication can be either actual or virtual; the virtual presence of others via telephone, radio, television, or other media still counts as real when it comes to affective labor. This claim is particularly relevant to the changing significance of bodily presence in relation to advances in digital communication technologies. For example, the interpreter who translates via a web-conferencing technology like Skype still performs a kind of bodily labor, even if her bodily presence is itself digitally mediated.
[63] Hardt, 96.
[64] Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 177, quoted in Hardt, 95.
[65] Hardt, 96.

The Monolingual Paradigm and the National Body

As Yasemin Yildiz points out in *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*, multilingualism has been the default condition for most of human history, and the dominant monolingual paradigm that equates one's native language with one's belonging to a clearly delineated ethnic and national group is a relatively recent development. This paradigm developed in late-eighteenth century Europe and was highly significant for the emergence of the modern nation-state, imagined and produced as a homogenous entity.

> [Monolingualism] constitutes a key structuring principle that organizes the entire range of modern social life, from the construction of individuals and their proper subjectivities to the formation of disciplines and institutions, as well as of imagined collectives such as cultures and nations. According to this paradigm, individuals and social formations are imagined to possess one "true" language only, their "mother tongue," and through this possession to be organically linked to an exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture, and nation.[66]

Johann Gottfried Herder particularly emphasized the link between the distinctness of each language and the particular character of the nation (*Volk*) to which it belonged. In his highly influential view, different languages should be recognized and appreciated for their unique characteristics, but they—and their respective nations—should also remain separate and distinct. As Yildiz notes, "What [Herder's] position cannot abide is the notion of blurred boundaries, crossed loyalties, and unrooted languages."[67]

Over the course of the 20th century, however, the multilingual blurring of boundaries became increasingly visible. Under the monolingual paradigm, multilingualism continued to exist in practice, but did not receive widespread acknowledgement or institutional support. However, as Yildiz argues, "globalization and the ensuing renegotiation of the place of the nation-state have begun to loosen the monolingualizing pressure and have thereby enabled the contestatory visibility of these practices in the first place, albeit still in circumscribed fashion."[68]

While some see such multilingual practices as affirming a multiplicity of identities and positionalities, others regard them as threatening the integrity of ethnic and national unity. From this perspective, interpreters betray their native national communities by crossing linguistic boundaries and failing to demonstrate national and linguistic loyalty. This is particularly true of interpreters who work for an occupying foreign power, such as German interpreters during the Allied postwar occupation. More recently, many Afghan and Iraqi interpreters who worked for the U.S. military and its allies have been branded as traitors, threatened, and killed by various local forces. These dangers have been further exacerbated by the U.S. government's failure to grant the vast majority of these interpreters asylum, despite previous promises to do so. In these cases, the physical injuries and deaths of interpreters are indeed grim reminders of their embodied state, and the inaction of the U.S. is a particularly unconscionable act of disavowal.

Importantly, Afghan and Iraqi interpreters also constitute a notable exception to contemporary conceptions of interpreting as feminized work. Although the tens of thousands of Afghan and Iraqi interpreters who have worked for the U.S. military since 2002 have included many women, most are male. This is due to a wide range of factors, including general notions of the military as a masculine realm, the physical danger of the work, and historically specific

[66] Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 8.
[67] Ibid., 8.
[68] Ibid., 3.

mobilizations of traditional patriarchal practices and gender roles in Iraq and Afghanistan.[69] However, in addition to the threats, dangers, and suspicions of subterfuge faced by their male colleagues, female Afghan and Iraqi interpreters also face suspicions of sexual promiscuity that correspond to the patterns I have described here. As Madeline Otis Campbell's study of Iraqi interpreters explains, rumors about female interpreters in Baghdad engaging in prostitution were widespread due to their "visible presence in the Green Zone and their professional intimacy with US Forces."[70] Campbell also ties suspicions of female interpreters back to gendered government rhetoric circulated near the end of the Iraq-Iran war, in which "Iraqi women represented the stricken motherland, and men represented their defenders."[71] Iraqi women thus became the bearers of the country's honor, but also, by the same token, "potential prostitutes."[72]

Indeed, nationalist models of linguistic and ethno-national boundaries have frequently been projected onto women's bodies, and threats to the integrity of a national body are often expressed in terms of sexual violation or betrayal. In wartime, defending the nation is often equated with protecting the bodies of the nation's women, and in defeat, the rape of local women by occupying soldiers is often regarded as a humiliating symbol of subjugation—the loss of sovereignty over one's nation and the female bodies belonging to it. On the other hand, women who choose to have sexual and romantic relationships with foreign occupiers are frequently figured as traitors to the nation. Within this nexus of sexualized associations, female interpreters can be seen as embodying overlapping threats to nationalist models of linguistic and corporeal purity.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Tawada's *Das Bad* takes up these discourses of nationality, language, and sexuality, but, as I will show in Chapter Four, also calls them into question. In *Das Bad*, the comparison of the female interpreter with a prostitute selling herself to occupying soldiers is made at a meeting of Japanese and West German businesspeople, and it thus resonates particularly with both Japanese and West German historical memories of the early years of Allied occupation following defeat in the Second World War. In Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, which takes place during the early postwar period, the protagonist actually has a relationship with an American soldier in which sex, language, and national identity converge. In Schmid's *Lichter*, associations of translation with prostitution are made fully explicit and concrete through an interpreter character who is actually also a sex worker in the Polish-German border zone. In Ingeborg Bachmann's short story "Simultan," the protagonist Nadja is a professional simultaneous interpreter, and discourses of prostitution do not play a role, but her romantic and expressly sexual affair with a recently separated—but not divorced—man she has just met does evoke traditional suspicions of working women and translators as potentially sexually transgressive. More centrally, her own experience of interpreting is both explicitly gendered and embodied, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

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[69] Madeline Otis Campbell, *Interpreters of Occupation: Gender and the Politics of Belonging in an Iraqi Refugee Network* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016), 94.

[70] Campbell emphasizes that Iraqi concepts of familial honor surrounding women's behavior are "a historical product of ideology that was reinvigorated in recent decades," although it "sometimes takes its power from perceptions of timelessness." Ibid., 88.

[71] Ibid., 94.

[72] Ibid., 95.

Chapter Two
Postwar Echoes: The Nuremberg Trials and Ingeborg Bachmann's "Simultan"

After the Second World War, simultaneous interpreting emerged as a crucial part of a widespread movement towards international collaboration, global governance, and increasingly globalized trade. Many initiatives were undertaken in direct response to the terrible destruction of the war, including the Nuremberg Trials, the founding of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Conference, the creation of the International Monetary Fund, and the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community.[1] As European countries rebuilt and reoriented themselves in the postwar and Cold War periods, interpreters became part of the fabric of international diplomacy, business, scientific exchange, and many other areas.

Although professional interpreters had existed before the war, it was not until the advent of simultaneous interpreting at the highly publicized Nuremberg Trials in 1945 that the profession gained widespread recognition. When simultaneous interpreting was adopted next by the United Nations in 1946 and then by numerous international organizations around the world, simultaneous interpreters became associated with an ideal of international progress through technological advancement and institutional cooperation. Indeed, the archetypal interpreter in today's public imagination still works at the UN, as portrayed by Nicole Kidman in Sydney Pollack's 2005 thriller *The Interpreter*. Notably, this archetypal interpreter is also female, which reflects actual demographic changes in the profession since 1945, as well as the cultural gendering and sexualization of translation discussed in Chapter One.

Within the realms of international relations and global governance that developed following the Second World War, interpreters offer a tangible point of reference through which to examine the flows and frictions of international exchange. In this chapter, I begin with the significance of the Nuremberg Trials for the interpreting profession and the crucial role played by interpreters in helping those who testified to Nazi crimes to be heard, both within the courtroom and around the world. I then turn to Ingeborg Bachmann's short story "Simultan," which engages with simultaneous interpreting as it had developed by the mid-1960s.[2] Bachmann depicts a profession that is situated in a framework of Cold War internationalism, but that nonetheless bears traces of the past that persist into the present. The protagonist of "Simultan" is a formally trained simultaneous interpreter who circulates continuously between various locations and languages, and who thus avoids confronting the historical weight of her Austrian heritage and her native language, German. Although "Simultan" does not explicitly refer to the

[1] The European Coal and Steel Community was the original predecessor of the current European Union, a supranational and multilingual institution with 28 member states and 24 official languages to date. The ECSC was established by the 1951 Treaty of Paris between France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The 1957 Treaty of Rome established two additional communities among the same member states: the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community, which later developed into the European single market of the EU.

[2] The first version of the story "Simultan" was produced as a radio broadcast by NDR Hannover in October 1968. A second version was printed first in the *Neue Rundschau* magazine in 1970 and then in Bachmann's short story collection *Simultan* in 1972. Ingeborg Bachmann, *Simultan* (Münich: Piper, 2002).

Nuremberg Trials, they resonate throughout the story as both the birthplace of simultaneous interpreting and the iconic scene of testimony that first made the scope of Nazi war crimes known to an international public.

Simultaneous Interpreting at Nuremberg

Simultaneous interpreting as it is practiced today was first implemented in 1945 at the Nuremberg Trial of Major War Criminals, the first in a series of trials known collectively as the Nuremberg Trials.[3] The trial was held in four languages: those of the occupying Allied powers (English, Russian, French) and that of the defendants (German); auxiliary interpreters were also available for witness testimony in Yiddish, Polish, and many other European languages. By holding an international criminal tribunal rather than summarily executing high-ranking Nazis right after the war, the Allied powers sought to present and document evidence of Nazi war crimes, but also to position themselves as advocates of democracy, justice, and fairness in contrast to the discriminatory violence of Nazi fascism. Simultaneous interpreting directly served these aims; for a fair trial, defendants had to be able to follow the proceedings and testify in German, but the additional time required for consecutive interpreting would have prevented an expeditious trial.[4] Simultaneous interpreting thus facilitated a new model of international justice and symbolized a renewed commitment to international—and multilingual—cooperation.

Simultaneous interpreting also played a crucial role in the careful staging of the trial as an international media event, in which the evils of the Nazi leadership were recorded in front of the entire world. The American chief prosecutor, Justice Robert Jackson, believed that "unless record was made … future generations would not believe how horrible the truth was." Another American prosecutor, Robert Storey, later stated, "The purpose of the Nuremberg trial was not merely, or even principally, to convict the leaders of Nazi Germany. [...] Of far greater importance [...] was the making of a record of the Hitler regime which would withstand the test of history."[5] International media coverage of the trial was extensive, and indeed, the trial was staged for mediation. The courtroom included a 250-seat press gallery and a 150-seat visitor's

[3] The Nuremberg Trial of Major War Criminals lasted from Nov 20, 1945 to Oct 1, 1946 and tried 23 men (Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and Heinrich Himmler had already killed themselves) for crimes of war, crimes against humanity, conspiracy, and crimes against peace. The subsequent Nuremberg Trials were a series of twelve U.S. military tribunals that took place from 1946 to 1949, in which 185 further defendants were tried for war crimes. These proceedings also relied on simultaneous interpreting, but only between German and English. In Tokyo, 25 defendants were also tried for war crimes by an international military tribunal between 1946 and 1948. These proceedings were conducted in English and Japanese, and relied primarily on consecutive interpreting. The same IBM equipment used in Nuremberg was installed, but it was mainly used when a speaker read from a document and a translation was available. Russian simultaneous interpreting of most of the proceedings, however, was also made available. Kayoko Takeda, "Interpreting at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal," *Interpreting: International Journal of Research & Practice in Interpreting* 10, no. 1 (January 2008): 65–83. See also: Kayoko Takeda, *Interpreting the Tokyo War Crimes Trial: A Sociopolitical Analysis* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010).

[4] Francesca Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation: The Nuremberg Trial* (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1998), 32.

[5] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem : A Report of the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 253.

gallery, and high-powered lights were installed before the trial to facilitate filming.[6] Simultaneous interpreting enabled the live testimony of witnesses in different languages, and it allowed many more journalists from around the world to report directly on the proceedings. At the same time, due to this international media attention, simultaneous interpreting itself made its debut in front of a worldwide audience.

Before the trial, Justice Jackson had worried that the difficulties of conducting a trial in four languages would undermine the international public's impression of the trial: "Unless this problem is solved, the trial will be such a confusion of tongues that it will be ridiculous, and I fear ridicule much more than hate."[7] In the end, however, the simultaneous interpreting system worked remarkably well, and the trial as a whole was largely considered a success. A week and a half into the trial, one journalist reported, "A four-power trial which could have been a farce in four languages had turned out to be (in the first eleven days) a triumph of orderly jurisprudence."[8] Although there were some minor bumps, overall the simultaneous interpreting system was considered "a miracle like Pentecost,"[9] and at the end of the trial, Justice Jackson also voiced his praise, stating: "The success and smooth working of this trial is due in no small measure to the system of interpretation and the high quality of the interpreters who have been assembled to operate it."[10]

Although the technology used in Nuremberg had existed since the 1920s, it had never before been used for truly simultaneous interpreting. The IBM Hushaphone Filene-Finlay system, as it was called, was developed between 1925 and 1926, and was subsequently employed at a number of international meetings.[11] Before the Nuremberg Trials, however, interpreters used the equipment either to read pre-translated texts or to transmit consecutive interpretations simultaneously with other interpreters.[12] In the first case, interpreters would translate prepared speeches ahead of time and then read these translations as the original speech was being delivered. In the second case, interpretations into multiple languages were simultaneous with each other, but not with the original speech; during a speech, interpreters would take notes, and afterward, interpreters would interpret into various languages at the same time. This system enabled interpreting into multiple languages without requiring additional time for each language, but it still doubled the time of the original proceedings.

At the Nuremberg Trials, however, simultaneous interpreters translated spontaneously, listening and speaking at the same time with only a few seconds of delay between auditory intake

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[6] David Bowen and Margareta Bowen, "The Nuremberg Trials: Communication through Translation," *Meta: Journal Des Traducteurs* 30, no. 1 (1985): 74; Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Nuremberg Trial* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing Inc., 2010), 147.

[7] International Military Tribunal, Seventeenth Organizational Meeting (ts. Oct 29, 1945): 16. Quoted in Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, 34.

[8] "The Chalice of Nürnberg," *Time*, December 10, 1945.

[9] Tusa and Tusa, *The Nuremberg Trial*, 219.

[10] C. L. Sulzberger, "Jackson Stresses Allies' Unity," *New York Times*, March 10, 1946.

[11] These include numerous meetings of the International Labor Organization beginning in 1927, several meetings at the League of Nations in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928, and the Fifteenth International Congress of Physiology of 1935 in Leningrad. Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, 30–31; Jesús Baigorri-Jalón, *From Paris to Nuremberg: The Birth of Conference Interpreting*, trans. Holly Mikkelson and Barry Slaughter Olsen, (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2014), 133–164; Lynn Visson, *From Russian into English: An Introduction to Simultaneous Interpretation.* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1991), 51.

[12] Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, 31.

and verbal output. This process is extremely strenuous, requiring mental agility, intense concentration, and physical and psychological stamina under pressure, in addition to linguistic abilities and subject-matter knowledge. Even for experienced simultaneous interpreters, the strain is so great that they usually work in teams, switching off after approximately 20 minutes. For simultaneous interpreters at the Nuremberg Trials, their task was particularly difficult both because they received no formal training and because of the horrific nature of the subject matter. Interpreters sometimes had to be replaced due to their reactions to testimony of massacres and other atrocities; some would freeze, while others would break down crying.[13] Nonetheless, the risk taken by the trial organizers to implement an experimental method of interpreting had a successful outcome overall. At the same time, the introduction of simultaneous interpreting at the Nuremberg Trials also influenced public perceptions of interpreters in a number of ways.

During the interwar period, the consecutive interpreters at the League of Nations enjoyed a kind of star status as elite performers, in direct contrast to more recent conventions of interpreter invisibility. They were a small group of mostly European men, coming primarily from well educated, upper-middle and upper class professional backgrounds.[14] As experienced players on the international stage who also followed formal diplomatic conventions for dress, manners, and speech, their status was similar to that of the diplomats and dignitaries for whom they interpreted. Because they occupied the podium on stage when delivering their consecutive interpretations of speeches, these interpreters were also highly visible.[15] In this way, they did not simply translate speeches; they performed them in front of an audience. Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer, a member of the League of Nations Secretariat, described the interpreters at the League of Nations as follows:

> The modern interpreter is a phenomenon sui generis. [...] He must be an orator and perhaps even something of an actor. The whole effect of an important declaration may be lost if the mannerisms and intonation of an interpreter are uncongenial to the spirit of a debate. He must furthermore be familiar with the questions under debate, or at least he must have a sort of sixth sense enabling him to detect the essential in a conventional phrase, its political implications and importance. [...] An unusual memory, an exceptional faculty of concentration, and every-ready presence of mind are, in addition, requisites for the successful interpreter.[16]

Although these qualities are in fact also required of both consecutive and simultaneous interpreters today, interpreters themselves are much less likely to occupy center stage, directly garnering wonderment and awe with their linguistic showmanship. Indicating both their prestige and their potential influence, Ranshofen-Wertheimer also said of the elite Council and Assembly interpreters at the League of Nations: "Only one who was born to it reached this eminence, which gave him a kind of star position in the international world."[17] At the same time, this kind of visibility can also be contrasted with the later visibility of the Nuremberg interpreters due to worldwide, multimedia press coverage of the trial. The League of Nations interpreters were stars

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[13] Ibid., 80–81.

[14] Jesús Baigorri-Jalón, *From Paris to Nuremberg*, 121, 130.

[15] Indeed, because an interpreter might interpret the speeches of several speakers in a given session, he was often the person who spent the most time on the stage. (Baigorri-Jalón, 122)

[16] Egon Ferdinand Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *The International Secretariat: A Great Experiment in International Administration* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), 139–140.

[17] Ibid., 140.

among a relatively small, though influential, realm of international elites; journalists sometimes reported on their linguistic talents and oratorical skill, but in general, they were better known as cosmopolitan individuals than as a modern international phenomenon. Ultimately, interpreting at the League of Nations declined in the 1930s in conjunction with the numerous crises faced by the organization during that time. From the mid-1930 to the end of the Second World War, diplomatic and military interpreting in Europe usually took place in smaller venues, and during the war much interpreting was performed informally and ad hoc by multilingual individuals without training, both among civilians and in the military.[18]

When hiring interpreters for the Nuremberg Trials, it was found that the older generation of consecutive interpreters from the League of Nations did not usually adapt well to the demands of simultaneous interpreting. Instead, Léon Dostert, the Head of the Translation Division, recruited a group of younger, more flexible multilingual men and women with various backgrounds.[19] Many came from military and diplomatic government agencies, others had professional backgrounds in fields such as law, teaching, academic research, and news media, while others had just graduated from university study, or in some cases, high school.[20]

Furthermore, many of the Nuremberg interpreters had attained their multilingual abilities as a result of the multiple waves of European migration that occurred during the tumultuous first half of 20th century. Some had been affected by the population displacements of the Russian Revolution and the First World War, while others had fled Nazi persecution as refugees and exiles in the 1930s and 40s. Several of the most prominent interpreters at the trial were European Jews who had emigrated to the U.S. and the U.K. Peter Uiberall, who worked in Nuremberg as an interpreter from the beginning of the trials and became Chief Interpreter during the Subsequent Proceedings, was born into a Jewish family in Vienna and emigrated to the U.S. after the German annexation of Austria in 1938.[21] Wolfe Frank, regarded by many as the best interpreter of the Trials, was a German Jew born in Munich who escaped to England and served as an officer in the British Army.[22] Former Nuremberg interpreter Edouard Roditi later reported on the forced cosmopolitanism of Europe's many displaced persons and their usefulness to the Nuremberg Translation Division with a certain degree of irony:

> [Interpreters who became ill] were replaced by a constant flow of neophyte linguists recruited mainly from Paris and Geneva, where bilingual refugees of various origins were still both numerous and jobless. Colonel Dostert's team of interpreters thus soon acquired the reputation of being composed mainly of refugee Russian princes or Jews.[23]

Indeed, a number of interpreters had themselves survived imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps or had lost family members in the Holocaust. For example, Evgenia Rosoff, a French citizen of Polish origins, had been a member of the French resistance movement and was subsequently imprisoned in the Ravensbruck concentration camp. She was regarded as an

[18] See, for example, Baigorri-Jalón's chapter on "The Interpreters of the Dictators" in *From Paris to Nuremberg*, 165-210.
[19] Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, 45.
[20] Ibid., 133–156.
[21] Ibid., 150.
[22] Ibid., 138.
[23] Edouard Roditi, *The History of Interpretation in a Nutshell* (Washington, D.C.: National Resource Center for Translation and Interpreting, Georgetown University, 1982), 14.

excellent interpreter and went on to work at the United Nations.[24] For interpreters who personally experienced Nazi atrocities, their translation of witness testimony at Nuremberg was undoubtedly an intensely charged emotional experience. Alfred Steer, who became Head of the Translation Division in 1946, remembers a Jewish interpreter who broke down crying in the courtroom and later explained: "I kept thinking that because of those men, twelve of the fourteen men in my family are dead."[25]

At the same time, however, focusing intensely on the linguistic requirements of the task at hand, including the speed and accuracy of their translations, appears to have allowed some interpreters to cope with an otherwise emotionally overwhelming situation. In these cases, the professional ideal of interpreter neutrality also served as a means of protection when emotional identification would have seemed inevitable. Howard Triest, a German Jew whose parents were murdered in Auschwitz, participated in the pre-trial psychological assessments of the defendants as a consecutive interpreter. Triest had fled to the U.S. in 1939, had become an American citizen, and had then returned to Europe to fight for the American army. He describes how his professional role superseded his personal feelings:

> You stand in front of the man who murdered your parents, and what can you do? I personally would have liked to do the same thing to them that they did to so many millions of innocent people. But we weren't here to do that, we were here to get information and interview the prisoners, and that we did.[26]

At the same time, he also reports feeling gratified to be part of the force that punished the people who had done so much harm to him and his family. Siegfried Ramler, an Austrian Jew who had escaped to the U.K. as a teenager, served as both a consecutive interpreter in the pre-trial investigations and as a simultaneous interpreter in the courtroom. Ramler reports concentrating on the linguistic demands of the job, such as unfamiliar vocabulary and differences between English and German syntax.

> My function as a tribunal interpreter required a professional attitude that did not allow emotion to affect performance in the courtroom. Despite the fact that I was a witness to and a target of Nazi persecution, experienced the murder of my grandfather, and saw my family forced to escape from Vienna, I focused on my function as a linguist, responding to the interpretation challenges facing me at the trials.[27]

Ramler and other interpreters expressed the view that they had contributed most to bringing Nazi criminals to justice precisely by translating as accurately and as fairly as possible, so that no doubt could be cast on the judgment of the trial, and so that justice rather than merely vengeance would be served.

Alfred Steer also emphasized the importance of interpreting accurately without letting one's personal views interfere. He recalls one interpreter who avoided translating offensive language, rendering a former concentration camp guard's statement, "You just had to piss on the Jews" ("Auf die Juden pissen"), as "you just had to ignore the Jews." Steer reprimanded her, explaining: "You are a servant of the court, and the judges are relying on your interpretation to

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[24] Baigorri-Jalón, *From Paris to Nuremberg*, 237; Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, 144.

[25] Hilary Gaskin, *Eyewitnesses at Nuremberg* (London: Arms and Armour, 1990), 41.

[26] Steve Palackdharry, *Journey to Justice*, DVD (Munich: Filmmuseum München, 2008).

[27] Siegfried Ramler, *Nuremberg and Beyond: The Memoirs of Siegfried Ramler*, ed. Paul Berry (Kailua, HI: Ahuna, 2008), 63. Ramler also states that "it was only later, with time for perspective, that the substance and meaning of the trials came into sharper focus" (53).

get their opinion of what the man is saying. It's *your* responsibility to give an accurate, complete translation, even if it *isn't* in harmony with your ideas."[28] This approach to questions of translation also corresponded with the larger aim of making the full extent of Nazi crimes known to the world.

Although it is common to refer to the "unspeakable crimes" of the Nazis in reference to their staggering horror and scope, the prosecutors and witnesses who testified at the Nuremberg Trial did speak them aloud, in painstaking detail, over the course of almost a year. This testimony, in which these crimes were spoken aloud in front of an international community that was then forced to acknowledge their occurrence, and the presentation of physical evidence that repeatedly confirmed this occurrence as historical fact, was indeed more important than convicting the individual defendants.[29] The interpreters at the trial played a crucial role in magnifying these voices through translation so that they could be heard as quickly as possible, both inside the courtroom and beyond it.

For listeners, the interpreters' voices affected their perceptions of the trial in a variety of ways, some of which had to do with biased reactions to the female interpreters. For example, some people complained that young women with "chirpy little voices" translating rough generals diminished the power of testimony.[30] Others complained about accents, from the "Brooklynese" of one interpreter to the heavy German inflections of several non-native English speakers. On the other hand, for John Dos Passos, who reported on the trial for *Life* magazine, the doubling of the prosecutor's language through the voice of an interpreter had a haunting effect. As Dos Passos describes it, the interpreter's voice is imprinted by her body's affective response to the words she hears and must speak aloud:

> When the prosecutor reaches the crimes against the Jews [the defendants] freeze into an agony of attention. The voice of the German translator follows the prosecutor's voice like a shrill echo of vengeance. Through the glass partition beside the prisoners' box you can see the taut face between gleaming earphones of the dark-haired woman who is making the translation. There is a look of horror on her face. Sometimes her throat seems to stiffen so that she can hardly speak the terrible words. [...][Justice Jackson's] voice is that of a reasonable man appalled by the crimes he has discovered, but echoing it is the choked, sterile German of the woman interpreter that hovers over the prisoners' box like a gadfly.[31]

The interpreter's voice, produced by her body, thus signifies and conveys her visceral reaction to the horrors of these crimes. Interestingly, her gender plays an important role in Dos Passos's description: in contrast to the voice of the "reasonable man," the voice of the "woman interpreter" is associated with a purely emotional, non-rational, bodily response. Here Dos Passos draws on a long tradition of figuring men as rational and women as emotional, while his description of the interpreter's voice as "a shrill echo of vengeance" evokes the Greek Furies and with them, the danger of unrestrained female emotion, hysteria, and violence. Of course, like the Furies, the interpreter serves the cause of justice, and for Dos Passos, being subjected to the overwhelming emotion of her voice is a fitting punishment for the Nazi defendants.

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[28] Gaskin, *Eyewitnesses at Nuremberg*, 40.

[29] The importance of being able to testify publicly plays a central role in Hans-Christian Schmid's 2010 film *Storm*, which deals with survivor testimony in the ICC trial of a Serbian war criminal. Hans-Christian Schmid, *Storm*, DVD (New York: Film Movement, 2010).

[30] Joseph E. Persico, *Nuremberg: Infamy on Trial* (New York: Viking-Penguin, 1994), 263.

[31] John Dos Passos, "Report from Nürnberg," *Life*, December 10, 1945, 49–50.

While Dos Passos emphasizes the interpreter's embodied emotionality, popular conceptions of interpreters in later years often associated simultaneous interpreters more with their electronic equipment. In this view, interpreters were seen to function as rational language machines, an idea Bachmann picks up on in "Simultan." Furthermore, while the interpreting booths in the Nuremberg courtroom were positioned next to the defendants' bench in clear view of the public, later arrangements have often placed simultaneous interpreters out of view at the back of the room, making it more likely that a listener will associate the voice coming over their headphones with those headphones themselves, as one part of an larger communication technology infrastructure. In the 1950s, as research on machine translation intensified, an instrumental view of language equivalency further informed perceptions of interpreters as translation machines.[32]

Upon its successful implementation in Nuremberg, simultaneous interpreting was introduced at the UN in 1946. After the Nuremberg Trials concluded, many of the interpreters there were recruited to work at the UN, where simultaneous interpreting gradually replaced consecutive interpreting as the main mode of interpreting multilingual sessions.[33] Within a few years, simultaneous interpreting spread further to various international organizations, eventually becoming the principal form of conference interpreting around the world.[34] Simultaneous interpreting thus grew in tandem with the new internationalism that followed the Second World War, a complex system of linguistic mediation that mirrored the increasing complexity of multidirectional cultural, economic, and political exchange around the world.[35]

However, even as simultaneous interpreting has seemed to promise a future free of language barriers and greater international understanding, to others, it also serves as a reminder of the fragility and tenuousness of human communication across difference. Indeed, the dark past behind the birth of simultaneous interpreting, as well as the founding of the United Nations, and the establishment of the institution that would eventually grow into the European Union, is continually implied by the very efforts that seek to prevent its reoccurrence. Interpreters as figures embody such tensions, in that the connection they enable reminds us of the divisions they temporarily bridge. They are responsible for communication but can also create discord and confusion, whether intended or not. And they are crucial nodes embedded within complex networks over which they are largely powerless, necessary for international communication but by no means sufficient.

Silences and Simultaneities

"Simultan" takes place in the mid-1960s, and the protagonist, Nadja, exemplifies a number of key historical developments in the interpreting profession. The postwar internationalism heralded by the Nuremberg Trials and institutionalized by the UN had by this time developed significantly within the context of the Cold War, and the need for simultaneous

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[32] Andre Lefevre and Susan Bassnett note that the requirements of machine programming, e.g. a systematic, positivist approach to equivalence and a focus on the word as the unit of translation, shaped the study of the linguistic aspects of translation. Andre Lefevre and Susan Bassnett, "Introduction: Proust's Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights. The 'Cultural Turn' in Translation Studies," in *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. Andre Lefevre and Susan Bassnett (London: Pinter, 1990), 4.
[33] Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, 162.
[34] Ibid.; Baigorri-Jalón, *From Paris to Nuremberg*, 212.
[35] Wilss, Wolfram, *Translation and Interpreting in the 20th Century: Focus on German*, 51–52.

interpreting had grown with it. Simultaneous interpreting played an integral role in international diplomacy and could serve as a symbol of the potential for understanding among different nations, cultures, and languages, enabled by scientific progress and technical innovation. However, it also pointed back to the traumatic history that led to its postwar emergence and the influence of that history on contemporary language use. Indeed, many of the international institutions and initiatives aiming toward greater collaboration and peace were grounded in and inevitably recalled the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War.

Yet in Western Europe in the 1950s and 60s, this history was often present as a conspicuous silence. Within the context of the Cold War, the U.S. and its allies found it expedient to accept the narrative that the general populations of Germany, Austria, and Italy had also been victims of their fascist rulers, and that once liberated by the Allied forces, they could quickly move forward as democratic allies of the West and leave the past behind. Austria was framed as the first victim of Hitler's aggressive foreign policy, ignoring the many Austrians who had supported Hitler and who had actively participated in genocide. In the occupied zones of Germany and Austria, denazification and reeducation measures were carried out rapidly and inconsistently, with many concessions made to the demands of reconstruction and to the impracticality of investigating and punishing the large percentage of the population that had been either Nazi Party members, supporters, or collaborators. Nonetheless, the official denazification policy enabled the international rehabilitation of the German and Austrian publics, who could now claim that the Nazis in their midst had been successfully eliminated. Ironically, the Nuremberg Trials, which had aimed to establish an indelible historical record of Nazi crimes and which had broadcast testimony of these crimes internationally, also served as part of this narrative of denazification and in this way contributed to a culture of silence both in and outside of Germany. In 1946, Italy granted widespread amnesty to fascist collaborators in the interest of moving forward as a country, and the anti-fascist resistance movement was celebrated as the foundation of the new Italian Republic. In France, resistance fighters were similarly commemorated, while the persecution of Jews and other minority groups under the Vichy regime remained a silent taboo. Furthermore, although Spain was denied entry into the UN in 1945 as a fascist dictatorship, by the early 1950s, this view was outweighed by Spain's strategic importance in the Cold War, and the U.S. began fostering political and economic relations with Spain despite its authoritarian government.[36]

Although a culture of silence was widespread in early postwar Europe, it should also be noted that European countries varied greatly in their eventual acknowledgement of and engagement with histories of fascism, genocide, and collaboration with the National Socialist regime. In Austria, the myth of Austria's victim status effectively silenced discussions of National Socialist involvement until the mid-1980s. In France, the French state's role in deporting 76,000 French Jews to Nazi extermination camps was not officially acknowledged until 1995. Similarly, Italian admissions of complicity with Nazi deportations only gained acceptance in the early 1990s. In West Germany, on the other hand, the generational changes of the late 1960s prompted national debates that evolved over the course of the 1970s and 1980s into an official culture of commemorating Holocaust memory. Nonetheless, the controversy surrounding an exhibit that opened in 1995 on the war crimes of the German army revealed that the so-called process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* was by no means resolved; the exhibit provoked an uproar because it undermined another victim myth, namely that the army had been

[36] Spain was not, however, permitted to join NATO or the European Community until after Franco's death.

merely a misused tool of the fascist regime and had not been actively involved in the genocide perpetrated by the SS and Gestapo.

Writing "Simultan" in 1968, Bachmann was thus in dialogue with growing debates in the West German public sphere about addressing the National Socialist past—conversations that were still largely absent in Austria.[37] "Simultan" asks how the history of fascist violence in Europe, in particular in Austria and Italy, reverberates in the language practices of the 1960s, shaping what is said, how it is said, and what is left unsaid. In Bachmann's story, the tension produced by the co-existence of past violence and its present disavowal is manifested in the embodied experience of the simultaneous interpreter Nadja. In particular, her subjective awareness of the weighted history of language comes into friction with her instrumental perception of herself as a highly skilled language machine who can transmit language without internalizing it.

The events of the story take place during a short vacation between conferences that Nadja takes with her new lover Ludwig to the coast of Calabria in southern Italy. As a high-level simultaneous interpreter, Nadja travels around the world, working for various international agencies, corporations, and organizations, including IBM, the International Union of Marine Insurance, and the UN-sponsored conferences on nuclear disarmament in Geneva. In doing so, she circulates among an increasingly globalized professional class of political representatives, businesspeople, program directors, and technocrats. Ludwig Frankel, whom she has met at a conference in Rome the previous week, is a researcher for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. He also travels frequently for his work and speaks multiple languages; he and Nadja live a mobile, cosmopolitan lifestyle that is both glamorous and exhausting. The text itself creates the sense of a multilingual whirlwind, peppered with phrases in Russian, Spanish, Italian, French, and English. In addition to being multilingual, the text is also highly polyphonic and heteroglossic; stream-of-consciousness narration blends into unmarked direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse, internal focalization shifts between Nadja and Ludwig without clear demarcation, and fragmented syntax leaves open spaces of uncertainty.[38]

Feeling adrift in the world of conference halls and hotel bars, Nadja looks to Ludwig as a way to reconnect with the imagined authenticity of her origins. Nadja and Ludwig are both originally from Vienna, and she takes pleasure in speaking the Viennese dialect of German with him. Having left Vienna at age 19, Nadja now only speaks German when interpreting: "Ich spreche nie mehr deutsch, nur wenn es gebraucht wird, dann natürlich, aber das ist etwas anderes."[39] Importantly, Nadja is not merely a globetrotting expatriate who has been away from the homeland too long; throughout the text, allusions to the crimes of the Nazi period complicate

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[37] "Simultan," together with the other short stories in Bachmann's 1972 collection *Simultan*, was translated into English in 1989 by Mary Fran Gilbert. In the English version, the title of "Simultan" is rendered as "Word for Word," and the title of the collection*, Three Paths to the Lake*, takes its name from a different story in the collection. The collection was briefly but positively reviewed in several U.S. publications; these reviews generally considered the collection as a whole, rather than singling out a particular story for closer attention. Ingeborg Bachmann, *Three Paths to the Lake*, trans. Mary Fran Gilbert (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1989); "Briefly Noted: Fiction," *The New Yorker*, March 5, 1990; Susan Slocum Hinerfeld, "Bold Prose From a Brilliant Poet: Three Paths to the Lake," *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-01-07/books/bk-268_1_ingeborg-bachmann.

[38] For an analysis of "Simultan" through Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony and heteroglossia, see Friederike Eigler, "Bachmann und Bachtin: Zur dialogischen Erzählstruktur von Simultan," *Modern Austrian Literature* 24 (1991): 1–16.

[39] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Simultan*, 8.

Nadja's relationship to the German language.[40] Speaking German with Ludwig, she wishes for the stability and sense of belonging that a return to her native language seems to promise: "Vielleicht hatte sie auch nur, nach einem dritten Whiskey auf der Dachterasse im Hilton, geglaubt, er bringe ihr etwas zurück, einen vermißten Geschmack, einen fehlenden Tonfall, ein geisterhaftes Gefühl von einem Daheim, das nirgends mehr für sie war."[41] Bachmann, however, quickly undermines the mythological promise of the mother tongue, as Nadja and Ludwig talk past each other, leave questions unasked, trail off into silences, and instead seek connection in the physical act of sex. Both repeatedly think about their past partners, Nadja about her ex-boyfriend and Ludwig about his wife, from whom he is separated. Over the course of the trip, Nadja suffers from headaches, sleeplessness, neck pain, numbness, dizziness, disorientation, and finally, speechlessness, as she is confronted with her relationship to language as an Austrian, as a woman, and as an interpreter.

A Strange Mechanism: Human-Machine Intersections

As a simultaneous interpreter in the 1960s, Nadja exemplifies a mid-way point in the development of the profession between the Nuremberg Trials and today. Like the interpreters at Nuremberg, she is relatively young and extremely flexible, moving frequently between locations, languages, and cultures. However, she is also experienced and highly trained, having studied at the prestigious Geneva Interpreting Institute.[42] In general, interpreting had become quite professionalized by the 1960s, and simultaneous interpreting in particular was widespread at major international conferences.[43] Compared to today, however, the frequent international travel of elite interpreters like Nadja was still exceptional and somewhat glamorous; for most people in Europe and around the world, air travel remained an expensive luxury. As a highly skilled "career woman" in the 1960s, Nadja is part of the increasing feminization of her profession, but the diplomats, business executives, and administrators with whom she works are overwhelmingly male, and her focus on her career rather than marriage and children sets her apart from most women of her generation.

By the 1960s, the technology and standard practices of simultaneous interpreting had evolved significantly, enabling the perception that interpreter and equipment were two components of the same infrastructure. In contrast to the predominately male consecutive interpreters at the League of Nations, Nadja does not take center stage as an orator; instead, she is embedded within a system of communication technology. While interpreters at the League of Nations were often framed as individual language geniuses and speaking subjects with signature styles, Nadja the interpreter is the product of modern technology and techniques, discipline,

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[40] Siobhan Craig, "The Collapse of Language and the Trace of History in Ingeborg Bachmann's 'Simultan' *Women in German Yearbook* 16 (2000): 39-60.

[41] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Simultan*, 8.

[42] The Ecole d'interprètes de Genève was founded in 1941 and introduced simultaneous interpreting into the curriculum in 1951. Ebru Diriker, "Simultaneous and Consecutive Interpreting in Conference Situations (Conference Interpreting)," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartrina (New York: Routledge, 2013), 365.

[43] Numerous training institutes were founded in Europe, North America, and other parts of the world. Simultaneous interpreting for live media (i.e. television) began in Europe in the early 1960s. The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) was founded in 1953 as a global professional organization to promote standards of quality and ethics and to represent the interests of conference interpreters worldwide. "About AIIC," accessed June 9, 2016, http://aiic.net/node/about.

training, and continuous effort. As such, she exemplifies the feminization of the profession in the postwar decades, which corresponded with a gradual loss of prestige and an increase in practices of self-effacement.

The influence of machine translation research in the 1950s and 60s is further apparent in Nadja's thoughts on language equivalence and in her perception of herself as a kind of translation machine. She strives to translate without any friction at all, facilitating the flow of language like a well-oiled machine. She describes herself as part of a larger interpreting apparatus, with input plugs for ears and an automated processing program in her head:

> Sie rieb sich beide Ohren, wo sonst ihre Kopfhörer anlagen, ihre Schaltungen automatisch funktionierten und die Sprachbrüche stattfanden. Was für ein seltsamer Mechanismus war sie doch, ohne einen einzigen Gedanken im Kopf zu haben, lebte sie, eingetaucht in die Sätze anderer, und mußte nachtwandlerisch mit gleichen, aber anderslautenden Sätzen sofort nachkommen, sie konnte aus "machen" to make, faire, fare, hacer und delat' machen, jedes Wort konnte sie so auf einer Rolle sechsmal herumdrehen, sie durfte nur nicht denken, daß machen wirklich machen, faire faire, fare fare, delat' delat' bedeutete, das konnte ihren Kopf unbrauchbar machen, und sie mußte schon aufpassen, daß sie eines Tages nicht von den Wortmassen verschüttet wurde.[44]

Here the idea of interpreters as instrumental conduits of language intersects with the conception of interpreters as empty vessels, lacking their own thoughts and feelings, and as thus fundamentally deficient. Research into the cognitive processes of actual simultaneous interpreters has shown that this view is not reflected in reality; simultaneous interpreting in fact requires a high degree of cognitive processing—it is impossible to interpret without first understanding what has been said.[45] In other words, interpreting is, in fact, inextricably linked with interpretation. Furthermore, as has been shown in numerous socio-linguistic studies and as I underscore here, it is also impossible to eliminate the complexity of an interpreter's human subjectivity, and attempts to do so inevitably generate frictions in the interpreting process.[46] At the same time, however, Nadja's perception of her ability to translate words by avoiding thoughts about their meanings echoes statements by Nuremberg interpreters, who asserted that they had no time to think about the enormous historical and psychological weight of the testimony they translated, because they were completely focused on the intricacies of language themselves. In other words, finding an accurate translation for terms such as "niederschlagen" took precedence over and prevented them from thinking about the violence inherent to this term

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[44] Bachmann, 18.

[45] See, for example, Barbara Moser-Mercer, "Simultaneous Interpreting: Cognitive Potential and Limitations," *Interpreting* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 2000): 83–94; Birgitta Englund Dimitrova and Kenneth Hyltenstam, eds., *Language Processing and Simultaneous Interpreting: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2000); Robin Setton, *Simultaneous Interpretation: A Cognitive-Pragmatic Analysis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1999); Maria Teresa Bajo, Francisca Padilla, and Presentacion Padilla, "Comprehension Processes in Simultaneous Interpreting," in *Translation in Context*, ed. Andrew Chesterman and Natividad Gallardo (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000), 127–42.

[46] See, for example, Wadensjö, *Interpreting as Interaction*; Claudia Angelelli, *Re-Visiting the Role of the Interpreter: A Study of Conference, Court and Medical Interpreters in Canada, Mexico and the United States* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004).

and the inconceivable scope of Nazi violence more broadly.[47] In "Simultan," it becomes apparent that for Nadja, adhering to this strictly instrumental model of interpreting provides a way of shielding herself from the troubling complexities, indeterminacies, and contradictions of global politics. In addition to the horrors of the past, these also involve the contemporary threat of nuclear warfare and the possibility of global annihilation. This is the flip side of postwar internationalist collaboration; with the specter of mutually assured destruction looming, the stakes of international diplomacy are high, and Nadja must repress the terror of this possible future in order to function effectively. When Nadja's strategy of avoidance ultimately proves untenable, the silences and multiple meanings of language create frictions within her as an embodied subject, causing her physical and emotional distress until she is able to integrate them into her understanding of herself as a linguistic agent.

One of the appeals of machine translation was that it promised to eliminate the disruptive friction of human agency.[48] Here Nadja's subject position as a woman is significant; often deemed subordinate, female labor is more easily repressed, allowing for a perception of mechanization. Yet mechanization can never fully remove the human; it can only displace or repress it. This is evident in the simple fact that machine translation programs are written by humans and operate according to human theories of language. Fundamentally, machine translation is based on a view of languages and their lexical units as equivalent, and working within a model of language that is simplified and solely instrumental, computers can indeed produce translations that satisfy a certain set of criteria—today better than ever. Amidst the onset of machine translation, "Simultan" nevertheless stages the frictions and emotional contours of language, which make evident that languages are not simply substitutable entities. When Ludwig imagines the possibility of a universal language, Nadja wonders what would become of the specifically Viennese expressions "Würstel mit Kren" and "Sie gschlenkertes Krokodil." Ludwig reminisces several times about a glorious Cernia fish that he encounters in the ocean, the German name of which he does not know. In fact, the Italian name "la Cernia" sounds very different from the German "der Zackenbarsch," and the grammatical feminine gender of "la Cernia" combined with its delicate sound likely contribute both to Ludwig's desire to catch it and to Nadja's identification with the fish as a vulnerable, female victim of male violence. As Ludwig describes how he wanted to spear the fish in its neck, Nadja reacts physically to his words: "Sie griff sich, während ihr Kopfschmerz jäh einsetzte, an ihren Nacken und sagte: hier, ich spüre es hier."[49] In contrast to a mechanistic model of language processing, Nadja frequently experiences various forms of corporeal friction in conjunction with linguistic exchange. Indeed, her physical symptoms such as pain, numbness, and dizziness may be manifestations of her repression of the past, but they also express what she is unable to verbally articulate. Somatization, the manifestation of psychological distress as physical symptoms, is traditionally associated with women and is often dismissed as simply being "all in your head." In "Simultan," however, Ludwig's rationalist dismissal of Nadja's embodied experience parallels the broader cultural silencing of collective trauma.

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[47] During the trial, Göring claimed he had been unfairly mistranslated when "niederschlagen" was translated as "to quash" or "to suppress" rather than as a specific legal term meaning "to suspend." Gaiba, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, 110.

[48] This move toward machine translation coincided historically with the desire to remove human agency from nuclear annihilation through automated detection and attack systems; humanity was ultimately deemed too flawed to bear the weight of deciding whether or not to launch nuclear weapons.

[49] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Simultan*, 36.

A Woman of the World

Nadja's gender intersects with her status as an elite simultaneous interpreter in a number of important ways. Her profession affords her a high degree of mobility and independence, particularly compared to the majority of women in her generation. While the constant travel required by her work could be seen as preventing her from having a family life, she in fact values her independence, and her resolution never to marry is based at least partly on a past relationship, in which her boyfriend tried to force her into a traditional domestic role:

> [Er wollte] sie einfach, ohne je auf sie einzugehen, in ein ihr fremdes Leben hineinzwingen [...], in eine ganz kleine Wohnung, mit ganz kleinen vielen Kindern, und dort hätte er sie am liebsten tagsüber in einer kleinen Küche gesehen oder nachts in einem allerdings sehr großen Bett, in dem sie etwas Winziges war, un tout petit chat, un petit poulet, une petite femmelle.[50]

Underscoring the symbolic violence of his diminutization and diminishment of her as a full person, he also hits her when she gets angry with him, but only "pour te calmer un peu,"[51] i.e. to slap some sense into her as a hysterical woman.

In the 1950s and 60s, young women were still often steered toward becoming nurses, secretaries, or elementary school teachers, at least until they married and left the workforce. Nadja chooses a career path that allows her to achieve both professional recognition and a high income, but that remains within the limits of cultural acceptance. Although simultaneous interpreting is a highly skilled profession that requires extensive training, Nadja's role as a female conference interpreter in the 1960s overlaps in certain ways with another feminized occupation enabled by 20th century technological developments, namely that of the airline stewardess. As a single woman who travels the world, Nadja projects a similar jet-setting glamour to that of the young, attractive, and stylish stewardesses advertised by the airline industry in the 1960s. Stewardesses of this period faced a fundamental contradiction as women: for many, the job was liberating and empowering, a way to achieve independence and see the world as a modern woman, but at the same time, they were explicitly marketed to male consumers as sexual objects.[52] Similarly, Nadja negotiates between a number of gendered expectations as a simultaneous interpreter, particularly with regard to her visibility. In the interpreting booth, she effaces her own subjectivity in the service of others; here the feminization of the profession is associated with invisibility and service work. Outside the booth, however, Nadja becomes an object of male attention as a younger, single woman among groups of professional men away from home:

> Nachher: die Hallen in den Kongreßgebäuden, die Hotelhallen, die Bars, die Männer, die Routine, mit ihnen umzugehen, [...] immer diese Männer mit ihren Wichtigkeiten und ihren Witzen zwischen den Wichtigkeiten, die entweder verheiratet und aufgedunsen und betrunken waren oder zufällig schlank und verheiratet und betrunken [...][53]

Within this environment, Nadja carefully stages herself as an elegant, self-assured professional; she wears the right styles, drinks the right brands of alcohol, feels at home in fancy hotels,

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[50] Ibid., 26.
[51] Ibid., 27.
[52] Victoria Vantoch, *The Jet Sex: Airline Stewardesses and the Making of an American Icon* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Kathleen M Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
[53] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 18.

accepts only the best in service, and avoids anything that is in bad taste. By performing her social class and cultural capital in ways that are often explicitly gendered (e.g. holding out her hand to be kissed), she establishes a position of authority that is in part based on her gender rather than existing despite her gender, which could more easily be undermined. At the same time, her emphasis on elegance and class may help guard her from insinuations of promiscuity: although often vague and unspoken, underlying general cultural associations of working women with prostitution persisted into the 1960s and beyond, particularly if those women were young, attractive, and working primarily in the service of men.

Nadja has thus established her professional identity in part as a countermeasure to the social forces (exemplified by her ex-boyfriend) that would push her into a traditional domestic role. But if one identifies solely with one's work, taking a vacation can be profoundly destabilizing, as evident in Nadja's experience of leaving Rome with Ludwig:

> Je weiter sie sich entfernte von ihrem Standplatz, der wichtiger für sie war als für andere ein Zuhause und von dem ein Sich-Entfernen daher viel heikler ist, desto unsicherer fühlte sie sich. Sie war keine selbstsichere Erscheinung mehr in einer Halle, in einer Bar, entworfen von VOGUE oder GLAMOUR, zur richtigen Stunde im richtigen Kleid, fast nichts mehr deutete auf ihre Identität hin [...].[54]

Yet even as her job provides her with a seemingly stable identity, it is also stressful and overwhelming. She describes the exhaustion of switching between six languages in existential terms: "Es zerstört mich**,** ich komme ins Hotel, trinke einen Whiskey, kann nichts mehr hören, nichts sehen und sitze ausgewrungen da, mit meinen Mappen und Zeitungen."[55] She is also ambivalent about the usefulness of her work. In contrast to the view that she helps to promote international understanding by facilitating multilingual dialogue, she worries that she simply perpetuates the Babelian confusion of international politics: "Wenn ich mir das ganze Kauderwelsch anhöre zwischen Paris und Genf und Rom, wenn man es eben so mithörte wie sie und mithalf, daß die einander immer mehr mißverstanden und in die Enge trieben [...]."[56]

For Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Jost Schneider, Nadja is emblematic of the post-modern, flexible, globalized worker of late capitalism described by Richard Sennett in *The Corrosion of Character*.[57] Sennett argues that the fragmentation, instability, and time pressure of such work erodes solidarity and trust, as well as personal integrity. From this perspective, which Nadja herself sometimes shares, she is unhappy because she is rootless, unmoored, and adrift in the post-modern global service economy. Ironically, although Nadja's work as an interpreter aims to facilitate communication with clarity and precision, her personal use of language is often vague; despite her linguistic abilities, she has difficulty expressing her own fears, needs, and desires. She also perceives herself through the dominant monolingual paradigm, in which her extraordinary multilingualism renders her unusual, fractured, and lacking a unified identity. She thinks of herself as "ein seltsamer Mechanismus,"[58] who, in her constant wandering between languages and places has somehow lost an important part of herself.[59]

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[54] Ibid., 17.
[55] Ibid., 14.
[56] Ibid., 28.
[57] Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).
[58] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 18.
[59] Ibid., 33.

Nonetheless, Nadja's distress is not only due to the nature of her work as an elite simultaneous interpreter. As I have indicated, she also struggles to negotiate social attitudes related to her gender, and she is haunted by her Austrian origins, which she must continually work to avoid. In many ways, her job as a simultaneous interpreter has helped her to escape both the constraints of traditional gender roles and the ties of a national language, culture, and history.[60] At the same time, this use of her profession as a means of avoidance does not offer a lasting solution. As an interpreter, she is confronted with the legacies of the past in the international politics of the present, which also follow a logic of repression, defensive posturing, and willful forgetting. Nadja describes every conference as the continuation of an endless investigation:

> Immer wird die Ursache für etwas weit Zurückliegendes gesucht, für etwas Furchtbares, und man findet sich nicht durch, weil der Weg dorthin zufällig von vielen zertrampelt worden ist, weil andere die Spuren absichtlich verwischt haben, weil jeder eine Halbwahrheit darüber aussagt, um sich abzusichern, und so sucht und sucht man sich durch die Unstimmigkeiten, die Uneinigkeiten hindurch, und man findet nichts.[61]

The attempts of the international community to deal with the past are stymied by a web of accidental and intentional obfuscation. Interestingly, the importance of past events is not dismissed or ignored; a desire to understand the past is, at the very least, performed. The same participants who express it, however, also collectively undermine it.

If Nadja is, as Brinker-Gabler claims, "lost in translation,"[62] this is not simply because her multilingualism, her frequent travel, or her work as a translator render her inherently lacking (e.g. lacking grounding, a home, a sense of belonging, her own voice, or a means of expression). Instead, it is due to her efforts to remain on the surface of all language without confronting its historical weight. This is most apparent in the first half of the story, as Nadja and Ludwig cycle through superficial phrases and standard idioms in German, French, Spanish, Italian, English, and Russian that do seem to be interchangeable.[63] Within the monolingual paradigm, a return to the mother tongue would seem to restore a sense of cohesive identity and belonging, but the text quickly shows this promise to be illusory. Nadja has not simply lost touch with her native language, country, and culture; she has in fact sought to distance herself from the collective trauma of the recent Austrian past, which remains inextricably linked to the German language but also to traditional gender roles. Through her travels with Ludwig, however, she is constantly confronted by the impossibility of compartmentalizing this traumatic history from the language itself.

Encountering the Mother Tongue

Through the character of Nadja, Bachmann takes part in debates about the corruption of the German language by the Nazis and the status of German after the Second World War. For many writers, the Nazis had irreparably disfigured the German language by turning it into a

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[60] Gisela Brinker-Gabler, "Living and Lost in Language: Translation and Interpretation in Ingeborg Bachmann's 'Simultan,'" in *"If We Had the Word": Ingeborg Bachmann. Views and Reviews*, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Markus Zisselsberger (Riverside, CA: Ariadne, 2004), 192.

[61] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 30.

[62] Brinker-Gabler, "Living and Lost," 194.

[63] Greber sees this as a "*deformation professionelle"* and an indicator of "den *lifestyle* des flotten Parlierens auf internationalem Parkett." Erika Greber, "Fremdkörper Fremdsprache," in *Interpretationen: Werke von Ingeborg Bachmann*, ed. Mathias Mayer (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2002), 183.

language of propaganda, hate speech, bureaucratic euphemisms for atrocities, and the technically precise institutionalization of mass murder. In the early postwar years, writers such as Günter Eich, Heinrich Böll, and Wolfgang Borchert sought to counter these distortions by stripping their language of all artifice or stylization, writing in a terse, direct style about the naked truths and hard realities of life after the war. Other writers debated whether it was ethical or even possible to clear away the language of the past and to start anew at a "year zero." Paul Celan, Bachmann's friend, lover, and interlocutor, continued to write in German despite the fact that his family was murdered in Nazi concentration camps; in doing so, his poetry—though increasingly difficult and sparse—insisted on forging new modes of expression through the very language of the perpetrator. Only in this manner could German be both salvaged and transformed, as a language that remembered the past but remained open to the possibility of new encounters.

In "Simultan," on the other hand, Nadja has reacted to the Austrian past by leaving the country at a young age and avoiding the German language in her personal life. When she encounters Ludwig Frankel, however, this strategy proves untenable, as she is repeatedly confronted with echoes of the past. To begin with, his traditional Germanic first name evokes numerous layers of German and Austrian history,[64] and Nadja draws on her linguistic skills in order to avoid it: "Sie überlegte, wie sie diese drei oder vier Tage lang ohne seinen Vornamen auskommen könne, sie würde einfach darling oder caro oder mein Lieber sagen."[65] Beyond sharing German as their native language, Nadja and Ludwig both speak the Viennese dialect, which, as Siobhan Craig argues, is particularly weighted for Nadja. While she desires the feelings of stability and belonging that it seems to promise, it is also a site of trauma and violence that makes such a homecoming impossible:

> Every utterance in the longed for ur-language trails a series of unspoken words and awarenesses that must be silenced and kept at a distance. [...] Implicit in every use of the Viennese vernacular is the trace of shared Viennese history: Austrian complicity with the Nazi regime, the violence and atrocities committed by the Austrians, and their participation in the Holocaust.[66]

Craig further shows that Nadja's linguistic crisis is tied to the persistence of the fascist past in the silences of the present, linking the slippages of history to the inherent instability of language:

> History, specifically both Austrian and Italian fascism, is structured like language, with the same interplay of absences and presences. Like words in the chain of displacements that is language, the democratic present is defined by the absence of the Nazi past, which is paradoxically always there as a trace, the unspoken and unacknowledged ground of all knowledge about "today."[67]

As Craig notes, Nadja participates in this culture of silence while also being aware of its inherent instability; language and history are continually threatening to collapse around her. Furthermore,

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[64] Siobhan S. Craig, "The Collapse of Language and the Trace of History in Ingeborg Bachmann's 'Simultan,'" *Women in German Yearbook* 16 (January 2000): 44. These include the Kings of Bavaria Ludwig I, II, and II (Ludwig II was known as a "Mad King," famous for building Neuschwanstein Castle and funding Richard Wagner, among other artistic projects), Ludwig von Beethoven, but perhaps most importantly, Ludwig/Chlodwig I, the first king of the Franks who united the Frankish tribes in the late 5th century. The name Ludwig, which means "famous warrior," thus has both nationalistic and bellicose origins, which is likely why it makes Nadja uncomfortable.

[65] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 12.

[66] Craig, "The Collapse of Language," 43.

[67] Ibid., 39.

the silences structuring Nadja's relationship to Austria's past are intertwined with the silences in her personal relationship with Ludwig; in this way, unspoken personal traumas intersect with and evoke unspoken historical traumas.

Although Craig's assessment of the slippages of language and history in "Simultan" are insightful and convincing, my reading of Nadja's trajectory over the course of the story differs significantly from Craig's. Craig argues that Nadja's distress in the first part of the story is due to her multilingual sensitivity to echoes of the fascist past in the language of the present, and that at the story's turning point, she chooses to become blind and deaf to these echoes and thereby submits to an illusory happiness. I argue instead that Nadja's physical and emotional afflictions in fact stem from her attempts to block out her awareness of historical trauma, which she is no longer able to do successfully in her relationship with Ludwig. After descending into speechlessness as a result of this internal conflict, Nadja reaches a point of tentative acceptance and is able to recognize the simultaneous existence of trauma, joy, despair, and—perhaps—the possibility of hope. In this key simultaneity, Nadja tentatively opens to both the weight of the past and the uncertainty of the future as they co-exist with the present.

In addition to reminding Nadja of her disavowed Austrian origins, Ludwig Frankel also leads Nadja to confront her relationship to the Austrian past in another way that is only implied and never directly addressed, namely his potential Jewish identity. Frankel is a common Jewish surname, and the reader learns that he emigrated to America and attended school there for several years, probably during the Second World War. Readers learn this toward the beginning of the story through a brief aside, as Nadja and Ludwig trade lists of the many places they have lived and worked:

> Er war einige Jahre lang in Rourkela gewesen und zwei Jahre in Afrika, in Ghana, dann in Gabun, länger in Amerika selbstverständlich**,** sogar ein paar Jahre zur Schule dort gegangen, während der Emigration, sie irrten beide die halbe Welt ab, und am Ende wußten sie ungefähr, wo sie, von Zeit zu Zeit, gewesen waren.[68]

Readers do not receive any further details, but this information resonates throughout the rest of the text. It is also unclear whether Nadja knows more than this; like much of the text, the free indirect discourse of this passage and its seemingly casual tone are impossible to attribute precisely to either Ludwig or Nadja.[69] In any case, this remark vaguely evokes Nazi persecution and the mass displacements of the Second World War, and thereby also recalls what it does not mention, namely the murder of millions who were not able to escape. This is then followed by the resumption of casual conversation and subsequent silence on the subject, mirroring the dominant practices of collective repression in much of Europe at that time. Yet despite being silenced, the past also repeatedly reemerges and must be disavowed anew. As Nadja is confronted with her Austrian identity in her relationship with Ludwig, she struggles to uphold her coping strategies of silence, escape, and disavowal.

Both in conversations with Ludwig and in her inner monologues, Nadja refers vaguely to dark periods in her personal life and terrible occurrences in the past more broadly. Through this repetition of ambiguous references followed by silences, a tension emerges between the need to

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[68] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 9.

[69] The wording could be imagined to represent Ludwig's actual statements (e.g. "Ich war länger in Amerika, selbstverständlich, ich bin sogar ein paar Jahre zur Schule dort gegangen, während der Emigration."), or it could be Nadja's narration of what Ludwig has told her, reflecting her own perspective on his statements, or it could be a separate narrative agent summarizing their conversation, or some combination of these.

address the past and the desire to repress it. Indeed, both Nadja and Ludwig seem torn between hinting at that which cannot be spoken and declining to ask each other questions or respond to each other's allusions. She mentions that she was hospitalized, and while the context implies it was due to the stress of her job, she only tells Ludwig, "Es ist mir damals sehr schlecht gegangen."[70] She also explains that she cannot sleep in the same room with another person, due to a shock she experienced in the past, but does not explain this further. Ludwig, for his part, lets these statements pass without remark. He similarly falls into silence around certain topics concerning his past: "Er hatte in Hietzing gewohnt, dann brach er ab, etwas mußte also noch in Hietzing geblieben sein, schwer auszusprechen."[71] Furthermore, both Nadja and Ludwig seek escape but struggle to remain in the present of their romantic getaway, as memories of past relationships and thoughts about work occupy their minds. While driving along the coast, Ludwig thinks, "Es ging sie beide wirklich nichts an, was in diesen Tagen geschah in der Welt, wie sich alles veränderte und warum es immer auswegsloser wurde, [...] er ärgerte sich nur, daß sein Kopf nichts verdrängte."[72] At the same time, Nadja also tries to force her mind back to the present: "Trotzdem mußte sie sich zusammennehmen, sie mußte, mußte jetzt und hier sein, nicht in einer früheren Zeit, nicht sonstwo auf einer Straße, nicht früher in diesem Land, sondern mit Mr. Ludwig Frankel."[73] She imagines grabbing the steering wheel and sending their car over the cliff to force a fully present connection with Ludwig, "eine Zusammengehörigkeit herstellen ein einziges Mal," but instead she takes a pill for an oncoming headache.

On the second day of their trip, Nadja and Ludwig visit the Greek temples at Paestum, which, as Craig notes, represent the "continued existence of the past within the present" and also recall how Germany and Italy's fascist regimes mobilized classical Greece and Rome as part of their legitimating discourses.[74] At the same time, I would add, Ludwig and Nadja's avoidance of their personal pasts merges here with their attitude towards the historical past. The temples are also part of Nadja's individual past because she has seen them before, and before they go, Ludwig's thoughts reflect his desire to move forward in time as well as space, rather than to revisit the (doubly) past: "Hoffentlich will sie diese Tempel nicht sehen, wenn sie sie doch schon zweimal gesehen hat, morgen früh gleich weiter."[75] While at the temples, Ludwig has a guidebook, "aber da sie nichts wissen wollte, erklärte er ihr besser nichts."[76] Although it occurs in the context of tourist information, this statement in fact applies to Nadja and Ludwig's entire approach to communication with each other. Nonetheless, Ludwig's very resolution to remain silent about Nadja's past leads him to dwell on it; it reasserts itself in its very absence. "Mit wem sie diese Tempel früher gesehen hatte, das ging ihn selbstverständlich nichts an, aber warum sie sie auf einmal nicht mehr sehen will? Er war bestimmt nicht der Grund dafür, es mußte etwas anderes sein, aber sie redete über alles und jedes hinweg."[77] At the same time, Nadja's superficial speech both covers over and also indicates the unexplained silence beneath it.

Later, after Ludwig has gone spear-fishing, Nadja thinks about the ripple effects of violence:

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[70] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 13.
[71] Ibid., 8.
[72] Ibid., 19.
[73] Ibid., 20.
[74] Craig, "The Collapse of Language," 45–46.
[75] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 15.
[76] Ibid., 16.
[77] Ibid., 17.

> Ein einziges Schiff oder gar eine Mine, nicht nur für getroffene Fische, auch für weit entfernte, ist furchtbar, fürchterlich sind diese Erschütterungen, Verstörungen, denn es dürfen auch die Fische heutzutage nicht mehr ruhig leben, und sie können nichts dafür. Kann ich denn etwas dafür? fragte sie, ich habe diese Furchtbarkeiten nicht erfunden.[78]

Here the ocean indicates global interconnectedness, and the shock waves from an act of destruction can be imagined as rippling out through time as well as space. Additionally, the image of an oceanic explosion with far-reaching effects and the temporal marker "heutzutage" also evoke the current Cold War threat of nuclear destruction, recalling underwater nuclear testing as well as the wide-ranging fallout of the disastrous 1954 Castle Bravo test on Bikini Atoll.[79] Having interpreted at the initial conferences on nuclear disarmament in the early 1960s, Nadja is particularly aware of these dangers, and her work continually reminds her of the tenuousness of international diplomacy. As an interpreter, she is responsible for facilitating communication and avoiding misunderstandings, which could have serious consequences, but beyond this, she must watch from the sidelines as international politics unfold without being able to intervene. Questions of collective guilt and responsibility for past and future horrors also merge in her defensive assertion that she did not invent "diese Furchtbarkeiten," where "diese" does not have a clear grammatical antecedent and can thus refer both to the development of industrialized mass murder by the Nazis and to the invention of nuclear weapons, which also occurred in the context of the Second World War.

On their final evening in the town of Maratea, Nadja and Ludwig drive up into the cliffs to see the view, and it is there that Nadja's internal conflict also reaches its peak, causing her to become dizzy, disoriented, and speechless. She is particularly stricken with terror when she sees an enormous statue of Christ on a cliff; she fears she will die, that she will throw herself off the cliff, or that the cliff itself will fall into the ocean. She wishes she could cry but finds she is unable to, and wonders whether she lost this ability somewhere in her wanderings between languages and places. She repeats that the statue on the cliffs means her annihilation, "es ist meine Vernichtung,"[80] a term which evokes generalized existential terror as well as the historically specific "Vernichtung der Juden" and "garantierte/atomare Vernichtung."

At the height of her suffering, she tries once more to escape—this time through sex as a loss of subjectivity, as self-annihilation, and as a silencing akin to death:

> Im Zimmer, als er sie umarmte, begann sie wieder zu zittern, wollte nicht, konnte nicht, sie fürchtete zu ersticken oder ihm unter den Händen wegzusterben, aber dann wollte sie es doch, es war besser, von ihm erstickt und vernichtet zu werden und damit alles zu vernichten, was in ihr unheilbar geworden war, sie kämpfte nicht mehr, ließ es mit sich geschehen, sie blieb fühllos liegen, drehte sich ohne ein Wort von ihm weg und schlief sofort ein.[81]

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[78] Ibid., 25.

[79] Underwater nuclear testing was banned by the 1963 Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Due to a miscalculation, the 1954 Castle Bravo explosion was more than twice as powerful as had been expected; this combined with changing winds to spread the fallout over more than 11,000 km², directly sickening Marshall Island residents as well as the crew of a nearby Japanese fishing boat. When the boat returned to Japan, some of the fish were sold and consumed before officials realized they were contaminated. This incident galvanized the anti-nuclear movement in Japan and also inspired Ishiro Honda's 1954 film *Godzilla.*

[80] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 34.

[81] Ibid., 35.

This numbness, too, proves only temporary. The next morning, the day of their departure, Nadja again experiences the silences of her relationship with Ludwig as invocations of the unspoken past. As they sit quietly, Nadja thinks about her ex-boyfriend and the connection she had hoped for with Ludwig. When she wonders what he is thinking about, however, the personal merges into the collective as her thoughts take a sharp, violent turn:

> Erst hatten sie gedacht, daß sie im Lauf der Tage einander viel erzählen und mitteilen würden, daraus war nichts geworden, und sie überlegte, ob er auch an jemand anderen dachte und im Schlepp seiner Gedanken viele Gesichter, Körper, Zerschundenes, Zerschlagenes, Ermordetes, Gesagtes und Ungesagtes hatte.

Here again, the ambiguity of the text allows for the simultaneous existence of multiple associations: "Zerschundenes" and "Zerschlagenes" could refer to real or metaphorical violence, such as the emotional wreckage of past relationships, for example. "Ermordetes" can also be understood symbolically, as in the murder of hopes, dreams, or his previous self; it could refer to Nadja's experience the night before of being obliterated by him through the act of sex, or to his hobby of spearfishing, in which Nadja relates to the fish as victims of violence. But above all, the word evokes the actual murder of millions of people in the Holocaust and Ludwig's personal relationship to this history. Grammatically, of course, the word "Ermordetes" refers to a category of things, i.e. "that which is murdered;" murdered people are referred to as "Ermordete." The tension of this grammatical construction, which refers to a murdered substance despite the fact that murder by definition only applies to living beings, reflects the dehumanization by the Nazis of their victims. It is also the culmination of a fragmentation that begins with faces and bodies, and continues with that which is battered and smashed; indeed, this fractured progression evokes photographs and filmic images of the piles of dead bodies documented at concentration camps. "Ermordetes" could refer to body parts that are no longer regarded as people but merely as (murdered) flesh.

Eine Erleuchtung, ganz plötzlich?

When Nadja describes the endless circling and disagreement that characterize the conferences she attends in their unsuccessful search for a historical answer to the confusion of the present, she imagines a sudden revelation as the only solution. "Man müßte schon eine Erleuchtung haben, um zu begreifen, was wirklich vorliegt und was man deswegen wirklich tun sollte, ganz plötzlich.[82] Amazingly, and somewhat ironically, the story itself ends with such a moment of enlightenment. On the morning of their departure from Maratea, Nadja undergoes a significant shift that take place over the course of three episodes. Rather than providing definitive answers, however Nadja's "Erleuchtung" occurs through her acceptance of a complex simultaneity that encompasses aspects of certainty and ambiguity. While this revelation is not merely ironic or illusory, it does ironize Nadja's wish for a moment of mystical insight and clarity; seeing clearly means seeing—and accepting—the complexities of history, language, and human emotion.

In the first episode, Nadja experiences a sudden awakening in the face of potential physical harm. Distraught and still unable to cry, she goes alone down to the rocky shore and catches herself putting her own life in danger: "[S]ie wurde immer waghalsiger, kühner, und ja, jetzt, sie setzte hinüber zu dem weitgelegenen schwarzen Felsen, sie riskierte es eben, abzustürzen, sie fing sich benommen, sie sagte sich, es ist eine Pflicht, ich muß, ich muß leben." Although she had previously imagined steering both Ludwig and herself off the road over a cliff

[82] Ibid., 30.

and had subsequently feared the cliff under her feet would crumble into the sea, she is now faced with the physical reality of bodily harm or even death and the profound consequences of either disregarding her safety on purpose or allowing herself to give in to a suicidal impulse. At the same time, the verb "hinübersetzen" points to parallels with her experiences of translation; on the rocks, she is faced with a void that mirrors the abyss of language that she must confront when moving between languages. In the past, she has tried to remain on the surface of language to avoid this danger, but this strategy has resulted in disorientation and distress. She has also attempted to withdraw into silence and obliteration, but she ultimately draws back from permanently succumbing to it.

Immediately after confronting the reality of physical and linguistic annihilation, Nadja experiences a transformation in the form of a linguistic substitution; the change of a single modal verb signifies a radical shift in her approach to being alive:

> aber was sage ich mir da, was heißt das denn, es ist keine Pflicht, ich muß nicht, muß überhaupt nicht, ich darf. Ich darf ja und ich muß es endlich begreifen, in jedem Augenblick und eben hier, und sie sprang, flog, rannte weiter mit dem, was sie wußte, ich darf, mit einer nie gekannten Sicherheit in ihrem Körper bei jedem Sprung. Ich darf, das ist es, ich darf ja leben.[83]

Whereas Nadja's translations have previously depended on avoiding thinking, her experience on the rocks emphasizes the importance of understanding. Crucially, Nadja's newfound knowledge is embodied, articulated in bodily movements that work in tandem with her rhythmic linguistic assertions. This action of understanding is also enacted in the present, where she has previously struggled to locate herself. It remains unarticulated how this empowering sense of certainty and appreciation is related to her awareness of the "Furchtbarkeiten" of the past, present, and future, particularly in terms of the millions of people who were not allowed to live by the National Socialists and their collaborators (die Menschen, die *nicht* leben durften). However, in the second and third episodes of Nadja's "awakening," her joyful certainty is tempered—although not undermined—by two ambiguous encounters.

In the second episode, Nadja confronts the limitations of her ability to translate and experiences a different mode of relating to language. Before joining Ludwig in the lobby to leave, she goes up to their hotel room once more. Checking the drawers, she finds a book titled "Il Vangelo" (The Gospel) that she at first thinks Ludwig has left behind before recognizing it as a standard hotel room Bible. She then uses it in place of a dictionary as part of a private superstitious ritual: "Wie sie ihre Wörterbücher aufschlug, um oft abergläubisch ein Wort zu suchen, als Halt für den Tag, diese Bücher wie Orakel befragte, so schlug sie auch dieses Buch auf." The sentence she randomly chooses with closed eyes reads, "Il miracolo, come sempre, è il risultato della fede e d'una fede audace."[84] (The miracle, as always, is the result of faith and of an audacious faith.) When she tries to translate this sentence into German, however, she finds she is unable to do so, and she begins to cry. "Sie hätte den Satz in keine andere Sprache übersetzen können, obwohl sie zu wissen meinte, was jedes dieser Worte bedeutete und wie es zu wenden war, aber sie wußte nicht, woraus dieser Satz wirklich gemacht war. Sie konnte eben nicht alles."[85] In accepting the human limitations of her ability to translate, she regains another ability, namely the longed-for ability to cry, and her frustration is thus transformed into relief. Importantly, Nadja's inability to translate the sentence to her own satisfaction is not related to

[83] Ibid., 37.
[84] Ibid., 38.
[85] Ibid.

vocabulary, semantic meaning, or grammar; instead, she articulates the problem in terms of substance, in seeming reference to the verse's divine origins. While her attempts to apply a mechanical method of word-for-word translation are accurate, the assumption of equivalence and interchangability on which they are based cannot hold.

Nadja's encounter with this sentence has received significant attention in the secondary literature on "Simultan." In Eve Schopohl's analysis, Nadja understands the meaning of the sentence but confronts "the abyss between words and meaning which makes translation impossible" and finally accepts "the incommensurability inherent in all translation."[86] For Erika Greber, Nadja's epiphany is associated with a sacred realm that is indicated by the Bible verse but that lies outside the text of the story. The miracle does not actually appear within the story's narration; it is only represented by the Bible verse's incommensurability: "Damit charakterisiert Bachmann das Wunder [...] als 'Fremdkörper' und lokalisiert es in einem nur als radikal Anderes zugänglichen numinosen Bereich—im Ausland des Textes."[87] Greber also notes that the Italian verse, which the story presents as an original text to be translated, is actually already a translation of a previous version (i.e. the Greek New Testament). Giulia Radaelli further complicates assumptions of origin and authenticity by noting that this sentence does not actually exist in any known version of the Bible.[88] Nonetheless, Radaelli argues that despite its unclear origin and its location between faith and superstition, the fictional Bible verse functions as biblical text, evoking a depth of meaning within a long tradition of biblical citationality. In her failed translation attempt, Nadja encounters the limits of language and translation, which Radaelli likens to a mystical experience. Here Radaelli also refers to Bachmann's statements on the productive potential of encounters with the limits of the possible:

> Im Widerspiel des Unmöglichen mit dem Möglichen erweitern wir unsere Möglichkeiten. Daß wir es erzeugen, dieses Spannungsverhältnis, an dem wir wachsen, darauf, meine ich, kommt es an; daß wir uns orientieren an einem Ziel, das freilich, wenn wir uns nähern, sich noch einmal entfernt.[89]

Although a utopia of language remains unreachable, it can offer a sense of orientation and a foothold in the face of a linguistic abyss. Gisela Brinker-Gabler reads Nadja's translation attempt in relation to Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," noting that the double meaning of "Aufgabe" ("task" and "giving up") also applies to Nadja's surrender, which can be read as a moment of illumination rather than as a failure. Nadja moves beyond the utilitarian function of language, becoming aware of "the echo-space of language and its reverberations" and of "language's communication of itself."[90] For Benjamin, translation is based in a longing for linguistic supplementation; languages as they exist are fragments that complement each other, pointing in the direction of a greater, pure language. For Brinker-Gabler, "Nadja's 'illumination'

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[86] Eva Schopohl, "(De-)Constructing Translingual Identity. Interpreters as Literary Characters in 'Simultan' by Ingeborg Bachmann and 'Between' by Christine Brooke-Rose," *TRANS*- 6 (2008): 4.
[87] Greber, "Fremdkörper Fremdsprache," 193.
[88] Giulia Radaelli, "'Wunder des Unglaubens'? Bibelzitat und Bibelübersetzung bei Ingeborg Bachmann," in *Das Buch in den Büchern: Wechselwirkungen von Bibel und Literatur*, ed. Andrea Polaschegg and Daniel Weidner (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012), 304.
[89] Ingeborg Bachmann, "Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar," in *Werke*, ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, and Clemens Münster, vol. 4 (Munich: Piper, 1995), 276. Partially quoted in Radaelli, "Wunder des Unglaubens," 304.
[90] Brinker-Gabler, "Living and Lost," 201–2.

is her insight into the relation of languages and language as relation," which articulates itself in social and cultural relationality.[91]

In different ways, all of these interpretations emphasize the instability and citationality of language, as well as its incommensurability. Whether fictional, divinely inspired, or everyday, language contains aspects that exceed the grasp of linguistic models, no matter how complex they become. Even though Nadja's attempt to translate the sentence is unsuccessful, the friction generated by this encounter expands her perception of language. It also opens another space of bodily expression, in which her experience of the limits of translation is itself translated into tears.

In the story's final scene, Nadja returns to the hotel lobby to meet Ludwig and finds a group of people watching a bicycle race on television. The announcer is overwhelmed with excitement as he verbally spurs the leader on:

> er redete immer schneller, als hätte er die Pedale zu treten, als wäre er nicht mehr imstande, durchzuhalten, als wäre es sein Herz, das aussetzen konnte, jetzt schweißte seine Zunge [...] der Sprecher keuchte, röchelte, er konnte unmöglich diesen letzten Satz zu Ende bringen und kam mit einem unartikulierten Schrei durch das Zielband.[92]

This announcer also functions as a kind of simultaneous interpreter.[93] He not only translates the visual into the verbal, he simultaneously embodies and transmits the vicarious physical strain of the lead cyclist racing toward the finish line; the tension and focus of the massive crowd watching the final minutes of a major race; and his own mounting excitement, identification with the winning cyclist, and unselfconscious immersion in the collective experience of the event as a whole. In contrast to Nadja's earlier description of herself as a compartmentalized translating machine, the announcer fully embodies and experiences that which he conveys. He does sacrifice verbal precision in doing so, but the physicality of his vocalizations nonetheless performs and conveys a form of affective meaning. This rhythmic description of exuberant language that seems to invoke or spur on physical movement also echoes the earlier passage in which Nadja, newly aware of the privilege of being alive, runs back to the hotel while repeating variations of the mantra, "Ich darf leben."

Bachmann, however, does not simply celebrate such unity of language, affect, and embodiment without critical reflection. As Nadja observes, the announcer's cry of excitement is echoed by the spectators, who then begin chanting the name of the winner, Italian cyclist Vittorio Adorni. The crowd's chants are depicted typographically on the page four times as follows:

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This typography emphasizes the staccato nature of the chant, which is at once fractured and rhythmic as a form of phatic communication that does not transmit semantic content but instead affirms communal experience. For readers, it is at once startling and distancing, pulling back from the immersive rush of the announcer's linguistic propulsion toward the finish line and realigning with Nadja's perspective as an observer.

In the televised crowd's chanting, Nadja hears echoes of the nationalistic fervor of fascism. Most directly, it recalls the chanting of "Sieg Heil!" at Nazi rallies and "Duce, Duce!"

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[91] Ibid., 203.
[92] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 39.
[93] Greber, "Fremdkörper Fremdsprache," 188; Brinker-Gabler, "Living and Lost," 199.

among Italian supporters of Mussolini, but the crowd's fanatical response also invokes the mass spectacles, group mentality, and rigid uniformity of fascism, as well as its glorification of physical strength.[94] "Sie hörte es mit Entsetzen und mit Erleichterung, und durch diese Rufe im Stakkato hörte sie die Stakkatorufe aus allen Städten und allen Ländern, durch die sie gekommen war. Den Haß im Stakkato, den Jubel im Stakkato."[95] She is horrified by this recognition, but it is also a relief to acknowledge its existence. She further acknowledges the violent, hate-filled aspects of human history around the world and the inherent potential of collective human nature for fascism, oppression, and even genocide to be repeated. Yet somehow this knowledge is now able to co-exist in Nadja's mind with the happiness of being alive and experiencing connection with other human beings.[96] As Brinker-Gabler notes, this co-existence can perhaps generate a productive friction that opens up new possibilities, rather than merely being a source of personal distress: "Instead of an either/or there is a both/and, a new possibility, that is the friction of the simultaneous presence of both."[97]

This acceptance of a "both/and" perspective resonates with the position of simultaneous interpreting on an international scale that aims for peace and increased cooperation among states, but is born out of—and thus continually refers back to—the Second World War and the Holocaust. The weight of this burden is underscored by the temporal setting of "Simultan." The Cold War intensified international diplomacy, but also brought forth the threat of nuclear extinction. In this context, the responsibility to avoid mutually assured destruction fell not only to diplomats, but also to interpreters. Through her focus on the figure of the female simultaneous interpreter, Bachmann intervenes in debates about silence and memory during the Cold War, showing how the model of democratic internationalism is still structured by the repression of traumatic histories.

In "Simultan," the testimony of the Nuremberg Trials is present in its absence and in the silences that structure both personal and collective relationships with the past. On a personal level, Nadja's experiences relief when she stops avoiding reminders of the past and instead accepts it as part of the present, regardless of which language she is speaking and which country she is currently in. At first glance, the story might seem to subscribe to a Freudian model of repression, in which Nadja's guilt and fear are expressed through her physical symptoms and generalized anxiety, which in turn are then resolved when she is able to recognize the real issues beneath them. The promise of a "talking cure," however, is left incomplete, as Nadja does not actually articulate her acknowledgement of the present past aloud; she does not testify. On the other hand, doing so would not solve the complex social and political issues that continue to surround her, both personally and professionally. Facing these issues is an important first step,

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[94] Craig connects fascist spectacle and the mass hysteria of sporting events, particularly with regard to Leni Riefenstahl's films. For Brinker-Gabler, this chanting echoes Bachmann's descriptions of the Nazi invasion of Klagenfurt in 1938 as a formative, traumatic experience. Greber notes that the race indicates "die Männerwelt des Sports" and that Bachmann reflects here on the capabilities and limitations of television as a newer mass medium. I would add that radio played a central role in disseminating Nazi propaganda. Craig, "The Collapse of Language," 60; Brinker-Gabler, "Living and Lost," 199; Greber, "Fremdkörper Fremdsprache," 188.

[95] Bachmann, *Simultan*, 39.

[96] Here the multivalence of the German word "Glück" might be a more accurate term than the English word "happiness," as "Glück" also means luck and would thus refer also to her arbitrary good fortune of being alive when so many others have not been so lucky.

[97] Brinker-Gabler, "Living and Lost," 199.

and Nadja's moment of certainty on the rocks should not be dismissed as illusory, but it is tempered by her acknowledgement of the infinite complexities of language, history, and human emotion. Despite the wished for "Erleuchtung, ganz plötzlich," the story ends without a definitive indication of how Nadja, or the international community, should proceed in light of this recognition.

Nonetheless, amidst the confusion, ambiguity, and torment of the present, Bachmann also suggests the existence of hope for the future as a part of this present. Indeed, the story's final word refers simultaneously to the past, present, and future. After wordlessly taking Ludwig's hand to leave the hotel, Nadja turns back around to congratulate the Italian bartender on Adorni's win, and her congratulatory wish stands apart in a new paragraph at the end of the text: "Auguri!" As a speech act, its congratulatory function is enacted in the moment Nadja speaks it aloud, and it refers, of course, to the Adorni's win in the immediate past. However, the multivalent word "Auguri" also refers to the future—it literally means "well wishes" and can be used to wish someone "all the best" in general or "good luck" for a specific event. Indeed, like the English word "augury," it stems from the Latin word "Augurim," which refers to the interpretation of omens. Although the power of divination is reduced to a wish for the future in modern Italian, Nadja's exclamation nonetheless indicates the ability of language to refer not only to the past but also to influence the future.

Writing in 1968, Bachman engaged with debates taking place in West Germany about the repression of the Nazi past, as a younger generation began to challenge their parents' silence on the subject in the mid-1960s. The Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 and the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt from 1963-65 brought personal testimony about the horrific scope of the Holocaust to a generation of Germans who had not been confronted with the testimony of the Nuremberg Trials and who had been raised in the silence of the 1950s. In the early 1960s, documentary plays by writers such as Rolf Hochhuth, Heinar Kipphardt, and Peter Weiss focused directly on historical events related to the Holocaust, which also provoked debates in the West German public media.[98] In 1965, the West German parliamentary debate over lifting the statute of limitations for murders committed under the National Socialist regime brought further attention to the issue.[99] However, the generationally specific calls to expose the full degree of German complicity in these crimes spread in conjunction with the international student movement, which escalated in West Germany in 1967. Like students in France, the U.S., Japan, and many other countries around the world, West German students protested against the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons, the hierarchies of the university and other institutions, and the hypocrisies of conservative bourgeois culture. However, they also protested against the widespread complicity of their parents' generation in the crimes of National Socialism, against the former Nazis who continued to hold positions of social and political power, and against the collective silence that had enabled these continuities to persist. 1967 also saw the influential publication of Alexander und Margarete Mitscherlich's *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern*, a psychoanalytic assessment of West Germany society's collective repression of the Nazi past through a focus on economic reconstruction. Bachmann, who was born in 1926, did not belong to the '68er generation, although her father, too, had been a member of the NSDAP. She had, in fact, been actively grappling with the legacy of European fascism since the late 1940s and had experienced the

[98] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 94–114.

[99] The 20-year deadline was first extended and then abolished for all crimes of murder in 1979.

collective repression of these questions in the critical reception of her early work.[100] Her response to the growing debates of the late 1960s is thus conflicted; while "Simultan" underscores the importance of acknowledging the horrors of the past as they persist into the present, its tentatively hopeful conclusion is circumscribed by the material realities of international politics.

At the same time, Bachmann's contribution is notable both for its broader European scope and its particular engagement with Austrian and Italian histories. In the 1960s and 70s, the number of Austrian artists and public intellectuals who directly addressed the widespread complicity of Austrians in the crimes of National Socialism was still relatively small, while the vast majority of the population held firmly to the narrative that they had been Hitler's first victims. In the Federal Republic of Germany, however, a number of groups called for a radical break not only with the political, but also the cultural, social, and artistic practices of the past. Although they belonged more to a broad artistic movement than to a clearly defined group, the filmmakers of the New German Cinema were also grounded in the desire to create a new kind of cinema that both interrogated the current state of West German society and asked how it had arrived there. In the next chapter, I turn to *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, a major film in the oeuvre of Rainer Werner Fassbinder as well as in the international reception of New German Cinema as a cultural phenomenon. Fassbinder, like Bachmann, is also concerned with continuities with the fascist past that shape the present, and he also refers back to 1945 as a moment when a new international order had not yet been solidified. Fassbinder, however, is particularly focused on the Federal Republic of Germany, reflecting on connections between the early years of Allied occupation and the West German "economic miracle," and the contemporary crises of the late 1970s.

[100] Karen Achberger, *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann* (Columbia, SC: Univ of South Carolina Press, 1995).

Chapter Three

Occupied Bodies: Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*

Like Bachmann's "Simultan," Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979) also looks back to an earlier period in European history in order to reveal continuities with its contemporary moment.[1] But whereas Bachmann's story depicts echoes of the past within the present of the mid-1960s, Fassbinder's film is actually set in the early years of Allied occupation and the West German "economic miracle." From the perspective of the late 1970s, Fassbinder revisits the years 1945-1954 to ask how the FRG arrived at the political crisis of 1977 known as the German Autumn. In other words, Fassbinder asks, "How did we get here?" and answers with *Maria Braun*. In his attempt to interpret the past in relation to the present, Fassbinder employs an interpreter figure, the protagonist Maria Braun. Like Nadja in "Simultan," Maria is also embedded as a mediator within linguistically coded political and economic configurations, structured, in Maria's case, most explicitly by the international postwar power of the United States. Also like Nadja, Maria's attempts to instrumentalize language come into conflict with silences about the past, and the resulting frictions manifest themselves in emotional and embodied reactions—in Maria's case, however, with disastrous consequences.

Fassbinder was a central figure of the New German Cinema whose work carried the revolutionary ideals and radical utopianism of the 1960s protest movement into the late 1970s.[2] He was critical of both the left-wing terrorism that grew out of the 1960s protest movement and what he saw as the West German government's authoritarian response to both protests and terrorism. His 1979 film *Die dritte Generation* portrayed the leftist terrorism of organizations such as the Red Army Faction and the Revolutionary Cells as cynically violent, opportunistic, and distanced from earlier political ideals.[3] At the same time, his contribution to the omnibus film project *Deutschland im Herbst* (1978) articulated his distress over the state's violations of democratic rights and the general population's resigned acceptance of authoritarian measures in the face of political turmoil. In *Deutschland im Herbst*, Fassbinder and his co-contributors reacted to the events of September and October 1977: the kidnapping and murder of industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer, the hijacking of a Lufthansa plane by terrorists working with the RAF, and the suicides of RAF leaders in prison, but also the government's response in the form of a media blackout, increased surveillance, and the prosecution of leftist sympathizers. For Fassbinder, these measures added to the atmosphere of repression already established by the passage of state emergency laws in 1968, the jobs blacklisting of protest movement leaders, politically motivated funding decisions, and other instances of unofficial censorship.[4]

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[1] Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, DVD (New York: Criterion Collection, 2003).

[2] Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History As Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 100.

[3] Ibid., 101.

[4] Ibid., 79-80, 100–101; Anton Kaes, "History, Fiction, Memory: Fassbinder's The Marriage of Maria Braun (1979)," in *German Film and Literature. Adaptations and Transformations*, ed. Eric Rentschler (New York: Methuen, 1986), 277–278.

In these developments, Fassbinder saw a continuity with the authoritarian repression of the National Socialist era, which had been disavowed by a postwar culture of silence and veiled by the rhetoric of democracy, but which nevertheless persisted into the 1970s. As Anton Kaes has shown, *Maria Braun* functions as a history of this present, reconstructing the past "not in order to find out how it 'really' was, but to explain how the present crisis came about."[5] In doing so, Fassbinder reflects on the immediate postwar moment as a missed opportunity for a radical break with both the recent Nazi past and the bourgeois, capitalist, nationalist ideology that preceded it.[6] Instead, as the protagonist Maria Braun's economic rise and resulting emotional downfall illustrate, postwar West German society concentrated on economic reconstruction and avoided discussions of National Socialism that could have led to significant change. As a result, Fassbinder argues, West Germany remained fundamentally conservative, conformist, and authoritarian, despite its democratic veneer. Indeed, *Maria Braun* explicitly indicates a continuity between the Nazi period and the present through the film's opening and closing shots of German Chancellors, beginning with a portrait of Hitler and ending with portraits of Adenauer, Erhard, Kiesinger, and Schmidt.[7]

At the same time, however, Fassbinder also complicates the notion of history as a straightforward, linear narrative. As Kaes also notes, Fassbinder engages with the multiplicity of the past through an intensely heteroglossic approach. Maria's personal story is intertwined with numerous other individual stories (*Geschichten*) as well as collective memories and public history (*Geschichte*) evoked by iconic images and documentary elements such as Adenauer's speeches on the radio and the 1954 World Cup final on television. To represent a multi-layered, heterogeneous past from the perspective of the present, Fassbinder employs "the overcoded concreteness and symbolic amplitude of filmic discourse" and thereby confronts viewers with the "discursive nature of historical representation."[8]

> Camera, *mise-en-scène*, framing, dialogue, music, lighting, radio news, and sound effects send out multiple, simultaneous, and often contradictory signs which cannot be separated and circumscribed. [...] The multitude of interwoven signs and languages, all of them reflecting and commenting on each other, also results in ambiguities, double meanings, and indeterminacies which activate the spectator's search for the most persuasive reading.[9]

Viewers are thus prompted to attempt a hermeneutic interpretation of the past, even as such an attempt is repeatedly undermined by reminders that this past is constructed, contradictory, and resistant to the extraction of a single, stable meaning.

This multiplicity was echoed in the film's domestic and international receptions, particularly in relation to the status of New German Cinema as a national cinema concerned with national history. As Thomas Elsaesser has noted, Fassbinder, together with several other key New German Cinema filmmakers such as Volker Schlöndorff and Werner Herzog, came to function in the late 1970s as an ambassador of German film to international audiences.[10] New

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[5] Kaes, "History, Fiction, Memory," 278.
[6] Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*; Kaes, "History, Fiction, Memory."
[7] Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*, 99.
[8] Kaes, "History, Fiction, Memory," 286.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

German Cinema was never broadly popular in Germany; rather, it was an art cinema funded by the state. However, the major international critical aclaim for films such as *Maria Braun* and Schlöndorff's *Die Blechtrommel* (1979) fed back into their German reception, as Elsaesser explains: "For the German cinema to exist, it first had to be seen by non-Germans. It enacts, as a national cinema, now in explicitly economic and cultural terms, [a] form of self-estranged exhibitionism."[11] Thus, German spectatorship of *Maria Braun* was further mediated through the film's international reception and the international reception of New German Cinema more broadly. Moreover, *Maria Braun* confronted German viewers with representations of a period in their national history that had, at least in part, also been currated for an international market interested in the national brand of German cinema.

As an interpreter figure, the protagonist Maria Braun facilitates an uncertain search for meaning amidst the rapid, multi-layered shifts of the postwar period. At the same time, she also exemplifies the film's heteroglossic engagement with the past through her multilingual skills and her ability to switch between different modes of self-presentation. Throughout the film, she negotiates changing structures of language and power, first under the Allied occupation and then in the context of the economic miracle. These negotiations within historically specific networks of power are brought to the fore when she serves professionally as an interpreter at a key point in her rise to economic success. I argue that reading *Maria Braun* through the lens of her role as an interpreter highlights the important function of multilingual communication in the film, which has until now escaped critical attention.

Within the history of the interpreting profession, Maria belongs to the same generation as the interpreters of the Nuremberg Trials. Unlike Nadja in the mid-1960s, Maria has no formal training; instead, the film depicts her informal acquisition of language ability—in addition to numerous other professionally valuable skills—in the context of the ruptures and displacements caused by the war.[12] She shares this informal education with many of the simultaneous interpreters at the Nuremberg Trials; like them, she must also be flexible and a quick learner, improvising her own "on the job training" as she goes. In fact, "interpreter" is one of many roles that Maria inhabits during her trajectory from bar hostess to powerful businesswoman, but her work as a linguistic mediator resonates throughout the film, illuminating intersections of linguistic, economic, and sexual exchange. In this respect, the filmic medium is also uniquely able to highlight both language acquisition and interpreting as embodied acts of communication and translation. At the same time, the film's repeated inclusion of English together with German in its multiple layers of sound evokes the shifting linguistic landscape that accompanied West Germany's political and economic reorientation after the Second World War.

While Nadja in the mid-1960s has a clearly defined role within established international institutions, Maria is embedded within a rapidly changing matrix of language and power structured first by Germany's status as a defeated nation and an occupied territory, and then by its emergence as part of a European and international community shaped by the Cold War. While the postwar occupation of Germany by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union imposed a new multilingual layer onto German society, West German industry was also rebuilt within a broader wave of globalization that followed the Second World War,

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[11] Thomas Elsaesser, "Primary Identification and the Historical Subject: Fassbinder and Germany," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 549.

[12] She also learns, for example, the context-dependent nature of exchange value by trading on the black market. Mary-Beth Haralovich, "The Sexual Politics of The Marriage of Maria Braun," *Wide Angle* 12, no. 1 (January 1990): 9.

characterized by the Bretton Woods system, export-oriented growth, and international trade. *Maria Braun* demonstrates the value of linguistic capital and the possibilities of translation within this context; by learning English, the language of economic and political power in West Germany, Maria gains opportunity and access, as well as the knowledge to negotiate these structures of power.

At the same time, the film is also about that which remains unspoken, unheard, or untranslated amidst this multiplicity of voices. Like "Simultan," *Maria Braun* also looks back to the Nuremberg Trials from a later perspective, questioning the relationship between translation and testimony, as well as the long-term effects of the trials on public discourse. Like Nadja, Maria as an interpreter is also confronted with collective silences regarding the Holocaust and the Nazi regime as she moves between languages and attempts to wield language as a precise instrument. The frictions arising from language use in the face of personal and collective silences are articulated in both Nadja and Maria's embodied experiences of communication. As Bachmann does in "Simultan," Fassbinder also takes up a model of interpreters as professionally distanced from the interactions they mediate and able to compartmentalize their own emotional responses, before exposing the impossibility of such dissociation. Nadja tries to distance her subjective thoughts and embodied experience from what she regards as a mechanized interpreting process, until her encounter with Ludwig pushes her to acknowledge the historical weight that is inseparable from her linguistic present. Maria, on the other hand, ultimately distances herself from language, sexuality, her body, and her emotions in her attempt to keep her ideal of marriage separate from the realities of economic exchange. When confronted with the impossibility of this separation, she manifests this internal collision physically by causing a deadly explosion.

Before continuing with my analysis, I will briefly outline the film's rather melodramatic plot: Maria marries Hermann while he is home on furlough, and they are able to spend "einen halben Tag und eine ganze Nacht" together before Hermann returns to the Russian front. After the war, Hermann does not return home, and Maria is subsequently informed that he is dead. Out of economic necessity, she initiates a romantic relationship with Bill, an African-American G.I., who can help provide for her and her family and who also teaches her English. One day, Hermann, who is in fact still alive, returns home unexpectedly while she is in bed with Bill. The two men struggle, and Maria, in coming to her husband's aid, hits Bill over the head and kills him. At her trial, Hermann takes the blame and goes to jail, and Maria vows to earn money for a new life together upon his release. She secures a position as personal assistant to Oswald, the owner of a textile business, for whom she also serves as an interpreter. She also initiates an affair with Oswald, and due to her single-minded devotion to earning money for a future with Hermann, quickly achieves economic success. When Hermann is released from jail, however, he sends Maria a letter saying that he cannot be with her until he has become an economically independent man. Only later, when Oswald dies of a terminal illness and Hermann shows up at her door, is it revealed that Oswald actually paid Hermann to stay away from Maria so that Oswald could continue his affair with her until his death. Maria, who had seen herself as exerting her own agency in choosing to employ her sexuality in her pursuit of economic success, realizes that she has in fact been prostituted by her husband, the very man in whom she had placed all of her hopes for the future. Unable to bear this revelation, Maria semi-consciously causes a gas explosion in the new house she has built to live in together with Hermann, killing them both.

Economies of Sex and Language

Reading Maria's acquisition of English through her role as an interpreter calls attention to her gendered position within a historically specific constellation of linguistic and economic exchange. Maria learns English through her relationship with Bill, which is characterized by linguistic, sexual, and economic exchange, and which is also marked as socially transgressive by Bill's race as well as his nationality. Through Maria's relationship with Bill, Fassbinder reevaluates stereotypes of opportunistic German women who "sold themselves" to American occupation soldiers for cigarettes and nylon stockings as soon as Germany was defeated. As discussed in Chapter One, here, too, the crossing of linguistic boundaries raises questions of national identity and betrayal as well as associations of sexual transgression. While Maria's figuration as an "interpreter-prostitute" is at first merely associative, it becomes dramatically concretized in her relationship with Oswald.

As Mary-Beth Haralovich argues, *Maria Braun* demonstrates how "gendered identities are informed by economic relations" and "social relations of exchange."[13] In her analysis, Haralovich charts Maria's transformation into a sexual commodity and the redefinition of her exchange value over the course of the film. Although Maria believes she can take advantage of the sexual economy while keeping her identity as a wife separate, she "becomes progressively more governed by the social relations of exchange, eventually becoming alienated as her exchange value [...] comes to dominate her."[14] The contract between Oswald and Hermann underscores this transformation from "active subject" to "object of exchange."[15] In my analysis of the film, I add language as a third element to the nexus of exchange that Haralovich outlines. In doing so, I invoke Lévi-Strauss's model of the exchange of women, goods, and words, as well as the convergence of translation with transaction, but I also situate this convergence historically within the particular political and economic circumstances of postwar West Germany.[16] In the first part of the film, which depicts the economic deprivation and political occupation of Germans in the immediate postwar years, Maria acquires her knowledge of English through a relationship characterized by sexual and economic exchange. In the second part of the film, which depicts the rapidity of West German reconstruction within the international framework of Cold War politics, Maria implements her knowledge of English to facilitate sexual and economic exchange.

In many ways, Maria's economic rise and moral decline represent the postwar history of the Federal Republic of Germany.[17] She is thus part of a long tradition of female figures that symbolize a nation, but her gendered position is also further historicized. As historian Elizabeth Heineman has shown, women's experiences play a prominent role in representing the postwar years in German collective memory, both because their contributions to the survival of their communities were unusually visible during this time and because they were not as directly implicated in the crimes of Nazism. Over time, aspects of female-coded experiences became universalized in West German collective memory, particularly as narratives of German

[13] Ibid., 7–8.
[14] Ibid., 8.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963).
[17] Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*, 97–98.

victimhood and heroic rebuilding.[18] In conjunction with her role as an interpreter, Maria also embodies two iconic and seemingly opposed female figures of the postwar period: the *Trümmerfrau* ("rubble woman") and the *Ami-Liebchen* ("Yank's Sweetheart"), also known to American G.I.s as "Veronika Dankeschön" (whose initials refer to venereal disease). Whereas the *Trümmerfrau* metonymically rebuilt the nation through hard work and self-sacrifice, the *Ami-Liebchen* disgracefully engaged in sexual relationships with American soldiers in return for chocolates, stockings, and other luxury items.[19] In actuality, many German women who entered romantic relationships with occupation soldiers sought emotional companionship as well as economic support, while others saw it as a way to ensure their family's survival.[20] In the popular discourse of the time, however, "fraternizers" not only prostituted themselves, they betrayed their people and dishonored the nation.

Although we do not see Maria actually clearing away physical rubble, she nonetheless evokes the *Trümmerfrau* archetype in her willingness to work hard, her commitment to do whatever is necessary to support her family, and her drive to rebuild a better life after the war. Moreover, her success as an ambitious leader in Oswald's textile company also contributes to rebuilding the German economy, leaving its postwar ruin behind. Early in the film, Maria and her sister Betti walk through a landscape of bombed out buildings past a line of *Trümmerfrauen*, citing iconic photographs as well as the *Trümmerfilme* of the immediate postwar years such as *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946), *Irgendwo in Berlin* (1946), and Germania *anno zero* (1948). In doing so, the film also refers to the *Trümmerfrau* as a central element in the Federal Republic of Germany's founding myth of rebirth as a "phoenix rising from the ashes."[21] But while this myth generally linked the economic miracle of the 1950s to the resilience, self-sacrifice, and hard work of the *Trümmerfrauen*,[22] Fassbinder calls this legacy into question by exposing the darker sides of the economic miracle, such as political alliance with the West, rearmament, the materialistic embrace of capitalism at the expense of human relationships, and the repression of the Nazi past. Indeed, Fassbinder asserted that West Germany missed a crucial opportunity to truly break with the past in 1945 and to establish a radically humane and free society; instead, the Zero Hour was a myth and a society of conservative, authoritarian exploitation was allowed to continue.[23]

If Maria's trajectory of material success and emotional demise complicates her association with the traditional *Trümmerfrau*, her portrayal as an *Ami-Liebchen* also reveals the historical complexity of this figure. From a strictly instrumental view, the ability to speak English is one of the economic benefits she receives from Bill in exchange for a sexual

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[18] Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (April 1, 1996): 355–356. See also Annette Brauerhoch, *"Fräuleins" und G.I.s. Geschichte und Filmgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2006).

[19] Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman," 374–388.

[20] Ibid., 381.

[21] Ibid., 355.

[22] Ibid., 375–376.

[23] "Unsere Väter, die nach Ende des Krieges Chancen gehabt haben, einen Staat zu errichten, der so sein hätte können, wie es humaner und freier vorher keinen gegeben hat, und zu was diese Chancen letztlich verkommen sind." Rainer Werner Fassbinder, "Die dritte Generation," in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Filme befreien den Kopf*, ed. Michael Töteberg (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), 73.

relationship, just like food, stockings, and other material goods.[24] As Haralovich notes, Maria first recognizes the exchange value of her sexuality when she confronts an American soldier who has made a rude sexual comment and he responds by giving her two packs of cigarettes (a valuable currency in the postwar barter economy) as a sign of both apology and admiration.[25] However, Maria and Bill's relationship is also based on genuine, mutual affection; they are both shown enjoying the companionship as well as the sexual aspects of their relationship. When Maria hears that her husband has died, Bill comforts her, and when Maria becomes pregnant, she and Bill are both happy about the news. Maria teaches Bill the German expression "guter Hoffnung sein" (to be expecting, i.e. pregnant), and they look forward to raising their child bilingually. Maria's linguistic relationship with Bill, who also speaks German with her and her family, is thus rooted not only in economic need and sexual attraction, but also in mutual affection, respect, and bidirectional learning.

Language Lessons

After Maria meets Bill at the bar where she works, the next scene shows him teaching her English. This scene explores the ways in which language is linked to bodily experience as well as to social conventions and constructs, particularly in relation to race and sexuality. The utopian possibility of a true Year Zero, which Bill and Maria's interracial relationship in some ways seems to promise, is in other ways already undermined by the impossibility of detaching language from its historical weight. As the scene begins, the camera pans to follow Maria and Bill as they walk up a path of steps through the woodsy garden area behind her family's apartment building. The camera pauses when Bill stops in front of a tree, where, pointing with his arm and index finger extended, he proclaims in an authoritative voice, "And this is a tree." Maria, who is learning by repeating Bill's words as well as the cadence of his voice, echoes with, "This is a tree." His dramatic pause, exaggerated gesture, and didactic tone call attention in Brechtian fashion to the role of linguistic authority that he temporarily inhabits. Language instruction functions here as a means of courtship and seduction, but it also potentially establishes a hierarchy of power between male teacher and female learner. Additionally, the formal grandeur with which Bill names first the tree and then the birds chirping in it—"and that which you hear, peep, peep, peep, are birds"—also recalls Adam naming the animals in the Garden of Eden, resonating with the impossible hope of a new start after the Zero Hour.

Despite all this, the authority of Bill's position as a speaker is threatened by two factors, one more historically specific and the other more universal. The first is Bill's precarious status as an African-American soldier in Europe in the 1940s; although he is aligned with the social, political, and economic power of the American army, he still faces widespread racism among both Americans and Germans.[26] The second is the fundamental instability of language itself.

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[24] As characterized by Rheuban: "In exchange for sex, Maria not only gets from Bill and the other American soldiers she serves in the bar cigarettes and nylon stockings, she also learns their language." "History, Melodrama, Ideology," 222. I would add that the film does not imply that Maria has sex with other soldiers in addition to Bill (but it does not explicitly rule it out as a possibility, either).

[25] Haralovich, "The Sexual Politics of The Marriage of Maria Braun," 9.

[26] Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey, "Representing Blackness: Instrumentalizing Race and Gender in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's The Marriage of Maria Braun," *Women in German Yearbook* 17 (January 1, 2001): 17. Majer O'Sickey also notes that the precarity of Bill's position is dramatically underscored when he is killed after removing his uniform (17). For more on African-American soldiers in occupied Germany, see: Timothy L. Schroer, *Recasting Race after World War II: Germans and African Americans in American-*

"This is a tree" may seem like a concrete statement, particularly when accompanied by Bill's gesture towards what indeed appears to be a tree. However, it also recalls Saussure's famous tree example of the arbitrariness of signs, reminding us that a "tree" is, at the same time a "Baum", an "arbre," an "árbol," and that it is only a "tree" within the conventional sign-system of English by virtue of not being a "shrub," "flower," "bird," and so on.[27] The socially constructed nature of language—but also, crucially, the role of language in shaping the social—is further emphasized when Maria repeats Bill's lesson on racial categories. When Bill declares, "I am black, and you are white," Maria repeats, "I am black and you are white." This repetition without a difference of words but with a difference in subject position further underscores the context-dependent instability of language. At the same time, we are reminded of how language can also work to institute and maintain rigid identity categories such as the implied opposition of "black" and "white." So far in the lesson, Bill has referred to sensory perceptions of sight and sound (seeing a tree, hearing birds); while categories of race also have to do with the perception of bodies, this perception is mediated by social constructs and linguistic practices. As the medium of color film conveys, Bill's skin color is objectively closer to medium brown and Maria's to light beige. However, from a social perspective, racial categories prefigure their relationship.

Once Maria has corrected herself, a final segment fully connects language learning, embodiment, and courtship. The camera stays on a medium close-up of Maria's face, shot over Bill's shoulder as his hand enters the frame to circle her left eye. "These are your eyes," he says, and she repeats, "These are...me...my eyes." He then moves his finger to her mouth and leaves it there while saying "And these are your lips," which she also repeats. This emphasis on possessive pronouns highlights Maria's ownership of her body, but her grammatical stumble also indicates the precarity of this agency, which is later undermined by Hermann's agreement with Oswald.

At this point the film cuts to a long shot of Maria and Bill standing in the garden; the shot is framed below by broken window glass and then, as the camera pans to follow Maria and Bill walking, by part of the window frame on the right. As in many of Fassbinder's films, this characteristic visual framing underscores how the characters are caught within larger social structures, ascribed identities, and cultural norms. Here, the shot through the window frame suggests they are being watched but also judged based on the racial categories Bill has just named. Moreover, the broken glass serves a reminder of the war's destruction; Maria and Bill continue to be framed by history, and the languages they speak are also impossible to divorce from this history.

In her analysis of the film, Sabine Pott makes a similar observation about a slightly later scene, in which the whole family (Maria, Bill, Betti, her husband Willy, Maria's mother, Grandpa Berger) is shown picnicking in the garden in a seemingly idyllic tableau, enjoying the food and drink that Bill has brought.[28] This moment could also be seen as holding out the utopian

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Occupied Germany (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007); Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Maria H. Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 85–108.

[27] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 65–67.

[28] Here Maria's mother is also shown practicing English with Bill. It is possible that her attitude is opportunistic, and that she sees the chance to improve her English as a material benefit of Maria's relationship with Bill, just like the food he has brought them. However, she also demonstrates a

promise of a new beginning, until the camera pulls back and we realize that the entire scene is actually shot from inside, again through a window.[29] Although this historical moment may be more open to new possibilities than the recent Nazi past or the Cold War politics and capitalist focus of the coming years, it is still constrained by pre-existing social norms, structures, and expectations.

In the eyes of many Germans of the early postwar years, Maria's relationship with Bill is a betrayal on multiple levels: a relationship with an American soldier is a betrayal of the sacrifices made by German men during the war and a humiliating insult added to the injury of defeat. A relationship with a Black man underscores that insult, and for those still holding to the Nazi ideology of racial purity, makes Maria a traitor to her race. On a personal level, Maria could be considered unfaithful to her husband Hermann when she begins a relationship with Bill before hearing that Hermann is dead. Maria, however, has her own version of fidelity, which is tied to her idealized concept of true love and the institution of marriage. Even when she believes Hermann is dead and Bill asks her to marry him, she answers: "Ich habe dich sehr lieb und ich will mit dir zusammen sein, aber ich werde dich nie heiraten. Verheiratet bin ich mit meinem Mann." Strikingly, when Hermann appears as Maria and Bill are about to have sex, Maria shows no signs of shame or guilt at being "caught with another man."[30] Instead, she rushes to greet him and comes to his aid in his struggle with Bill. Indeed, the extent to which Maria is in fact still subject to a prewar ideology of what Fassbinder called "sentimental idealism" is revealed when she betrays Bill by killing him out of loyalty to her husband.[31] During her trial for Bill's murder, she reaffirms the separation of her sacred, idealized marriage and her everyday exchanges of sexuality and affection (what others might in fact prioritize as real life or material reality).

Unable or unwilling to mourn Bill's death, Maria instead concentrates solely on her future with Hermann. Once Maria and Bill's baby is stillborn, all that remains of Bill, both in Maria's life and in the film, is the English language, which is subsequently instrumentalized in the service of capitalism. For Matthias Uecker, Maria's happy relationship with Bill and the promise of a multiracial and multilingual baby are the central missed opportunities depicted by the film.[32] According to Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey, any hope for a post-racist model of German society is violently undermined by Maria's casual killing of Bill, whose existence is framed as disposable.[33] In this reading, Maria's lack of emotional reaction to Bill's death and subsequent erasure of his memory are indicative of the systemic racism in both American and German societies.[34] For Uecker, Maria's inability to mourn Bill's death and her repression of his killing through a single-minded focus on earning money for the future exemplify the economic miracle

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willingness to communicate and to encounter him linguistically in his language as well as her own. She is welcoming, expresses gratitude for his gifts, and does not distance herself or exhibit any discomfort about Bill's race. In this precarious moment immediately following the war, the fulfillment of economic needs can potentially still co-exist with community and social connection.

[29] Sabine Pott, *Film als Geschichtsschreibung bei Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 42.

[30] Matthias Uecker, "A Fatal German Marriage: The National Subtext of Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun," German Life and Letters 54, no. 1 (2001): 53.*

[31] Rheuban, "History, Melodrama, Ideology," 211.

[32] Uecker, "A Fatal German Marriage," 54.

[33] O'Sickey, "Representing Blackness," 19.

[34] Ibid.

as an attempt to repress memories of the past.[35] In my estimation, both forces are concurrently at work. The "good hope" for the future indicated by Maria's pregnancy, however imperfect and historically constrained it may have been, dies along with Bill and the baby. From this point on, Maria grows increasingly calculating and manipulative, beholden only to her fixation on an idealized future with Hermann.

Maria thus embodies a complex tension of contradictory boundaries, which further characterize her figuration as an interpreter. From an outside perspective, she transgresses numerous boundaries in her extramarital relationships with Bill and Oswald and as an assertive woman in a male-dominated business world; she also commits the ultimate ethical transgression of taking a human life. Nonetheless, her internal sense of integrity is based on keeping her marriage elevated and separated from everything else. In subsequent scenes, these questions of transgression and fidelity will be further illuminated by Maria's position as an interpreter, as the film draws on historical discourses of interpreters as transgressive figures. Before this, however, Maria's internal distinction of idealized fidelity is highlighted by a key moment of translation during her trial for Bill's murder, which also intersects with the question of fidelity in translation: to whom or what should one be faithful and at what cost?

Fidelity on Trial

Translation and interpreting play a crucial role during Maria's trial by an American military court, recalling the Nuremberg Trials and raising questions about international justice in translation. Although Maria later serves as an interpreter herself, here her testimony is translated by a courtroom interpreter, whose neutrality is visually called into question. He is seated along side a row of military officials under an enormous American flag hung at the front of an improvised courtroom, and he is usually framed together with the officer conducting the proceedings in a medium shot when either one of them is speaking. For Majer O'Sickey, the trial scene functions to question the narrative of widespread denazification and to criticize the U.S. for prosecuting Nazis based on convenience rather than justice: "The surrealistic set, the Brechtian *Gestik*, and the melodramatic music, combined with dramatic camera angles and editing, lend this ostensible search for justice a farcical aspect."[36] When Hermann suddenly claims that he in fact killed Bill, the court quickly accepts him as a "substitute perpetrator." Majer O'Sickey also notes the systemic racism that implicitly diminishes the loss of a Black life; Bill is neither mourned nor even mentioned again in the film, and Maria, the court, and the film itself are eager move on.[37] Thus, I would add, the trial is revealed to be merely a performance of justice, and the relationship between testimony and silence is further complicated.

The centrality of translation—and mistranslation—in this scene highlights the difficulties of understanding another person's subjective experience, particularly across languages, cultures, genders, and positions of power. Having acted in accordance with her belief in elevating her love for Hermann above all else, Maria tells the truth about her relationship with Bill during her interrogation, while also testifying to her love for her husband. She rejects the allegation that she merely used Bill to trade sexual favors for material gain and insists that she was fond of him. When the interrogator objects, "Didn't you just say the same thing about feelings for your husband?" she answers, "Nein," and as the interrogator begins to flip back through the transcript

[35] Uecker, "A Fatal German Marriage," 54; Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit Zu Trauern: Grundlagen Kollektiven Verhaltens* (München: R. Piper, 1991).
[36] O'Sickey, "Representing Blackness," 19.
[37] Ibid.

of her testimony, she continues, "Sie brauchen gar nicht nachzusehen. Sie würden den Unterschied sowieso nicht verstehen. Den Bill habe ich lieb gehabt, und ich liebe meinen Mann." Maria's certainty that the court will not understand her position is underscored and literalized by the interpreter's mistranslation of her statement, which fails to convey the difference between "liebhaben" and lieben": "She loved Bill and she loves her husband." "Well, that is really a very fine difference," quips her interrogator dismissively before moving on. The court has clearly prejudged Maria through the framework of the materialist Veronika Dankeschön stereotype and its members are unable or unwilling to understand the complexity of Maria's experience. Moreover, if the Maria's trial reflects critically on the limitations of the Nuremberg Trials overall, the court interpreter's mistranslation can also be read as questioning the ability of translation to fully convey testimony about the past.

However, Maria's testimony to her absolute love for her husband is understood by at least one person in attendance, namely Hermann himself. He, of course, understands the linguistic distinction that Maria makes in German, and perhaps even more importantly, he subscribes to the same ideology of sentimental idealism that will ultimately become both his and Maria's downfall. Immediately after Maria finishes the sentence, "...und ich liebe meinen Mann," the film cuts from Maria's face to Hermann's, who is standing behind a pillar at the back of the room. As we hear the businesslike voice of the interpreter translating Maria's statement, it contrasts with the visceral reaction that we see on Hermann's face in a medium close-up; he hunches over and clasps his handkerchief to his face, looking stricken with emotion, as if about to vomit or cry out. For Hermann, this "very fine difference" changes his understanding of Maria's actions, and a few seconds later he proclaims to the courtroom that he was the one who killed Bill. In doing so, he joins Maria in performing the ideal of marriage as loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice, which, however, proves untenable.

An Experienced Woman

After Bill's death and Hermann's imprisonment, Maria's encounter with the wealthy industrialist Dr. Karl Oswald constitutes a major turning point in her economic and emotional trajectory. Crucially, this scene also centers on linguistic intersections, multilingual ability, and (mis)translation. On the train home after giving birth to a stillborn son, Maria learns from the conductor that the French-German owner of a textile company is sitting in first class. In meeting Oswald, Maria stages herself as an intriguing, seductive woman who keeps him guessing. After asking Oswald with a wide smile whether the seat next to him is free in an otherwise empty train car, Maria then feigns disinterest, closing her eyes and leaning her head back while he attempts to make conversation.[38] This is the first of Maria's numerous attempts to gain the upper hand in her relationship with Oswald, who, as a wealthy, well-educated, male business owner, holds a more powerful social position than a young woman with little money or formal education. However, in addition to relying on her "feminine wiles" to destabilize Oswald, Maria also possesses another key asset that Oswald does not: the English language. Oswald is middle-aged, spent the war years in France, and does not speak English. Maria's ability to speak English, the language of the global future, as opposed to French, the language of the European past, is further emphasized when they are joined in the first-class car by a drunk African-American soldier who calls himself "Lonely Richard." Richard, speaking English with an odd blend of crude British and American slang, asks Oswald if Maria is his "little lady" and expresses his desire to have sex

[38] This calculated introduction contrasts sharply with her relationship with Bill, which begins when she approaches him directly and asks him to dance.

with her.[39] Whereas Oswald does not understand English and is unsure how to handle the situation, Maria responds in English by topping Richard's vulgarities with a string of her own, threatening castration and a call to the military police. Through her (intimate) knowledge of English and the codes of the U.S. military, she demonstrates her linguistic and cultural capital and thus disrupts Richard's display of sexualized power and his attempt to objectify her as an "occupied" woman.[40] Richard responds with a mix of surprise, mocking and actual respect, and drunken good humor; he salutes Maria with an "Aye, aye, sir!" that recognizes her in a male-coded position of authority and ambles off.

Oswald is impressed both with Maria's English and her ability to assert herself. When he asks her what she said to Richard, she responds with a "mistranslation" that is in fact a blatant lie intended to communicate something else entirely. With her eyes once again closed and her head leaned back, as if nothing had happened, she languidly tells him, "Ich habe gesagt, Sie sind Karl Oswald, aus der Textilbranche, Sie reisen gern und möchten die Zeit nützen, etwas nachzudenken." With this obvious lie, she underscores Oswald's inability to understand English and his reliance on her in this matter—he only gets to know what she wants him to know, and if she wishes to lie to him, she will do so. Nevertheless, she also indicates that she was in fact focused on listening to Oswald during their earlier conversation, and that her exchange with Richard was really all about Oswald, not in terms of content, but as its intended audience. When Oswald asks where Maria learned such good English, she answers nonchalantly and with eyes still closed, "Im Bett." If the sexualization of Maria's foreign language ability was not apparent before, it is certainly clear now, as Maria explicitly links sexual and linguistic experience. In a medium close-up, Maria's face is framed by the bright red headrest of her seat, and a smile spreads across her face as she presents herself to Oswald (and to the camera) as a carefully staged sexual object.

As Majer O'Sickey points out, however, Maria not only uses Richard to impress Oswald, she also betrays Bill by attributing her vulgar English to their sexual relationship, which the film in fact depicts as tender and respectful.[41] Thus she compounds her betrayal of Bill by also betraying his memory. Moreover, I would add, Maria instrumentalizes her knowledge of English, divorcing it from the aspects of emotional connection and intimacy that it carried in her relationship with Bill. Instead, she employs English strategically in the same way that she employs her body as a tool for financial gain.

A Highly Visible Interpreter

Oswald hires Maria as his personal assistant, and, as his accountant Senkenberg informs her, she is the first woman in an executive position at the company. We then see Maria serving as an interpreter in negotiations with an American company over the purchase of nylon manufacturing machinery. The scene highlights her position as a woman as well as her willingness to overstep conventional boundaries as an interpreter. In doing so, Fassbinder draws on the tradition of portraying interpreters as scheming manipulators but also subverts it in order to portray Maria's rise as a powerful businesswoman. In this scene, the American sellers grow

[39] Majer O'Sickey reads his strange mix of linguistic genres as a form of defamiliarizing parody that calls attention to categories of race, gender, and sexuality. O'Sickey, "Representing Blackness," 20–21.
[40] In Majer O'Sickey's reading, Maria undermines Richard's position as a Black man in order to align herself with white male power, embodied by Oswald in this scene. This mirrors her earlier murder of Bill in collaboration with Hermann.
[41] O'Sickey, "Representing Blackness," 22.

impatient as Oswald and Senkenberg deliberate over how many machines their firm can afford to buy. But when it appears that the negotiations have reached an impasse, Maria intervenes directly. She thus moves from acting as a medium with interventionist tendencies to a fully empowered agent.

Maria is also a highly visible interpreter. In contrast to models of interpreter neutrality and invisibility, she explicitly draws attention to her physical presence in the room. The friction generated by her presence as an attractive woman among a group of men is intentional; rather than downplay her sexualization and objectification in the workplace, Maria attempts to harness it. In fact, the friction of her physical presence facilitates international economic exchange across barriers of language and business style. Already in her work as a bar hostess and her encounter with Oswald on the train, we have seen Maria display herself as a sexual object; here, too, she stages herself as a bewitching spectacle. She is the only woman in the room, a microcosm of her minority status as a woman in the world of business. While the four men present wear brown and grey suits that blend in with the brown tones of the room's wooden furnishings, Maria stands out with a light blue blouse, red lipstick, and her blonde hair.

The scene is deliberately staged and choreographed. It takes place in Oswald's elegant drawing room, which is bordered on three sides by doorways to other rooms as well as a large mirror, offering multiple opportunities for Fassbinder's signature framing shots. As the negotiations proceed, the characters enact a dynamic of dispersal and coalescence that visually performs the back and forth exchanges, advances, retreats, and asides of the negotiations. The audio and visual images do not always align; sometimes the camera will follow a speaker across the room but then linger on that point after the speaker has turned around and paced out of the frame, and at other times a speaker will be partially reflected in the mirror. This creates a tension between embodied and disembodied voices that underscores the slippages of speaker positions in interpreted communication. While Oswald and the lead American negotiator pace across the room in different directions, Senkenberg and his American counterpart generally remain seated at tables in the center of the room, hunched over their records and calculations. Their seated position indicates their supporting roles in relation to their bosses' decision-making power, while also emphasizing that they are grounded in numbers and rationality, in contrast to the dynamism required of business leadership in capitalist enterprise. As an interpreter, Maria also occupies a service position, but she stands, indicating that her role as a facilitator of communication is of a different order.

The scene begins with camera movement that demonstrates Maria's visually arresting appearance: the camera pans right to follow the lead American across the room, but as his path crosses with Oswald's in the middle of the room, Maria comes into view on the right side of the frame and the camera stops to focus on her while the American proceeds into the background. Maria leans against a piano, incongruously evoking the sultry pose of a lounge singer; her self-consciously bored posture echoes her feigned indifference on the train, inviting but also unsettling the male gaze. Here, too, however, she is also ready to jump into action; with her first translation, she strides purposefully across the room, followed by the camera, where she then strikes another leaning pose against a doorway. She paces again, and is again followed tightly by the camera, as she makes her first interjection, urging Oswald and Senkenberg to take a risk and give the Americans a definite answer. She then takes up her lounging position at the piano again until she switches out of her role as an interpreter.

The question of Maria's fidelity as an interpreter is complex. Senkenberg, who understands some English, is suspicious of Maria's translations, particularly as they are obviously not word-

for-word. Indeed, Maria's translations arguably go beyond the murky boundary that separates translation from paraphrase, commentary, or other forms of mediation, as evidenced by the following exchange:

> American: "Will you please tell your gentlemen that I'm not sure they understood – we are selling machines! If they want to knit their stockings by hand they should do so, but that's not our business!"
>
> Senkenberg: "Was hat er gesagt?"
>
> Maria: "Er hat nochmal betont, dass die Pency nur komplette Anlagen liefert und nicht einzelne Teile."
>
> Senkenberg: "Ich habe etwas von Handarbeit verstanden."

Maria is not a faithful translator in the traditional sense. She interprets with a heavy emphasis on interpretation, in the sense that she conveys the central point underlying the American's frustrated utterance, but in an entirely different manner. By professional standards, her translation is severely lacking. However, in her linguistic infidelity she nonetheless remains faithful to the interests of her employer. She does not covertly manipulate the communication she translates—her translation is factually true, relevant, and actionable; she "merely" summarizes in the interest of moving the negotiations forward. From a standard professional perspective, this would be viewed as an abuse of her privileged—and trusted—position, but it also fits Maria's overall approach to life in which the ends justify the means. In a later exchange, Maria's sarcastic yet accurate translation pointedly expresses her own frustration with Senkenberg's appeals to caution as well as his skepticism towards her and her abilities.

> American: "Just to tell you the very truth, gentlemen, … we are getting tired of this!"
>
> Senkenberg: "Was hat er gesagt?"
>
> Maria: "Er hat das bisherige Ergebnis zusammengefasst."
>
> Senkenberg: "Ich habe irgendwas gehört, dass er müde ist."
>
> Maria: "Das hat er auch gesagt, dass er es satt hat."

These translations, first subtly sarcastic and then overtly biting, perform her position of linguistic power. As with her blatant mistranslation on the train, here, too, she demonstrates Oswald and Senkenberg's dependence on her for information; she alone is in the position to decide how it will be filtered, shaped, and presented. When Senkenberg questions her translation based on his literal understanding of the word "tired," Maria's further translation underscores her superior grasp of English while also expressing her annoyance with his questioning. At the same time, Maria is again actually performing for Oswald, demonstrating her language skills and her business savvy, as well as her sexual desirability.

At this point, Maria's redefines her mediating role by foregrounding her physical presence as her primary mode of facilitating the deal. By inserting herself directly into the negotiations, she does not so much depart from her role as an interpreter as harness the fantasies and anxieties associated with it and further accentuate the element of bodily presence inherent to it. During the dialogue sequence quoted above, the film cuts from a medium long shot of the American negotiator saying "We are getting tired of this," to a reverse medium long shot representing his point of view. Maria is in the foreground with Senkenberg and Oswald behind her on either side. After Maria makes it clear to Senkenberg that she is also fed up with his and Oswald's waffling, she turns back around to face the camera squarely and makes her move to intervene in the negotiations directly. As Oswald and Senkenberg continue to voice their doubts about the deal, she steps forward toward the camera, while Oswald and Senkenberg fade into the background out of focus. For a moment, she seems to look directly into the camera, before it

draws back slightly, showing the American's left shoulder in the bottom right corner of the screen, and it becomes clear that she is maintaining direct eye-contact with him as she moves confidently towards him. By aligning the viewer with the American's perspective, the viewer is also both challenged and seduced by Maria's intense gaze and knowing smile. Without taking her eyes off the American, she interrupts Oswald, who is still out of focus behind her, asking, "Darf ich auch mal was sagen?" When he replies affirmatively, the film cuts to a close-up shot of Maria turning suddenly to look at Oswald, fixing him—and the viewer—with her flashing eyes while telling him in a steady, assertive voice to go drink a cognac in the kitchen and give her a half hour alone with the Americans. As a reverse shot reveals Oswald to be intrigued by Maria's proposal (and person), Senkenberg objects from his blurry and increasingly irrelevant position behind Oswald that this no longer has anything to do with questions of translation. Indeed, Maria has at this point departed fully from the realm of linguistic translation; nonetheless, she remains faithful to the interests of the company and to her role as a facilitator of economic exchange.

In a reverse medium shot from Oswald's perspective, Maria paces as she explains her gendered qualifications: "Herr Senkenberg hat schon recht, ich verstehe nichts vom Geschäft, aber ich verstehe was von der deutschen Frau, von Nylon und Gewebtem. Ich verstehe überhaupt sehr viel von der Zukunft, da bin ich sozusagen Spezialist." Here she turns her status as a woman without formal business training from an ostensible liability into a privileged position of expertise. As she continues to speak, she paces left out of the frame, the camera pulls back and pans slightly to the right, framing all four men who are turned toward Maria in fascination. Their faces are lit from Maria's direction off-screen, and they are positioned as the audience to Maria's performance of cultural authority.

Oswald agrees to the experiment, and as Senkenberg continues voicing his objections, the film cuts to the final shot of the scene: a mesmerizing close-up of Maria's face against a wood paneled wall, her blond hair lit from above like a crown or halo, her left side slightly in shadow, evoking an air of mystery and seduction, a satisfied smile spreading across her lips, and her eyes focused on a point to the right of the camera (presumably either the American or Oswald, her short- and long-term targets). This shot enacts the men's collective view, but it also invites primary identification with the male gaze, as viewers are also transfixed by Maria's beauty and her assertive, suggestive expression. From the beginning of the scene, spoken language takes precedence over the written information in the accountants' financial records and notes. But as the scene progresses, visual perceptions of physical presence become most important, and in the final shot, Senkenberg and Oswald's verbal back-and-forth is reduced to background noise by the intensity of Maria's physical display. Indeed, Maria's physical presence as a mediator ultimately plays a more important role than her language abilities in facilitating economic exchange.

We learn the outcome of Maria's negotiations in the next scene, when Oswald raises a toast at dinner to the bold deal that Maria has struck. We do not, however, learn what transpired in Maria's half hour alone with the Americans. It is notable that although nothing in Maria's words or behavior directly suggests solicitation of sex, her assertive display of female physical presence, combined with sustained direct eye contact, is enough to raise the possibility, particularly when read in conjunction with notions of interpreters as sexually transgressive figures. Some readings of the film assume that she actually "proffers sexual favors" as part of her bargaining tactics.[42] I believe she harnesses the inevitable insinuations and fantasies of promiscuity surrounding attractive young women in service positions such as secretaries and

[42] Rheuban, "History, Melodrama, Ideology," 222.

interpreters in order to create an opportunity to distinguish herself, but that the shrewd bargaining, practical sense, and fierce determination she demonstrates throughout the film likely guide her in negotiating with the Americans as well.

Nonetheless, Maria can be read as an interpreter-prostitute figure like those discussed in Chapter One. In any case, this characterization has more to do with cultural associations and stereotypes than with the complexities of actual sexual and romantic relationships; Maria's willingness to cross boundaries of gender, race, class, language, nationality, legality, and social convention is captured by this dual figuration. Maria does, in fact, initiate a sexual relationship with Oswald in pursuit of financial gain. As she explains to her husband, she knows she will have to deal with sexual advances from her boss at some point, so she begins the affair to get the upper hand. Although she cannot escape her gendered social position, she can seek to instrumentalize and exploit it. In doing so, she attempts to assert the agency over her own body and sexuality that social conventions have traditionally denied.

In the end, however, Maria is prostituted by Hermann, whose secret contract with Oswald essentially allows Oswald to rent Maria as a sexual object from Hermann.[43] Although Maria's fidelity is called into question in numerous ways throughout the film, she is ultimately brought down by being too loyal to Hermann and to the ideal of their marriage. Oswald, who initially seems like a schoolboy wrapped around Maria's finger, turns out to be the shrewdest negotiator of all. Betrayed by both Hermann and Oswald, Maria is unable to bear the friction between the ideal of her marriage and its degrading reality, which is violently expressed in the explosion that she (consciously or unconsciously) causes, killing her and Hermann. As Anton Kaes and others have shown, Maria's demise exposes the dark side of West Germany's official redemption through the economic miracle and international rehabilitation due to the Cold War, which occurred at the expense of historical memory. In the same way that Maria was betrayed by the men in her life, West Germany was betrayed by Adenauer's secret deals to rearm despite the horrors of the recent past, selling out German interests to the U.S.[44] At the same time, Maria also represents the German women who provided crucial labor after the war but who were then "sold out," and "put back in their place" by a patriarchal establishment once the economic miracle was underway and they were no longer needed.[45] Several forms of betrayal thus converge in the film's ending, including sexual, economic, gendered, political, and historical betrayals—betrayals of memory and betrayals of hope for the future. For much of the film, Maria as an interpreter figure serves as the focal point of tensions between fidelity and betrayal—she is arguably faithful in her infidelity to her husband in the same way she is faithful to Oswald's firm in her unfaithful translations as an interpreter, but she certainly betrays Bill by killing him and arguably betrays herself as well. However, the end of the film reveals that Maria is embedded within larger social (patriarchal, capitalist, militaristic) structures that undermine human relationships, personal integrity, and ethical action, essentially supporting a culture of betrayal. At the same time, of course, Fassbinder also criticizes the ideal of absolute, unquestioning loyalty, particularly when it is embraced at the expense of acknowledging material reality; in this respect, Maria's loyalty to the ideal of her marriage can be likened to nationalism as an unquestioning loyalty to an idealized nation. Through the film's ending, Fassbinder dramatically underscores the danger of such idealism.

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[43] Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*, 86.
[44] Ibid., 98.
[45] Rheuban, "History, Melodrama, Ideology," 225.

In the final moments of the film, the end of the 1954 World Cup final radio broadcast coincides with the explosion that kills Maria and Hermann, expressing Fassbinder's despair over the rise of West Germany as a proud, rearmed nation that has silenced the past and lost the possibility for change. Here the original sound recording of a significant historical event again intersects with the private, fictional melodrama of Maria's story.[46] As West Germany scores the winning goal, the cheers of the crowd coincide with the blast of the explosion. The game ends shortly thereafter as Maria's house burns, and the image of flames is paired with the announcer's triumphant cry: "Aus, aus, aus, aus! Das Spiel ist aus! Deutschland ist Weltmeister!" In West German collective memory, the "Miracle of Bern" holds a distinctly positive place; the unexpected victory against Hungary was regarded as a symbol of West Germany's recovery, redemption, and return to the world stage. However, by staging this historical moment congruently with Maria and Hermann's violent end, Fassbinder brings out the ominous undercurrent of persistent nationalism inherent in the announcer's polysemous words; "Weltmeister," of course, means "(soccer) world champion," but its literal meaning is "master of the world."[47] As West Germany is welcomed back into international sports competitions as well as the realm of international politics, and as West Germans begin to take pride in "being somebody again," the chance for a new beginning is lost, and old nationalist and authoritarian tendencies are allowed to continue.[48]

This staging of a mediated international sporting event as an indication of widespread nationalist tendencies despite the recent horrors of the past mirrors the televised bicycle race at the end of Bachmann's "Simultan." Like the announcer in "Simultan," the German announcer of the 1954 World Cup final, Herbert Zimmerman, was famous for his emotional reporting of the events on the soccer field, in particular during this game. The sound and intensity of his voice on the radio permeates the final minutes of *Maria Braun*, creating an atmosphere of tension, suspense, and frenzy leading up to the explosive conclusion. Unlike Nadja's experience in "Simultan," however, there is no relief mixed with the horror of recognition. In "Simultan," the announcer's bodily engagement with and immersion in the subject that he mediates stands in contrast with Nadja's previous attempts at a distanced, disengaged mode of mediation. Nadja recognizes and accepts the endlessly complex historical weight that accompanies the language and subjects that she mediates, and the story ends with a mixture of sadness, resignation, and possible hope. Maria's attempts at compartmentalizing, repressing, or emotionally distancing herself from important aspects of the past and present do not end with resolution or synthesis, only violent confrontation and destruction. If there is hope for the future at the end of *Maria Braun*, it lies not within the film itself but in its potential reception both in and outside of Germany.

[46] Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*, 98.
[47] Ibid., 98, 103.
[48] Ibid., 98, 102.

Chapter Four
From Post-War to Post-Wall: Yoko Tawada's *Das Bad* and *Das nackte Auge*

Like *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, Yoko Tawada's novella *Das Bad* also engages with themes of occupation in relation to female bodies and linguistic markers of foreignness. Although *Das Bad* does not take place amidst a historical military occupation the way *Maria Braun* does, Tawada's surreally literalist prose stages multiple occupations of the interpreter's body by the language of others. Indeed, the interpreter's instumentalized body becomes a site of linguistic violence and contestation, but also of resistance. With *Das nackte Auge*, Tawada further explores interlingual relationships characterized by inequalities of political power, in this case from a postcolonial and postcommunist perspective.

In this chapter, I consider two literary texts by Yoko Tawada that take place shortly before and shortly after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. Within the chronological development I have been outlining, this chapter functions as a historical pivot point, with the first text set in West Germany in the late 1980s looking back to the Second World War, and the second set in the late 1980s through the 1990s, depicting European borders that fluctuate, overlap, disappear, and rematerialize. *Das Bad* was published in 1989 and portrays a young Japanese woman living in West Germany who works as an interpreter and who encounters both Japanese and European echoes of the Second World War. *Das nackte Auge* was published in 2004 but revolves around the end of the Cold War in Europe, beginning in 1988 and continuing through the 1990s. Within this historical context, I focus on Tawada's engagement with embodied modes of translation and communication that extend beyond a hermeneutic approach to meaning. In *Das Bad* and *Das nackte Auge,* acts of interpreting and translation are also explicitly gendered, both recalling and subverting traditional discourses of translation as sexualized and transgressive.

Mutable Bodies: Between Erasure and Resistance

In *Das Bad*, as in many of her works, Tawada explores the mutable relationships between bodies and language through intertwined instances of linguistic translation and physical transformation. These intersections emphasize both the material aspects of language and the fundamental instability of languages, bodies, and identities of all kinds. As a writer, Tawada is interested in both spoken and written language, as well as the relationship between the two, but *Das Bad* focuses particularly on speech as an explicitly embodied experience of language. The narrator of *Das Bad* takes on multiple social and occupational roles and undergoes multiple physical transformations, which I read in relation to discourses of gendered translation, gendered labor, and the translator's (in)visibility. Most importantly, *Das Bad* reveals the violence of translational and interpretive practices that seek to attribute fixed meanings to the voices, bodies, and experiences of individual subjects, and asks what alternative forms of embodied translational encounter might be possible. I argue that while the novella stages the dangers of narrowly conceived hermeneutic modes of translation, it also points towards alternative conceptions of translation involving bodily mediation and the materiality of linguistic encounters. In her work as an interpreter, the narrator of *Das Bad* experiences the language of others as a physical violation. However, the same embodiment that makes her vulnerable to this linguistic assault also provides

a means of potential resistance; the frictions generated by her embodied acts of translation temporarily open a space in which multiple meanings and modes of bodily communication can co-exist.

Tawada's experimental writing practices are informed by diverse modes of translation, including literal, surface, interlinear, and back-translations**.** Her work also stages both translation and non-translation as important experiential events, framing translation as a performance that is always situated in time, space, and a particular social and cultural context. Tawada writes both in Japanese, her native language, and in German, the language of her primary residence since moving to Germany in 1982. Her writing frequently reflects on differences and unexpected intersections between particular languages, primarily Japanese and German, but also other languages such as Afrikaans and English. *Das Bad* is one of her earlier publications; Tawada wrote the novella in Japanese, but it was first published in German translation in 1989.[1] *Das Bad* consists of 10 chapters that alternate between the narrator's often surreal descriptions of her experiences, memories, dream sequences, and dream-like episodes not explicitly marked as such.[2] Over the course of the novella, the occupational roles and social identities taken on by the narrator include interpreter, girlfriend, daughter, Japanese woman, foreigner, photograph model, language student, sideshow exhibit, typist, and medium. These shifts are accompanied by physical changes; as the novella begins, the narrator notices that she has grown scales, and it ends with her metamorphosis into a transparent coffin.

The central problem that Tawada engages with in *Das Bad* is the aggressive inscription of individual subjects by discourses of gender, race, culture, social status, occupation, and other delineations of identity. Although the narrator is an interpreter, she is in fact repeatedly (and reductively) "interpreted" by others. In particular, Tawada depicts a form of hermeneutic violence that echoes the extraction of meaning by force central to Steiner's Hermeneutic Motion. In this view, translations that aim to pin down certain meanings while excluding other meanings and other aspects of language can also inflict violence. In *Das Bad*, the narrator is skinned, sliced up, nailed to her chair and nailed into a coffin, darkly recalling Vladimir Nabokov's description of poetry translated into prose: "Shorn of its primary verbal existence, the original text will not be able to soar and sing; but it can be very nicely dissected and mounted, and scientifically studied in all its organic details."[3] From a postcolonial feminist perspective, Gayatri Spivak also cautions against translations that focus on logic and grammar without attending to the rhetoricity of language. Particularly when translating non-Western texts, translators who ignore the rhetoricity of the original text engage in a "neo-colonialist construction of the non-western scene" and risk erasing the "staging of the agent" within language: "The jagged relationship between rhetoric and logic, condition and effect of knowing, is a relationship by which a world is made for the agent, so that the agent can act in an ethical way, a political way, a day-to-day way; so that the agent can be alive, in a human way, in the world."[4]

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[1] Although translations were subsequently published in a number of languages, the Japanese original was only published in 2010 in a facing-page edition with the German translation.

[2] For a discussion of the ways in which Tawada's work engages with surrealist traditions, see: Bettina Brandt, "The Unknown Character: Traces of the Surreal in Yoko Tawada's Writings," in *Voices from Everywhere*, ed. Douglas Slaymaker (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2007), 111–24.

[3] Vladimir Nabokov, "Problems of Translation: Onegin in English," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 121.

[4] Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," 371.

Furthermore, because Tawada's agents do not actually possess a fundamental core of meaning that can be extracted, they are often interpreted by ascribing stable meanings to them. Such acts of interpretive attribution operate linguistically, visually, and physically. For example, the narrator's German boyfriend Xander marks her cheek with an X as a sign of his ownership, and he affixes her image as an idealized Japanese woman by styling and photographing her.[5] This objectification of the narrator as a racialized, "exotic" woman is unmistakably violent; the camera is compared to a gun, its lens to a trap, and the material inscription of photographic film to bodily harm: "Der Buchstabe X fraß sich in mein Fleisch. Er machte dem Spiel des Lichts ein Ende, und die Gestalt einer Japanerin war auf Papier geätzt."[6]

The mutability of human bodies—and of female bodies, in particular—stands in complex tension to such attempts to categorize, constrain, and affix stable meanings and identities to individual embodied subjects. First and foremost, the novella asserts that human bodies, subjectivities, and affiliations are inherently fluid, multivalent, and continually changing, which is why efforts to fix and contain them can be so injurious. Indeed, the novella begins with the narrator's statement that the human body is approximately eighty percent water, and it is therefore no surprise that one sees a different face in the mirror every morning. "Die Haut an Stirn und Wangen verändert sich von Augenblick zu Augenblick wie der Schlamm in einem Sumpf, je nach der Bewegung des Wassers, das unter ihm fließt, und der Bewegung der Menschen, die auf ihm ihre Fußspuren hinterlassen."[7] These footprints, however, also point to the body's vulnerability to physical and discursive violence and discipline, and they specifically anticipate Xander's marking of the narrator in the next chapter. Over the course of the novella, the narrator loses her tongue, is rendered blind and disfigured by her work as a typist, is nailed to her chair, and enclosed in a coffin. Covered in fish-like scales, she dreams that she is skinned, sliced, and served at a wedding dinner. She is rendered invisible, first on film, and then due to a special cream that she applies to her skin, and the novella ends with this final self-description: "Ich bin ein transparenter Sarg."[8]

This ending seems to indicate a complete erasure and emptying out of the narrator's subject position and a literal manifestation of the translator's invisibility. It would also seem to resonate with a common conception of interpreters as not only invisible but also plagued by a feeling of emptiness due to the "hollow" nature of their work that does not allow them to express their "authentic" selves.[9] *Das Bad* also contains numerous indirect references to Ingeborg Bachmann and her *Todesarten* writings, and the narrator's disappearance in some ways mirrors the end of Bachmann's *Malina*, in which the female narrator's ability to occupy the position of a speaking subject becomes untenable within a male-dominated order of language, causing her to disappear into a crack in the wall.[10]

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[5] Fischer draws on Weigel in her analysis of the objectification of foreign and female bodies by male-European discourses. Both female and foreign bodies function as a realm of projection for male desires and fears: "Die Unbestimmbarkeit des Körpers macht ihn zu einem reizvollen Objekt der Aneigung, läßt ihn jedoch gleichzeitig als unberechenbar und potentiell gefährlich erscheinen" (Fischer, Verschwinden, 102)

[6] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 2. This edition is not paginated, so I indicate chapter numbers instead.

[7] Ibid., Ch. 1.

[8] Ibid., Ch. 10.

[9] Andres, *Dolmetscher als literarische Figuren*, 434–448.

[10] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Werke*, ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, and Clemens Münster, vol. 3 (Munich: Piper, 1995), 337.

In *Das Bad*, however, the body functions not only as a site of erasure but also as a means of potential resistance. In fact, the very mutability of the narrator's body holds open the possibility of escaping the grasp of definitive and potentially violent attributions of meaning. Furthermore, because Tawada's work repeatedly undermines any notion of a stable, authentic, or unified self, particularly one grounded in or guaranteed by the body, physical transformation is thus not necessarily an inherent threat to the subject. Before moving to the interpreting scene in which the possibility of corporeal resistance is introduced, I will first briefly elaborate on Tawada's depiction of identity as a performative construction without grounding, or as a series of translations with no original.

After the narrator's opening assertion of the human body's fluidity, she describes her morning routine: hanging next to her mirror is a photograph of her, which she uses as a model, "correcting" the differences with make-up. In the next chapter, we learn that this photograph (which is inherently a reproduction) is similarly constructed. When Xander first tries to photograph the narrator for a travel agency advertisement, her image doesn't appear on the film. He attributes her invisibility to her lack of a sense of herself as Japanese: "Das kommt sicher daher, daß Sie nicht japanisch genug empfinden."[11] He then applies heavy make-up, styling her as an idealized Japanese woman, and as a result, in the narrator's non-identificatory description, "die Gestalt einer Japanerin" appears in the photograph.[12]

In conversation with Xander, the narrator further undermines any notion of the body as a stable entity and of external appearances as signifiers of an authentic internal self. She asserts that one's skin does not inherently possess a stable color, and that skin color is produced by the play of light on the skin's surface.[13] Xander responds to the narrator's insistence on bodily variability by attempting to preserve first skin color as a clear category of racial delineation and then the voice as a marker of a singular, unified self:

> "Aber das Licht spielt auf eurer Haut anders als auf unserer."
>
> "Das Licht spielt auf jeder Haut anders; bei jedem Menschen, in jedem Monat und am jedem Tag."
>
> "Aber dafür hat jeder eine eigene Stimme in sich. In uns..."
>
> "In uns gibt es keine Stimme. Nur die Luft außerhalb unseres Körpers vibriert."[14]

Both skin color and voice are shown to be externally produced and thus prone to variation and resignification. In fact, it is because subjects are constituted by their continually changing interactions with the world around them that attempts to limit these variations have such injurious effects.

Interpreting Tongues

While Xander's objectification of the narrator comes from a German/European perspective, she also encounters sexism from her Japanese compatriots. At a business dinner, where she interprets between representatives of a Japanese and a German firm at an elegant hotel restaurant, her native language and culture are shown to have equal potential for chauvinism and stereotyping. Speaking Japanese does not offer a welcome bastion of ease, identification,

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[11] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 2.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2011), 122; Karen Kelskey, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* (Duke University Press, 2001).
[14] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 2.

belonging, or understanding; instead, the Japanese businessmen variously eye her suspiciously for her linguistic promiscuity, make comments in front of her about the two German businesswomen present, and patronizingly advise her to return to Japan and get married.

The narrator further asserts: "Ich bin zum Dolmetschen eigentlich nicht geeignet. Ich hasse das Reden mehr als alles andere. Besonders das Reden in meiner Muttersprache."[15] Although she does not explain this statement further, her experience of alienation can be read in conjunction with other texts by Tawada that expose the limitations of speaking, thinking, and living only in one's native language. In "Das Fremde aus der Dose," the narrator asserts: "Ich ekelte mich oft vor den Menschen, die fließend ihre Muttersprache sprachen. Sie machten den Eindruck, dass sie nichts anderes denken und spüren konnten als das, was ihre Sprache ihnen so schnell und bereitwillig anbietet."[16] Here and in *Das Bad*, Tawada undermines the notion of an exclusive, natural mother tongue that automatically establishes kinship and belonging. In Japan, "the myth of the homogenous, monolithic, and monolingual nation" has prevailed since the late 19th century, instituted as part of modernization reforms.[17] As Yasemin Yildiz demonstrates in her survey of Tawada's works, Tawada employs diverse multilingual strategies to break out of a naturalized inclusion into this constricting monolingual paradigm.[18] In "Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter," the narrator shifts away from the notion of a mother tongue, with its emphasis on origin, authenticity, and singularity, and toward a model of non-organic multiplicity by adopting a German typewriter as her "language mother." The same narrator also argues for the benefits of speaking a foreign language by comparing its liberatory potential to that of a staple remover:

> In der Muttersprache sind die Worte den Menschen angeheftet, so dass man selten spielerische Freude an der Sprache empfinden kann. Dort klammern sich die Gedanken so fest an die Worte, dass weder die ersteren noch die letzteren frei fliegen können. In einer Fremdsprache hat man aber so etwas wie einen Heftklammerentferner: Er entfernt alles, was sich aneinanderheftet und sich festklammert.[19]

Although the narrator of *Das Bad* does not seem to find the same liberation of thought and language through her study of German, she does experience freeing moments of multivalent indeterminacy through non-linguistic, bodily communication, which I will address shortly.

Yildiz also explicitly links Tawada's concern with questions of gender to her move away from both nation and mother tongue by locating Tawada within a larger cultural and gendered phenomenon of the 1980s and 90s, when numerous middle-class Japanese women left Japan to study and work abroad in the U.S. and in Europe.[20] Many of these women articulated their turn to the foreign as a way to resist expectations of "the female life course in Japan" and to detach their gendered subjectivity from the nation-state. [21] As Yildiz points out, multilingual practices played a key role in this movement, as many women left Japan for foreign language studies and many others worked as "interpreters, translators, bicultural and bilingual consultants [...] and

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[15] Ibid, Ch. 3.
[16] Yoko Tawada, *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 1996), 41–42.
[17] Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 114.
[18] Ibid., 109–142.
[19] Yoko Tawada, *Talisman*, 15.
[20] Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 122; Karen Kelskey, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).
[21] Kelskey, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams*, 2.

other facilitators of Japan's business, media, and cultural relations with the world."[22] As a young Japanese woman working as an interpreter in Germany in the 1980s, the narrator of *Das Bad* is thus in some ways representative of a larger transnational phenomenon. Furthermore, the reactions of her countrymen to her as single woman living abroad resonate with broader anxieties about independent, mobile women as destabilizing forces requiring containment.

As Yildiz also points out, however, Tawada does not participate in an uncritical celebration of Europe as an enlightened realm of women's liberation in opposition to Japan; she is equally critical of European patriarchal structures and practices, including in relation to language. The narrator falls in love with Xander as he teaches her German, which he does by saying words that she then repeats. His speech is thus figured as the authentic, original model, while hers is a derivative copy that does not express her own experience or subject position. Through this act of linguistic colonization,[23] the narrator reports that Xander gains possession of her tongue: "Während ich wiederholte, was Xander mir vorsprach, ging meine Zunge in seinen Besitz über."[24] This description stands in contrast to models of language ability as additive; rather than *giving* the narrator the gift of another tongue, Xander *takes* control of her existing tongue.

This competitive model of language continues in the interpreting scene, although the narrator does propose a potential alternative, in which multiple linguistic and physical tongues co-exist in the space of the speaker's mouth. The narrator explains that when working as an interpreter in fine restaurants, she usually orders "Seezunge" (sole) because it provides her with a back-up tongue: "Wenn ich sie esse, habe ich das Gefühl, dass eine andere Zunge für mich weiterspricht, wenn ich einmal um Worte verlegen bin."[25] On this occasion, however, one large fish is ordered for the whole table, so the narrator goes without the second tongue of the "Seezunge." The large fish is described as a grotesquely injured body, and, crucially, its tongue has been removed.

If the tongue the narrator uses to interpret belongs to Xander, the Japanese businessmen are eager to take it back, i.e. to resituate the narrator as a speaking subject under the care and control of a national, paternal order. In speaking on behalf of another person, an interpreter can be said to lend their tongue to that person. Tawada extends and complicates this metonym in order to critique notions of linguistic ownership that are also associated with possessive models of translation, such as Friedrich Nietzsche's assertion that translation is a form of conquest.[26] When the narrator notices one of the Japanese men giving her a disapproving look as she interprets, she observes: "Eine Dolmetscherin ist wie eine Prostituierte, die sich an Besatzungssoldaten verkauft; von den einheimischen Männern wird sie gehaßt. Offenbar glauben sie, daß die deutschen Worte, die sich in meine Ohren ergießen, eine Art Sperma seien."[27] Here Tawada's narrator employs hyperbolic imagery to highlight and criticize underlying associations of linguistic boundary crossing with sexual betrayal. As in the case of the wartime prostitute, the female interpreter's ethno-national identity gives the men of that group a sense of ownership

[22] Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 123.
[23] Monica Tamaş, "Silencing the Woman: Yōko Tawada's Short Novel 'The Bath,'" *Cogito* 3, no. 3 (September 2015): 143.
[24] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 5.
[25] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 3.
[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Translations," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 67–68.
[27] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 3.

over her and her body, which is then threatened by her interaction with foreigners. Here the interpreter's engagement with a foreign language is figured as a linguistic violation of bodily boundaries (the interpreter takes the foreign language into her body through her ears and it flows out through her mouth), which then metonymically threatens the integrity of the ethno-national body as well. In this striking image of listening as a transgressive sexual act, the interpreter's body is corrupted as the foreign language penetrates it, and she is despised for her willing submission. As this scene continues, however, the embodied nature of the narrator's interpreting also allows for the possibility of resisting the instrumentalization of her body as a channel of communication, signaling the potential for alternative spaces of communicative experience to emerge through acts of embodied speech.

Between Erasure and Resistance: The Interpreter's Instrumentalized Body

While her association with the German language raises concerns about the narrator's fidelity as a Japanese national, the narrator freely admits to being unfaithful in her actual linguistic translations. She does so in order to smooth over potential awkwardness and to avoid giving offense. For example, when one of the Japanese men voices his astonishment that the German businesswomen are so provocatively dressed and the narrator is asked to translate his comment, she invents a substitute translation without an original: "Ich übersetzte, was keiner gesagt hatte: 'Er meinte, wie wünderschön das alte Porzellan sei.'"[28] Rather than revealing the narrator to be a meddlesome traitor, however, these interventions primarily emphasize the unimportance of actual semantic meaning within the elaborate social ritual of the business dinner. The "meaning" of the dinner conversation lies in performing the ritual itself. The Japanese company's president gives a speech full of platitudes, while the listeners fidget with boredom. In general, the primary purpose of a business dinner is not to work out the specifics of a deal but rather to build and solidify the relationships through which economic exchange takes place. In this way, the narrator's unfaithful translations (essentially lies) are actually faithful to her primary function at the dinner, which is to provide the affective labor of social mediation between groups belonging to two different cultures.

As the dinner conversation continues, the narrator depicts this labor in strongly visceral terms. Like a prostitute, her employers pay for her physical presence and for the use of her body as a site of exchange. Although the earlier images of the interpreter as prostitute are attributed to the anxieties of the Japanese businessmen, here the narrator describes her own experience in terms of bodily penetration:

> Die Münder öffneten sich wie Müllbeutel; Abfall quoll heraus; ich mußte ihn kauen, schlucken und in anderen Worten wieder ausspeien. Einige dieser Worte rochen nach Nikotin und andere nach Haarwasser. Das Gespräch war lebhaft. Alle redeten durch meinen Mund. Alle Stimmen preschten in meinen Magen und wieder aus ihm heraus. Ihre Schritte dröhnten bis in mein Hirn.[29]

Again, the semantic content of language is insignificant here; linguistic utterances take the form of waste overflowing out of bodily orifices. The interpreter must then take this waste into her own body, before expelling it back out. Instrumentalized as a tool of communication, her mouth also becomes a territory to be occupied, regardless of her own subjective experience. The association of smells with words heightens the sense of overwhelming physical proximity; in a reversal of the stereotypical man who comes home smelling of cheap perfume, the narrator is

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

inundated by words that smell like businessmen. Indeed, her entire body is besieged by the language of others.

In light of this distress, it is not surprising that she begins to stutter. She portrays this verbal breakdown as a physical reaction to the voices coursing through her body. What is surprising, however, is her description of stuttering as a pleasant sensation: "Wenn ich stottere, fühle ich mich sehr wohl."[30] Stuttering is usually thought of as an unwanted, frustrating phenomenon, and one would expect an interpreter to be particularly distressed by it. Instead, it provides the narrator with a sense of comfort and ease that speaking her native language does not. The narrator does not explicitly clarify why she instead finds it pleasant, but she does provide several indications.

First, the stutter originates from her stomach: "Die Haut meines Magens zog sich zu einem Dudelsack zusammen und musizierte."[31] When stuttering, her body is no longer a linguistic instrument operated by someone else but becomes instead a musical instrument with its own intentionality. Second, she explains that as a child, she referred to herself by her first name, a common practice for children in Japan. As she grew older and was required to use the "I" pronoun, she was only able say it with a stutter: "Das *Ich* zerbrach mir in Teile mit großen Abständen dazwischen. So also sah die Selbstbenennung aus, zu der ich es schließlich gebracht hatte: mit soviel Raum zwischen den Lauten war sie für mich wie das Absingen eines Liedes."[32] Here, too, stuttering turns speech into a kind of music, which unlike language is essentially non-referential. It seems that the narrator finds the signifier "I" too confining, as it would fix her entire sense of self within a clearly delineated realm. By stuttering, however, she is able to loosen the grip of language and open up alternative spaces of possibility within the socially prescribed description of her identity.

Similarly, stuttering forms a space of resistance within the stream of language that bombards her. Her body, which had been acting to facilitate the conversation, becomes a point of friction in the flow of linguistic exchange. Her stuttering opens up a space of possibility, not yet overdetermined by linguistic and social conventions, allowing room for her own thoughts and feelings that have been subordinated to the intentions and desires of the other speakers present.

The narrator's pleasurable stuttering constitutes a moment of resistance to the social and linguistic systems that assign her an overly delineated role, and it suggests the possibility of alternative modes of embodied translation and communication, resonating throughout the rest of the novella. However, it is also depicted as a moment of unsustainable physical and emotional excess. As she continues to stutter, she excuses herself and collapses with dizziness in the restroom. Rather than opening up further space for the articulation of her multivalent subjective experience, her loss of consciousness obliterates it completely. Upon regaining consciousness the narrator undergoes another loss, namely, the loss of her tongue.

Mobile Tongues and Corporeal Music

Tongues play an important role in many of Tawada's works, and they are extremely multivalent. As sensory organs, as corporeal loci of speech, as metonyms for particular languages, as sites of sexual and linguistic encounter, and even as potential forms of subjectivity, they defy attempts to pin them down with any clear-cut interpretation. In *Das Bad*, the narrator's loss of her tongue also remains ambiguous, resisting the possibility of a single interpretation.

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

After losing her tongue, the narrator can no longer work as an interpreter, but this loss does open up space to situate interpreting in relation to other forms of embodied mediation.

In a sequence of events that underscores both the tongue's mobility and its persistent physicality, the narrator's tongue is first devoured by a "Seezunge" and then taken possession of by a dead woman. After fainting in the hotel restroom, the narrator regains consciousness one sense at a time, which situates her tongue as one of several sensory organs. She hears a distant crinkling noise, she sees the capillaries on the insides of her eyelids, she smells milk cooking, and she feels something soft touching her lips: "Eine Seezunge. Sie schlüpfte in meinen Mund hinein und spielte mit meiner Zunge. Erst zärtlich, dann heftiger, zuletzt biß sie hinein und aß sie auf."[33] At first, the "Seezunge" seems to enact the co-existence of multiple tongues with which it was previously associated. However, it reveals itself to be a convert to the competitive, monolingual model, in which only one tongue can exist in a given mouth. No further explanation is given, but from this point on, the narrator is no longer able to speak.

Certainly, the narrator's loss of her tongue can be read from a psychoanalytic perspective, as a number of scholars have done, although this approach fails to account for Tawada's insistence on the materiality of linguistic mediation. Indeed, in many ways, the text seems to invite a psychoanalytic approach; as Ruth Kersting, Sabine Fischer, and Monica Tamaş note, the narrator's encounters with her mirror image and her ultimate rejection of it can be productively read through Lacan's mirror stage,[34] while the narrator's relationships with her mother and the dead woman can be read in relation to Lacan's weaning complex and the maternal imago.[35] The threat of castration is also established in the narrator's childhood: when a doctor mocks the young narrator for continuing to breastfeed at age five, she throws a toy at him, and he responds by angrily threatening to cut her tongue out.[36] Accordingly, Sabine Fischer reads the narrator's loss of her tongue as a form of castration, with the tongue as a phallic symbol of creativity.[37] In this reading, the *Seezunge*'s entry into the narrator's mouth and its consumption of her tongue represents the intrusion of male-dominated language that mutilates the narrator's source of linguistic agency.[38] At the same time, however,—and this may simply be the other side of the same psychoanalytic coin—Fischer also points to the body as a site where repressed desires, fears, and needs reemerge under conditions of extreme stress.[39] In this vein, the narrator's loss of

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[33] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 4.

[34] Sabine Fischer, "'Wie der Schlamm in einem Sumpf.' Ich-Metamorphosen in Yoko Tawadas Kurzroman 'Das Bad,'" in *Interkulturelle Konfigurationen — Zur deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur von Autoren nichtdeutscher Herkunft*, ed. Mary Howard (Munich: Iudicium, 1997), 65; Tamaş, "Silencing the Woman," 145.

[35] Ruth Kersting, *Fremdes Schreiben: Yoko Tawada* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2006), 130–157.

[36] Sabine Fischer, "Wie der Schlamm in einem Sumpf," 69.

[37] Ibid., 68. Along the lines of this reading, I would add that the tongue is figured in numerous texts by Tawada as a sexual organ, and as an instrument of (traditionally male-dominated) speech, it is also a site of power and agency. Although I am skeptical that Tawada is actually locating creativity and agency in the phallus as it is traditionally understood, it is possible that she is working with the idea of a transferable, signifying, non-male phallus in the sense that Judith Butler proposes. (Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 28–57.) On the other hand, perhaps we can move away from the phallus as a symbol of power and signification altogether and deal with the tongue on its own terms.

[38] Fischer, "Wie der Schlamm in einem Sumpf," 68.

[39] Ibid., 74.

her tongue could be seen as a psychosomatic reaction to the instrumentalization of her body, tongue, and subject position as an interpreter; without a tongue, she is no longer able to interpret—which she does out of economic necessity—and is in fact freed from speaking at all. Importantly, however, the narrator freely admits her dislike of speaking, complicating a straightforward reading of unconscious desires that find expression through the body. From another psychoanalytic perspective, Ruth Kersting reads *Das Bad* as an allegory of Julia Kristeva's call to reintroduce dynamic, nondiscursive, and often embodied meanings and subjectivities into the symbolic order's ossified system of signification.[40] This analysis, in which Xander represents the visual and linguistic symbolic order while the dead woman represents the narrator's return to a corporeal, libidinous, maternal semiotic realm, is in some ways quite convincing, but it ultimately establishes a schematic duality that cannot account for the complex materiality of the narrator's communicative experiences. Although psychoanalysis might account for meanings produced by the body in excess of language, any strictly psychoanalytic reading of *Das Bad* would seem to promote exactly the type of hermeneutic extraction or reductive decoding that the text otherwise seems to resist. I would argue that in referring to psychoanalytic tropes and discourses, Tawada invites readers to bring this perspective to bear on the text as one level of meaning that intersects with, modifies, and is in turn modified by other layers of meaning, including phenomenological experiences of language, mediation, and embodiment.

She is found by a hotel cleaning woman, who takes her home and who turns out to be a ghost. We learn that the woman died in a fire a month ago and that the police suspect either murder or suicide. The text hints that she is, at least in part, an incarnation of Ingeborg Bachmann, due to her age, the unclear circumstances of her death by fire, her social ostracism as a woman living alone, her figuration as a writer, specific overlaps with Bachmann's novel *Malina,* as well as broader intersections with Bachmann's critique of male-dominated language and social structures.[41] Later, the dead woman reveals that she possesses the narrator's tongue: "Sie zeigte mir, was sie in ihrer Hand hielt. Es war meine Zunge."[42] Temporally (and perhaps causally) linked to the narrator's overwhelmingly corporeal experience of interpreting, the dead woman's possession of her tongue can be read as an extension and intensification of that experience—literalizing the metonymic idea of the interpreter's tongue being controlled by another person. However, while Xander's ownership over the narrator's tongue is associated negatively with her restriction as a speaking subject, the dead woman's physical possession of her tongue remains ambiguous.

Through the relationship between the narrator and the dead woman, Tawada explores several additional aspects of mediation. As an interpreter, the narrator functions as a medium (i.e., a means of communication); her contact with a dead woman arguably extends her role to that of a spiritualist medium. Importantly, their relationship entails multiple forms of intensely physical and intimate mediation, in which the narrator gives her entire body over to the service of the dead woman. Although her tongue seems to have been taken without her consent, the narrator later frames this loss as a gift: "Man kann sagen, daß ich für den Rest des Lebens meine Zunge jener Frau geschenkt hatte."[43] (Of course, this statement could also be read ironically, particularly due to its distancing introductory clause, adding yet another layer of indeterminacy to the narration.) In addition to becoming the dead woman's confidant, the narrator also becomes

[40] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
[41] Tamaş, "Silencing the Woman." Fischer, "Wie der Schlamm in einem Sumpf," 71.
[42] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 4.
[43] Ibid., Ch. 9.

her typist; under great physical strain that deforms her body and leaves her blind, the narrator records what the woman says every night using the narrator's tongue. In the final chapter, after the narrator forgets the letters of the alphabet and can no longer type, the dead woman simply occupies her body at night, appearing beneath the narrator's invisible skin and causing her bones to tremble. Tawada thus depicts an extreme, literalized version of the potential intimacy inherent to interpreting, as well as the potential dangers of self-effacement. The porous boundaries between speaker and interpreter and the ensuing potential slippages of subjectivity are illustrated not only by the narrator's physical service to the woman, but also by her own self-effacement. She uses a special cream to make her skin invisible before lying down and providing her body to the dead woman as a medium, now in the sense of a physical substance that can be acted upon. Silent, blind, and invisible, functioning only as a transparent coffin, she seems to have achieved the ideal of a fully transparent medium at great personal cost, namely total self-erasure.

Several commentators have read the narrator's self-erasure as an act of resistance; by disappearing, the narrator withdraws herself from the violence of prescriptive identities, the dominant male gaze, and, I would add, the constraints of the monolingual paradigm. For Fischer, the narrator rejects the two "Todesarten" identified by Bachmann—suffocation within the patriarchal order or the inability to exist outside of it—in favor of self-determined self-obliteration.[44] Monica Tamaş reads *Das Bad* through *Malina* to argue that the narrators of both works are not only silenced and erased by male-dominated culture, but that their disappearances also constitute protests against this social order. However, according to Tamaş, these protest attempts ultimately fail due to the impossibility of existence outside "the scrutiny of identity-regulating ideologies."[45] For Kersting, the narrator's turn to an exclusively bodily mode of communication indicates a rejection of the deadly constrictions of the symbolic modality of language.[46] All of these readings are persuasive, and yet they cannot fully account for the novella's ambiguous and multivalent ending, because Tawada has structured the text itself in a way that resists definitive interpretation. It remains unclear which aspects of her erasure the narrator chooses and which are imposed upon her. One might also ask whether an act of self-erasure that is chosen in reaction to external violence amidst limited alternatives is in fact significantly different from erasure directly caused by such external violence. Although individual segments lend themselves to analysis, the novella as a whole eludes the type of hermeneutic grasp that would seek to have it "dissected and mounted, and scientifically studied."

Instead, I will conclude by considering how and to what extent the alternative spaces of embodied communication suggested by the narrator's stutter reappear within the novella and in Tawada's subsequent writings. At first, the dead woman's occupancy of the narrator's body would seem to repeat and intensify the narrator's earlier experience of interpreting as bodily invasion. However, the narrator's description of the woman's nightly visits in fact echoes the corporeal music of her own stutter. She explains that she does not see or hear the woman when she appears inside her body, but that she feels her presence in her bones: "Ich spüre nur, wie meine Knochen ein Zittern weiterleiten. Dann halte ich den Atem an und konzentriere mich auf das Vibrato der Knochen. Ein Ton, der nicht zu Musik werden kann, nein, eine Schwingung, die

[44] Fischer, "Wie der Schlamm in einem Sumpf," 71–72.
[45] Tamaş, "Silencing the Woman," 150. Tamaş further draws on Helene Cixous's reading of Sigmund Freud's "hysterical" female patients, which interprets their defiance as "a silent rebellion against the power of men who regulated women's bodies and words," (148). Tamaş also reports that Tawada had just finished reading Malina when she began writing *Das Bad* (145).
[46] Kersting, *Fremdes Schreiben*, 152.

nicht zu einem Ton werden kann."[47] This vibration that is not quite music not only echoes the narrator's stomach-bagpipe, it also echoes another moment of unregulated musical expression that occurs in the penultimate chapter during an otherwise nightmarish episode of surrealist transformations. After collapsing with exhaustion from her work as a typist, the narrator lies down to rest inside a coffin built by Xander, which turns into a bird with scales that carries her into the land of the dead. Amidst scenes of global war and destruction, a brief moment of polyphonic, non-referential, bodily communication takes place between the narrator and the bird, who is also the dead woman:

> Ich umarme mit all meiner Kraft den Leib des Schuppenvogels, in meinen Armen verwandeln sich seine Schuppen in Windglöckchen, von denen eines nach dem anderen zu klingen anfängt. Ihre scharfen und sanften und bitteren und weichen Töne dringen in meine Knochen ein, die nun auch zu singen beginnen; mitten aus ihrem Tönen taucht eine Kraft auf, die niemandem gehört.[48]

This moment of unrestricted and nonproprietary multiplicity is cut short, however, when Xander prompts the narrator to stab the bird to death, silencing its many bells. Within the novella, this bodily music survives only as an echo within the narrator's bones when she communes with the dead woman. Yet beyond *Das Bad*, this music resounds throughout many of Tawada's later writings, which explore the alternative spaces of embodied communication initially revealed by the narrator's stutter.

In particular, the multiplicity of tongues promised by the "Seezunge" is fully realized in *Überseezungen*, Tawada's 2002 collection of literary texts written in German. The title itself reflects this multiplicity and can be read as a compound of the nouns "Übersee" and "Zungen" ("overseas tongues") or as a play on "Übers*e*tzungen," pointing out both the potential for transformation and the plurality of tongues inherent to acts of translation.[49] It also contains the phrase "über Seezungen" ("about sole/sea tongues"), which acquires new relevance when read in conjunction with the role of "Seezungen" in *Das Bad*. Indeed, the image of international waters filled with mobile and intermingling oceanic tongues resonates strongly with Tawada's interest in fluid boundaries and translingual encounters. The book is divided into three sections or groupings of tongues: "Euroasiatische Zungen" begins with the story "Zungentanz," in which the narrator dreams that her entire body is a tongue. "Nordamerikanische Zungen" contains a portrait of a tongue ("Porträt einer Zunge," about the language of a German woman who has lived in the U.S. for many years) as well as short text that highlights the tongue's exceptional mobility and flexibility. In "Eine Scheibengeschichte," the narrator describes how her body changes when seated in an airplane: "Mein Rücken wird steif, die Füße und Waden schwellen an, das Steißbein sitzt nicht mehr richtig, und die Haut trocknet aus. Nur die Zunge wird immer feuchter und elastischer. Sie bereitet sich auf die Begegnung mit einer Fremdsprache vor." [50] In "Südafrikanische Zungen" the narrator dreams in Afrikaans, and when she is told that a person dreams in the language of the land where his or her soul resides, she answers: "Ich habe viele Seelen und viele Zungen."[51]

In "Erzähler ohne Seelen," published in the 1996 German-language collection *Talisman*, Tawada explicitly links the embodied production of language with a multiplicity of voices.

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[47] Tawada, *Das Bad*, Ch. 10.
[48] Ibid., Ch. 9.
[49] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 54.
[50] Yoko Tawada, *Überseezungen* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 2002), 115.
[51] Ibid., 70.

Tawada (or her literary persona) imagines her writing process to be a convergence of the numerous potentialities contained within her body:

> Mit Hilfe dieses Wortes [Zelle] kann ich mir viele kleine lebende Räume in meinem Körper vorstellen. In jedem Raum befindet sich eine erzählende Stimme. Diese Zellen sind deshalb vergleichbar mit Telefonzellen, Mönchszellen oder Gefängniszellen. […] Während ich schreibe, versuche ich, die Erzählungen aus dem Körper herauszuhören.[52]

Here the productive act of writing blends together with the receptive act of listening, with no identifiable origin or stable site of authorship. She goes on to compare this process to the work done by simultaneous interpreters, whose translations are like retellings of a story:

> Sie übersetzen und machen auf diese Weise Nacherzählungen. Die Mundbewegungen, die Gesten und die Blicke des einzelnen Simultan-Übersetzer sind so individuell, daß man nicht glauben kann, es gehe bei allen um einen gemeinsamen Text. Vielleicht geht es in Wirklichkeit auch gar nicht um einen einzigen gemeinsamen Text, sondern die Übersetzer machen durch das Übersetzen sichtbar, daß dieser Text gleichzeitig mehrere Texte ist.[53]

Here the movements of the interpreters' bodies signify both their own individuality and the individuality of their translations. These translations, however, are not seen as distortions of the original text, and the interpreters demonstrate no disloyalty. Rather, they bring out new possibilities hidden within a particular text, story, or linguistic formulation, revealing its inherent multiplicity and pointing toward the multiplicity of all language.

The Politics of Presence

In many ways, Tawada's 2004 novel *Das nackte Auge*, can be read in relation to the violent inscription, silencing, and erasure of a racialized female subject depicted in *Das Bad,* and like *Das Bad*, *Das nackte Auge* also considers alternative forms of embodied and mediated communication in response to this violence. *Das nackte Auge* tells the story of a young Vietnamese woman who spends the 1990s living as an unauthorized immigrant in France, where she spends much of her time in the cinema watching films starring Catherine Deneuve. It is an explicitly postcolonial and postcommunist novel, in which the narrator is confronted by dominant narratives of French colonialism as benevolent and of communism as failed and irrelevant. It further intervenes in European debates about unauthorized immigrants and asylum-seekers that flared up in the early 1990s after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, *Das nackte Auge* also engages with questions of film spectatorship, intermedial translation, and embodied communication. Because the narrator does not speak the languages spoken in the films she sees, she focuses on sounds and images and interprets them based on her own frame of reference. She oscillates between admiration of and identification with Catherine Deneuve, and as her life outside the cinema becomes increasingly abject, she finally dissolves into the screen completely. Scholarly discussions of this novel have, for the most part, treated its political elements separately from issues of translation, poetics, mediation, and spectatorship.[54] I will argue, however, that these

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[52] Yoko Tawada, *Talisman*, 17.

[53] Ibid.,18.

[54] Hansjörg Bay, "'Eyes wide shut'. Mediale Übersetzungen in Yoko Tawadas *Das nackte Auge*," *Études Germaniques* 3, no. 259 (2010): 551–68; Yumiko Saito, "Zur Genese der japanischen Textphasen von *Das nackte Auge*," in *Yoko Tawada: Poetik der Transformation*, ed. Christine Ivanovic (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 2010), 285–96; Daniel Medin, "The Woman Who Disappeared : Traces of Kafka in Yoko

concerns intersect in the novel's central engagement with questions of bodily presence and absence. In the following, I will consider these questions in relation to two forms of translation that occur in *Das nackte Auge*: first, the narrator's descriptions of her viewing experiences, which can be read as intermedial translations, and second, a key scene of embodied translation that occurs at the novel's end.

In a number of ways, these translations reflect the position of Tawada's earlier novella *Das Bad*, which suggests the dangers of a strictly hermeneutic extraction or inscription of meaning, while also framing the subject's corporeality as a potential site of resistance to this extraction or inscription. As previously discussed, hermeneutic interpretation and translation theory are historically intertwined in the European tradition. Many models of translation draw on this link, portraying translation as the extraction and transfer of meaning from one language into another, as, for example, in George Steiner's model of "Hermeneutic Motion."[55] However, other theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Spivak also insist on attending to the materiality of language and the materiality of the translation process, which is, in fact, always both spatially and temporally situated.[56] Sandra Bermann, meanwhile, draws on Judith Butler to suggest an understanding of translation as a model for ethical encounters with alterity.[57] Furthermore, if we accept Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's assertion that works of art produce both "meaning effects," which have to do with conceptual content that calls for interpretation, and "presence effects," which appeal to the senses and are central to lived experience, we might ask what happens to "presence effects" in translation.[58]

In *Das nackte Auge*, semiotic elements and sensory phenomena are translated from the audiovisual medium of film to the linguistic medium of writing via the narrator's fictional experiences of embodied spectatorship. These multi-layered translations highlight both the physical materiality of these media as well as the sensory and perceptual effects they produce in the bodies of readers, viewers, and listeners. At other times, however, the narrator experiences what we might call "absence effects" of film spectatorship, becoming disembodied to the point of disappearing as an embodied subject. In light of these tensions, the novel's final scene of corporeal translation posits the possibility of translation as a practice enacted in co-presence rather than a delivery of meaning marked by the absence of an original.

Unlike the other works discussed in this dissertation, my analysis of *Das nackte Auge* does not center on an interpreter figure in the conventional sense. However, the non-hermeneutic, embodied forms of translation that Tawada proposes are directly relevant to my study of interpreting as an embodied act of translation and thus warrant inclusion. I should also note that my use of the term "intermedial translations" to describe the narrator's descriptions of the films she sees is situated within ongoing debates about the definitions of translation,

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Tawada's *Das nackte Auge*," *Études Germaniques* 3, no. 259 (2010): 627–36; Leslie Adelson, "Rusty Rails and Parallel Tracks: Trans-Latio in Yoko Tawada's *Das nackte Auge*," in *Singularity and Transnational Poetics*, ed. Birgit Mara Kaiser (New York: Routledge, 2014), 115–33; Petra Fachinger, "Postcolonial/Postcommunist Picaresque and the Logic of 'trans' in Yoko Tawada's *Das nackte Auge*," in *Yoko Tawada: Poetik Der Transformation*, ed. Christine Ivanovic (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 2010), 297–308.

[55] Steiner, *After Babel*.

[56] Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?"; Spivak, "The Politics of Translation."

[57] Bermann, "Performing Translation," 295.

[58] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford (Calif.): Stanford University Press, 2004).

remediation, adaptation, and other communicative processes.[59] While I believe it is not always productive to extend the term "translation" to include things like the adaptation of a novel into a film, in the case of *Das nackte Auge*, Tawada's remediations are bound up with questions of language and various forms of translation. I thus approach these sections of the novel through the lens of translation, but without claiming that this is the only way they should be read. Indeed, *Das nackte Auge* was born in translation and is constituted by translation throughout; Tawada wrote the novel in both Japanese and German, translating sections back and forth until she had a complete manuscript in each language.[60] In this way, Tawada, whose work has always undermined constructions of authenticity and originality, created two translations with no identifiable, authoritative original. Within the novel, traditional hierarchies of original and translation are also called into question.

Cinema as Refuge, Cinema as Seduction

While the novel ends with an act of embodied translation, it begins with a translated body. The unnamed narrator, a Vietnamese high school student who travels to the GDR in 1988, is, in a sense, "translated" against her will when she is kidnapped and carried across the border that divides the communist East from the capitalist West. She comes to East Berlin to give a speech at an international youth conference—"Man wollte eine authentische Stimme zum Thema 'Vietnam als Opfer des amerikanischen Imperialismus hören'"[61]—but is instead taken to West Germany while unconscious by Jörg, a West German student, who claims he has delivered her to freedom. This is a bitterly ironic reversal of more common narratives of GDR citizens making daring escapes to freedom in the West, and it is underscored by the narrator's experience of "freedom" in Bochum, where she feels like a prisoner in Jörg's apartment. She attempts to return home in a surrealist/magical realist episode involving an extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which recalls Tawada's story "Wo Europa anfängt." However, she goes in the wrong direction and ends up in Paris instead, where she lives a marginalized existence as an unauthorized immigrant. Without a visa, employment, or the ability to speak French, she takes refuge in the cinema. The films she sees structure her experiences, and each of the novel's thirteen chapters is titled after a film featuring Catherine Deneuve that shapes the events of the novel in some way. With regard to postcolonial and postcommunist discourses, two films by director Régis Wargnier play a particularly important role: *Indochine* (1992), in which Deneuve plays a French plantation owner in the waning days of French colonialism in Vietnam, and *Est-Ouest* (1999), about a Russian doctor and his French wife who return from exile to the Soviet Union in 1946 and suffer oppression under Stalin's dictatorship.

Although the narrator spends ten years in Paris, she never learns more than a few words of French; she also resists learning German and at one point even blocks out the meaning of Vietnamese. She describes herself as "ein sprachloses Subjekt,"[62] and in many ways, her lack of a voice in French society is indicative of the ways in which individual and collective historical experiences can be silenced by the hegemonic narratives of politically or economically dominant groups. As Hansjörg Bay observes, once the Cold War ends, the narrator's positive views of

[59] For an overview of these debates, particularly in terms of limits and overlaps between translation and adaptation, see Laurence Raw, ed., *Translation, Adaptation and Transformation* (London: Continuum, 2012).
[60] Saito, "Zur Genese der japanischen Textphasen von Das nackte Auge."
[61] Yoko Tawada, *Das nackte Auge* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 2004), 7.
[62] Ibid., 74.

communism and criticisms of capitalist exploitation are rejected out of hand. The historical narrative in which the freedom and democracy of American-led capitalism triumph over evil and oppression does not only invalidate alternate political viewpoints, it also invalidates individual experiences and memories that conflict with this narrative.[63] Likewise, the narrator's arguments about French colonialism with the couple she lives with in Paris for a period of time are negated by her material dependence on them. A discussion of the film *Indochine* prompts the Vietnamese-French wife Ai Van to assert, "Es ist leicht, den Kolonialismus zu kritisieren. Aber die Freiheit oder die Unabhängigkeit sind genau wie foie gras ein französisches Produkt."[64] When the narrator protests, Ai Van declares, "Du hast immer noch die Propaganda von früher in deinem Kopf."[65] The French husband, Jean, admits that France could have done more to facilitate a cooperative development between France and Vietnam, but adds that freedom is only an abstract concept and that in any case, the French colonial administration was never as destructive as the Japanese.[66] The narrator finds her arguments invalidated by her social position: "Ich wünschte mir, Jean und Ai Van mit scharfen Argumenten totschlagen zu können. Aber ich konnte ja noch nicht einmal richtig sprechen. Außerdem hatten meine Worte keine Gültigkeit, denn ich schlief in der Wohnung, die Jean bezahlte, und ich aß aus dem Topf von Ai Van."[67]

On the streets of Paris, the narrator fears being apprehended by the police and experiences her existence as fundamentally illegal: "Jeder hätte sofort bemerken können, dass ich kein Recht hatte, in dieser Stadt zu sein."[68] In contrast, the cinema provides a space of unconditional acceptance and an escape from threats of surveillance: "Um von der ruhelosen Straße wegzukommen, flüchtete ich ins Kino. Dort durfte man für wenig Eintritt lange verweilen. In der Dunkelheit bestand keine Gefahr, von einem Polizisten beobachtet zu werden."[69] The cinema's comfort also has an explicitly regressive quality; the narrator repeatedly refers to the movie theater as a protective womb, recalling Jean-Louis Baudry's characterization of the cinematic viewer as passive, immobilized, and artificially regressed.[70] Furthermore, for the narrator, the cinema offers access, however mediated, to richer, more vibrant experiences of the world than those of her daily life in Paris.[71]

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[63] Hansjörg Bay, "'Eyes wide shut'. Mediale Übersetzungen in Yoko Tawadas *Das nackte Auge*," *Études Germaniques* 3, no. 259 (2010): 558–560.
[64] Tawada, *Das nackte Auge*, 90.
[65] Ibid., 93.
[66] Ibid., 91.
[67] Ibid., 93.
[68] Ibid., 50.
[69] Ibid., 51.
[70] "[Due to] the darkness of the movie theater, the relative passivity of the situation, the forced immobility of the cine-subject, and the effects which result from the projection of images, moving images, the cinematographic apparatus brings about a state of artificial regression." Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," trans. Jean Andrews and Bertrand Augst, *Camera Obscura* 1, no. 1 (1976): 119.
[71] Considering the importance of travel in both this novel and Tawada's work as a whole, it is worth considering whether the cinema enables the narrator to travel in a different mode while she remains stuck in Paris. While this might initially seem to contradict her descriptions of the cinema as a womb, we might read them in relation to Giuliana Bruno's concept of gendered spectatorship and travel, in which conditions of dwelling can be mobilized by film. Bruno seeks to undo binary traditions and metaphors in which men travel and women stay home, by emphasizing the position of female travelers and film spectators in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: "As a participant in the culture of travel, film increased the possibility for the female subject to map herself into the epistemology and erotics of mobility." (82)

Because the narrator does not understand the French, English, and Spanish languages spoken in these films, she concentrates on the sensory qualities of their sounds and images. While she sometimes ascribes her own interpretations to the events depicted on the screen, at other times her descriptions of her viewing experiences are more phenomenological, focusing on atmosphere, appearance, and sensory perception. For example, she describes the auratic quality of Catherine Deneuve's image in the film *Drôle d'endroit pour une rencontre* (François Dupeyron, 1988): "Der Pelz, die blonden Haare, die Haut, die Stöckelschuhe: Diese Dinge haben Ausstrahlungen, die auf der Leinwand wie winzige goldene Federn aussehen."[72] In addition to the senses of sight and hearing directly addressed by the audiovisual medium of film, the narrator also refers to the other senses it can activate. She describes sensory perceptions such as the taste of mango, the scent of criminality, or the warmth of muscles felt through linen pants.[73]

Interestingly, these remediations from film into written language serve to highlight non-linguistic, and indeed non-semiotic, aspects of the filmic medium, which Gumbrecht would call presence effects. Indeed, as a writer, Tawada uses language to imagine and to convey the possibilities of spectatorship that are opened when the constraints of linguistic meaning are removed. In other words, this further act of mediation serves to intensify certain experiences of presence effects rather than diminishing them. For example, the narrator perceives the physicality of Catherine Deneuve's voice-over at the beginning of *Indochine*: "Und weil ich den Inhalt nicht verstand, stand die Stimme für sich, selbstsicher und elastisch mit ihren Erhebungen und Senkungen. Ich hörte darin Atem, Reibungen, Seufzen, manchmal auch eine laut gewordene Hitze."[74] Freed from the ordering framework that language typically provides, the narrator experiences alternative modes of viewing that are by turns highly personal, open-ended, intertextual, and intensely sensory.

Catherine Deneuve's on-screen presence serves as a focal point in this intermedial evocation of sensory experience. While the narrator's abject body grows increasingly invisible both in and outside the cinema, Deneuve's body exudes a captivating presence that exceeds the boundaries of language and interpretation. For the narrator, Deneuve's body functions as an object of desire, a space of psychological projection, and a point of orientation. The world outside the cinema is unstable and arbitrary, where countries like the GDR can abruptly cease to exist, and a high school student can unintentionally become a criminal overnight. Because the narrator lacks the status of an institutionally sanctioned subject, much of life in Paris is also inaccessible to her; without proper documentation, she cannot obtain legal employment, study at the university, or even register for language school. As an outsider, the people on the streets appear to her as if in a blurry, colorless film: "Die Fußgänger, die ich auf der Straße sah, waren kaputte Grammophone und die Stadt ein misslungener Film, aber ich schlief im Keller und lebte

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Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion : Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), 75–109.

[72] Tawada, *Das nackte Auge*, 102.

[73] See Vivian Sobchack's chapter "What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh" on the haptic, embodied experience of film spectatorship. Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 53–84. In his essay, "The Third Meaning," Roland Barthes also explores the extra-linguistic dimension of the film image that he calls the "obtuse meaning," which exceeds the informational and the symbolic, "exceeds psychology, anecdote, function, exceeds meaning without, however, coming down to the obstinancy in presence shown by any human body." (54) Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 52–68.

[74] Tawada, *Das nackte Auge*, 84.

in den Kinotheatern."[75] Deneuve's filmic presence, on the other hand, possesses a vivid materiality that the rest of the world seems to lack.

In particular, the narrator admires Deneuve's face for its ability to resist reductive ascriptions of meaning by the cinematic apparatus. Referring to the ideological structure and prescriptive symbolism of some films as "die Gewalt der Bilder,"[76] the narrator parallels Gumbrecht's criticism of a narrow focus on hermeneutic understanding and his emphasis on presence phenomena in encounters with art:

> "Ihre Schönheit war eine ausgearbeitete Fläche, die von jedem Ausdruck frei war. Keine einfache Botschaft zwang mich in die Enge des Verstehens. Besonders bei Großaufnahmen war Ihr Gesicht so faszinierend offen wie eine Leinwand vor der Filmvorführung."[77]

At the same time, however, Deneuve's appearance on the screen also has an overwhelming effect on the narrator's perception of herself. Addressing Deneuve, she states: "Meine Person verschwand im Dunkel des Kinosaals und es blieb nur noch meine brennende Netzhaut, auf der sich die Leinwand reflektierte. Es gab keine Frau mehr, die "ich" hieß. Denn Sie waren für mich die einzige Frau, mich gab es also nicht."[78] This inverse correlation of Deneuve's filmic presence and the narrator's absence continues up to the novel's final chapter, where their relationship is transformed. [79]

Dancing from Screen to Hand: Intermedial and Embodied Translations

Although the final chapter also involves a film featuring Catherine Deneuve, namely Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), it differs significantly from the rest of the novel. The narrator is absent from this chapter, along with the lens of subjective experience marked by her first-person narration. Instead, the chapter is reported in the third person and imagines an encounter in Berlin between Selma, a Czech immigrant, and an older blind woman. Except for the chapter's title, no direct mention is made of the film *Dancer in the Dark* itself, which features Björk as a woman going blind and Catherine Deneuve as her friend Kathy. Instead, elements from the film are woven into a scene that also incorporates aspects of the narrator's experiences in the rest of the novel, but in the distorted manner of a dream.

In this alternate realm, the narrator as an individual subject has seemingly dissolved, and the remaining fragments have merged with elements of Catherine Deneuve in the figure of the older blind woman. The blind woman, although she looks like an older Catherine Deneuve, is Vietnamese and lived for ten years in Paris due to what she calls "ein Missverständnis, wenn nicht sogar ein Unfall."[80] We learn that she was blinded in 1988 when she tried to help a foreign girl being attacked in Berlin, who later died from a stab wound. She explains that although she is blind, she enjoys going to the movies with her friend Kathy, who translates the images on the

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[75] Ibid., 146.
[76] Ibid., 97.
[77] Ibid., 95–96.
[78] Ibid., 54.
[79] In the passage quoted above, the narrator's experience of immersion and self-erasure in the cinema directly mirrors that described by Béla Balázs: "Mein Blick und mit ihm mein Bewußtsein *identifiziert* sich mit den Personen des Films. Ich sehe das, was sie von ihrem Standpunkt aus sehen. Ich selber habe keinen. Ich gehe in der Menge mit, ich fliege, ich tauche, ich reite mit." Béla Balázs, *Der Geist des Films*, 1. Aufl (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 15.
[80] Tawada, *Das nackte Auge*, 184.

screen into finger movements on the palm of her hand. The novel thus ends by citing a scene in *Dancer in the Dark* in which Kathy does this for her blind friend Selma.

What are we to make of this final chapter, which concludes the intense visuality of the preceding chapters with blindness? And what of the novel's multiply mediated ending, a linguistic adaptation of a filmic scene of bodily translation? On the one hand, the narrator's absence can be read as the final dissolution of her sense of self. Defined by her illegal status and by her position as a postcolonial and postcommunist subject, the narrator is repeatedly discounted, excluded and invalidated. As a result, she dissolves into a realm of movie fantasy, regressing all the way back into non-existence. Indeed, the previous chapter ends with an image of self-blinding that also represents a self-annihilation. In that chapter, she returns to Bochum from Paris to live with her former kidnapper Jörg, who tells her to move on and forget the images of her communist past. She answers: "Ja. Ich werde sie vergessen, aber dafür muss ich mit dem Sekundenzeiger in meine Augen stechen."[81] The final chapter's refiguring of this blindness as the result of xenophobic violence further points to the social structures that in fact propel the narrator's self-erasure. While presence effects can be produced and conveyed through mediated forms, those of physically present, material bodies can also be obscured. By juxtaposing the intensity of Deneuve's on-screen presence with the narrator's literal erasure, we see how a mediated body can come to "matter more" than an abject body "in the flesh."[82]

On the other hand, however, the narrator is still present in the figure of the blind woman, in the same way that Deneuve is present in both the blind woman and her friend Kathy. In this realm of translation, the narrator's relationship to Deneuve is transformed into one of shared presence, indicated by a merging of bodies and subjectivities. At the same time, blindness seems to open up new experiences of presence—experiences that are free from a regime of meaning associated with ontological violence. Although the final chapter is marked by the narrator's absence, it ends with an embodied translation that conveys an intense experience of shared presence.

In *Dancer in the Dark*, Kathy (Deneuve) and Selma (Björk) watch a Busby Berkeley dance number in a movie theater, and when Selma asks Kathy to describe what is happening on the screen, Kathy takes Selma's hand and "dances" her fingers across Selma's palm. Here we see presence effects translated through bodily contact: Kathy translates her own experience of presence phenomena—her visual perception of the dancers moving their bodies on the screen—into the movement of her hand on Selma's. While the movements of both the dancers and Kathy's fingers could be interpreted from a hermeneutic perspective, the experience of joyful movement that Kathy shares with Selma is most important. Indeed, translation as an embodied experience of communication becomes a kind of communion.

In Tawada's adaptation of this scene, the blind woman explicitly appreciates these bodily movements for their lack of clear semiotic meaning. She values them as singular articulations of presence rather than as regimented signifiers:

> Meine Freundin Kathy übersetzt mir nämlich die Bilder in die Fingersprache und tippt sie auf meine Handfläche. Meine Hand ist meine Leinwand, und die Finger von Kathy sind die Autoren, denn ich bin sicher, dass sie die Geschichte umschreibt, wenn sie ihr nicht gefällt. In einem Film ohne Bilder sind die meisten Menschen reine Schritte. [...] Das Gesicht der tanzenden Frau sehe ich nicht, zumindest nicht so wie ein Polizist ein Gesicht sehen und identifizieren kann. Die Gesichter, die wie Passbilder aussehen, bedeuten mir

[81] Ibid., 181.
[82] Butler, *Bodies That Matter.*

> nichts mehr. Ich möchte den Tanz sehen, ich meine, die seltsamen, sinnlosen Bewegungen der Menschen.[83]

Recalling the narrator's description of "die Gewalt der Bilder," vision here is associated with systems of control and surveillance, in which identities are ascribed to subjects and reductive interpretations are imposed on them.[84] Whereas the narrator is interpreted within French society as essentially illegal and thereby abject, the blind woman finds freedom from visual regimes of interpretation, and her body now becomes a canvas open to new possibilities of experience. Furthermore, despite multiple layers of mediation, the novel ends with a shared experience of human presence that is independent of knowledge, information, or interpretation. When asked where Kathy lives, the blind woman responds with the novel's final lines: "Ich weiß nicht, wo sie jetzt ist. Aber wenn ich ins Kino gehe, sitzt sie immer neben mir."[85] Having previously admired the resistance of Deneuve's physicality to interpretation on the screen, the narrator now merges with it, dwelling together with Deneuve in the combined alter-ego of the blind woman, while also sharing an experience of embodied communication with Deneuve in the figure of Kathy.

With the blind woman's story, Tawada illustrates a mode of translation based on a shared experience of presence rather than an identification and extraction of semiotic meaning. Instead of a reductive and potentially violent practice of interpretation, this mode of translation allows for multiple possibilities of co-authorship, enactment, and communicative exchange. In this view, mediation does not always have a distancing effect; it can also foster new forms of interconnection. In particular, embodied acts of translation do not only convey presence effects; they also generate new possibilities of experiencing presence together.

Whether we read this final note of presence as a kind of redemption, as Gumbrecht might, or as an alternative understanding of a tragic journey, it throws the narrator's experience of erasure into stark relief. Here I differ from Gumbrecht by insisting on the political dimensions of physical presence, particularly with respect to mediation and translation. Issues of representation and erasure have, of course, been widely discussed in the realms of both identity politics and translation studies, but in *Das nackte Auge*, the narrator questions her very right to exist and to occupy space at all. At one point, she addresses Deneuve and explains the critical role of the cinema in her very survival: "Man würde mir nicht glauben, dass ich bloß keinen anderen Ort zum Überleben hatte als bei Ihnen auf der Leinwand und nur deshalb immer da war."[86] When she renounces this space through a symbolic act of self-blinding and self-negation in the penultimate chapter, she also ceases to exist as an individual subject. Instead, the final chapter presents readers with an alternative possibility of non-interpretive shared co-presence.

The dramatic increases in refugees entering Europe over the past two years also underscore the political dimensions of physical presence. Although refugees migrate for many reasons, including political rights, freedoms, and protections, many are also, at the most basic level, seeking a physical space in which they are able to continue being alive. Thus far, communities in Europe have engaged with the arrival of new refugees in various ways, from the blossoming of a *Willkommenskultur* in Germany to the growth of anti-immigrant right-wing

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[83] Tawada, *Das nackte Auge*, 185–186.

[84] For more on links between photography, early cinema, and modern police detective work, see Tom Gunning, "Tracing the Individual Body Aka Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwarz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 15–45.

[85] Tawada, *Das nackte Auge*, 186.

[86] Ibid., 105.

parties like the *Alternative für Deutschland* and the French *Front National.* The most familiar response is to interpret the new bodies in their midst according to widespread practices of identification, including categorizing and stereotyping. On the other hand, imagining translation as a communicative experience of shared presence that does not, however, demand self-negation, might be one way to explore alternative possibilities of co-existence.

The following chapter also deals with translation in relation to border crossing and unauthorized immigration, as well as the constructed and shifting nature of Europe's borders. Like *Das nackte Auge,* Hans-Christian Schmid's film *Lichter* (2003) engages with social and political changes that followed the end of the Cold War in Europe; *Lichter* takes place at the Polish-German border shortly before the eastward expansion of the European Union. Furthermore, both *Das nackte Auge* and *Lichter* intervene in post-wall debates about "eastern" migration to Western Europe. Tawada ironizes both ideological narratives in which citizens of (now formerly) communist countries yearn for the freedom of the West, as well as anti-immigrant discourses in which bogus asylum-seekers from Eastern Europe flood into Western Europe to take advantage of social benefits. Her (Far Eastern) narrator is forcibly brought to Western Europe, where she dwells in abjection and dreams of returning to a communist society that no longer exists. In *Lichter*, on the other hand, the ontological instability of the border between Eastern and Western Europe is staged through scenes of multi-directional movement and intimate exchanges.

Chapter Five
European Border Traffic: Hans-Christian Schmid's *Lichter*

In 2002, following a decade of accession negotiations between Poland and the European Union, the EU was preparing to expand eastward. At the same time, German director Hans-Christian Schmid was filming the eastern border of the EU as it then existed between Germany and Poland. Through a series of intersections and exchanges on both sides of the Polish-German border, his episodic film *Lichter* (2003) depicts a border region in flux.[1] On one hand, the German border regime is shown to operate as a "selective membrane" and an "abjecting mechanism," letting certain people through and rejecting unwanted others.[2] On the other hand, the border—constructed by social, cultural, and political processes—is subject to change.[3] Its existence requires continual rearticulation through repeated acts of territoriality, from customs inspections and deportations to political discourses of security and sovereignty.[4]

As gaps and instabilities emerge through such repetitions, they are sought out and exploited by key characters in the film, including smugglers, unauthorized immigrants, and interpreters. Through a focus on the figure of the interpreter, I examine the crucial role that language and translation play in both the construction and crossing of social and political borders. Within *Lichter*, the German, Polish, Russian, and English languages operate variously as markers of difference, belonging, connection, negotiation, and impasse. Two of the film's six storylines center on interpreters, and both dramatize the intersection of linguistic, migratory, and financial flows with the interpreter's embodied practice and socially situated position. As such, they both facilitate and impede global movement and exchange while also constituting unique points of friction within these transnational flows. Here I return to Anna Tsing's concept of "friction" as "the sticky materiality" of practical, worldly encounters through which "aspirations for global connection are enacted."[5] In *Lichter*, both the linguistic flexibility of the film's interpreters and the frictions that they generate point to a European border zone in flux, in that acts of translation enact border regimes while also calling their stability into question.

The liminal status of the film's interpreters as linguistic mediators is articulated by their transgression of social and political boundaries: one interpreter is also a sex worker and the other becomes a smuggler. Here filmic representations give distinct audiovisual shape to latent anxieties and fantasies about translation and geopolitical borders. Fictional melodrama, in which

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[1] Hans-Christian Schmid, *Lichter*, DVD (Hamburg: Universal Pictures Germany, 2004).

[2] Randall Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema: Interzones and Imaginative Communities* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 125. In an earlier article, Halle builds on Julia Kristeva's model of abjection as expulsion that constitutes the borders of the self, extending it to the establishment and maintenance of the German nation-state: Randall Halle, "Views from the German-Polish Border: The Exploration of Inter-National Space in *Halbe Treppe* and *Lichter*," *The German Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 88–89.

[3] Anssi Paasi, "Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 2001): 7–28.

[4] Mark Salter et al., "Interventions on Rethinking 'the Border' in Border Studies," *Political Geography,* 30, no. 2 (2011): 66–67. Salter draws on Judith Butler's view that identities are constituted by a stylized repetition of acts over time, arguing that states similarly constitute their sovereignty by repeatedly performing themselves as sovereign.

[5] Tsing, *Friction*, 1.

metaphors are concretized and imagined possibilities are taken to extremes, provides a unique perspective on the ways that cultural and metaphorical understandings of translation and global movement shape, intersect with, and are in turn produced by actual practices of interlingual mediation and geopolitical border crossing. In my analysis of the film's interpreters and their roles in the Polish-German border zone, I consider how their embodied acts of translation are linked to other acts of border crossing and what kinds of friction these cross-border movements generate. I also ask what can and cannot be carried across the linguistic, cultural, and physical borders depicted in the film.

The term "translation" itself refers to the crossing of a border; the English word derives from the Latin *translatio*, which literally means "carrying across."[6] Linguistic translation, like the crossing of a geopolitical border, is often understood as a point of contact between the domestic and the foreign. Yet translation can also delineate a boundary, just as all borders simultaneously connect and divide.[7] In this view, translation brings foreign elements into a domestic sphere; as translation theorist Lawrence Venuti states, "translating traffics in the foreign."[8] Like the migration of people, translation brings with it new practices and perspectives, but it can also evoke fears of infiltration and contamination. As the verb "to traffic" implies, this influx of the foreign can occur openly or can be covertly smuggled in, taking advantage of gaps in knowledge and understanding.

Interpreters enact the border crossing of translation, which becomes further concretized when interpreting takes place at the site of a geopolitical border, as it does in *Lichter.* Interpreters are often figured as bridges, but their physical presence also serves as a continual reminder of the gap that necessitates their mediation. They are uniquely flexible and mobile, moving repeatedly between languages and cultural contexts, and unlike written translation, interpreting is often dialogic.[9] In *Lichter*, interpreters perform numerous multidirectional crossings that can vary and develop over the course of an interaction; the borders enacted by such dialogic interpreting are thus also continually shifting.

In the following, I first discuss the relationship of translation to the border zone as a space of fluctuation and uncertainty, before considering each of the film's interpreters in greater detail. In particular, I show how the film draws on traditional discourses of translation as betrayal to highlight the uncertainty of the border zone, while at the same time depicting translation as a complex multidirectional convergence generating both productive and unexpected frictions. Further, I examine figurations of interpreting as intervention, as transgression, as gendered labor, and as an intimate, sexualized act. I argue that these figurations represent anxieties arising from a conflict between the ideal of interpreters as neutral channels of communication and the reality of interpreters as socially embedded human subjects. Finally, I show how interpreters' intersectional positionalities can complicate the categories of "foreign" and "domestic" that continue to shape the field of translation studies.

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[6] The same is true in many other European languages, in which the term is either derived from the Latin or is a calque thereof, such as the German term *Übersetzung* ("setting across") and the Russian term *перевод* (*perevod*, "transfer").

[7] See, for example, Georg Simmel, "Bridge and Door [1909]," in *Simmel on Culture*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: SAGE, 1997), 170–73.

[8] Lawrence Venuti, "Translation, Community, Utopia," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 491.

[9] Cecilia Wadensjö, *Interpreting as Interaction* (London: Longman, 1998).

Betrayal in the Border Zone

Like virtually all national borders, the Polish-German border has undergone numerous historical changes due to shifts in political and military power. The current border, which runs along the Oder and Neisse rivers, was established by the Allied powers after the Second World War. *Lichter* takes place on both sides of the Oder River, in the German city Frankfurt (Oder) and the Polish city Słubice. Although now separated by a national border, the two were actually a single German city until their division in 1945, after which Słubice was resettled by Poles. Recalling this historical unity underscores the constructed nature of such borders; the same river can function as a community's center in one historical context and as a "naturally occurring" geographic barrier in another. In 2002, the Oder River served as a national border, as an external EU border, and frequently as an imagined cultural border between Eastern and Western Europe. However, even as the Polish-German border depicted in *Lichter* displayed solidity through its checkpoints, watchtowers, patrol boats, and border police, plans for change were already well underway.[10] In 2003, Poland and nine other new member states signed and ratified a Treaty of Accession, which went into effect on May 1, 2004 and brought about a significant eastward expansion of the EU. With Poland's 2007 incorporation into the Schengen Area, Poland's borders with Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Germany were opened, and the EU border shifted eastward to the Polish-Belarusian and Polish-Ukrainian borders, which today are both heavily policed and traversed.

In *Lichter*, the highly mobile handheld digital camera employed by cameraman Bogumil Godfrejów follows the film's characters as they move back and forth across the Polish-German border and circulate in the borderlands on both sides.[11] Kristin Kopp identifies an "aesthetics of dislocation" in the film's disjointed episodes, frequent shifts in location, rapid camera motion, and unconventional editing, which, according to Kopp, work to transcend national categories by undermining viewers' attempts to locate depicted actions in relation to the border.[12] I would argue that these aesthetic strategies do not so much transcend national delineations as destabilize them and expose their constructed nature. Although subject to change, enactments of the Polish-German border nonetheless carry real, material consequences for the film's characters.[13] I would

[10] Halle also situates *Lichter* within the context of EU eastern expansion, arguing that the transformation of the German-Polish border calls for "new imaginings of community beyond the national" and that the film invites spectators to rethink their concept of the border and their relationship to it. Halle, "Views from the German-Polish Border," 91.

[11] Halle notes the significance of the film's nuanced portrayal of the Polish side in comparison with other German films that depict Poland as an incoherent realm of alterity or "filmic nonspace." Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema*, 115.

[12] In the opening scene, for example, viewers share the visual disorientation of a group of Ukrainian migrants as they emerge from the darkness of a smugglers' truck into a rural landscape. Kopp further accounts for the film's depiction of economic depression, unemployment, and criminality on both sides of the border by arguing that the film's real dichotomy is not between Germany and Poland, but between a borderland region of disenfranchised locals and a globalized, highly-mobile, financial and political elite. Kristin Kopp, "Reconfiguring the Border of Fortress Europe in Hans-Christian Schmid's *Lichter*," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 82, no. 1 (2007): 43–48.

[13] For example, Ukrainian migrants are willing to risk their lives to enter Germany rather than remain in Poland; cheaper labor costs result in a textile factory being built in Poland rather than Germany; and the price difference between German and Polish cigarettes is significant enough to warrant an extensive smuggling operation. Furthermore, the Ukrainians' disorientation upon exiting the smugglers' truck

also suggest that the film's aesthetic of dislocation functions to frame the border zone as a space of uncertainty.

In particular, the numerous intersections that constitute this unstable space pose the risk of communication gaps—both between languages and within them—leading to misinformation, misplaced trust, and outright deception. Indeed, the film's various storylines are connected not only by the Polish-German border, but also by the theme of betrayal. Although the film's characters vary in nationality, socioeconomic status, and mobility in relation to the border, they all either perpetrate or fall victim to betrayals in the border zone. The film begins with a betrayal that consists of an uncrossed border: A group of Ukrainian migrants, having paid a smuggler to take them to Germany, is dropped off in a wooded area and told that they are just outside of Berlin.[14] In actuality, however, they are still in Poland, just outside Słubice, and must find their own paths across the border. Later, the Polish taxi driver Antoni attempts to guide a Ukrainian couple with a baby across the Oder illegally and pays a fisherman to be their lookout. After the fisherman betrays them and their attempt fails, Antoni steals the couple's money before putting them on a bus back to Ukraine. In another storyline, the German cigarette smuggler Andreas is abandoned by Katharina, the girl he loves, and subsequently betrays his smuggling partner and romantic rival Marko to the border guards. The personal and political betrayals of the film's interpreter characters, which I discuss below, are thus part of a larger series of betrayals in this unstable border zone. They are, however, particularly intensified by their intersection with discourses of translation as betrayal.

As exemplified by the well-known Italian epigram *traduttore, traditore* (translator, traitor), translators have often been figured as traitors to the authors and the original texts they translate. In this view, the impossibility of exact linguistic equivalence is seen as a failing, and the translator therefore necessarily betrays the original by producing an inferior substitute, a deviant corruption, or a misrepresentation.[15] In recent decades, a number of translation scholars have advocated "creative betrayal" as a productive, imaginative approach to translation, but outside this field, a widespread skepticism persists.[16] Suspicions are further provoked by the

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represents a dangerous pitfall precisely because their location in relation to the Polish-German national border is so crucial.

[14] As Kopp notes, the camera conveys the visual disorientation of the Ukrainian migrants as they emerge from the darkness of a smugglers' truck into a rural landscape. Ibid., 32, 48.

[15] See for instance Barbara Johnson, "Taking Fidelity Philosophically," in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 142–48; Arthur C. Danto, "Translation and Betrayal," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 32 (Autumn 1997): 61–63; Susan Bassnett, *Translation* (London: Routledge, 2013), 9–11; Eliot Weinberger, "Anonymous Sources (On Translators and Translation)," in *In Translation: Translators on Their Work and What It Means*, ed. Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 21–22; Catherine Porter, "Translation as Scholarship," in *In Translation: Translators on Their Work and What It Means*, ed. Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 60–61.

[16] These include Sylvie Durastanti and Catherine Porter, "In Praise of Betrayal," *Inventory* 2 (Fall 2011): 88–93; Alexis Nouss, "In Praise of Betrayal (On Re-Reading Berman)," *Translator: Studies in Intercultural Communication* 7, no. 2 (November 2001): 283–95; Suzanne Jill Levine, *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (St. Paul: Greywolf, 1991); Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (London; New York: Routledge, 2006); Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenburg, vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 66–67; Philip E. Lewis, "The Measure of Translation Effects," in *The Translation Studies Reader*,

translator's liminal position and greater linguistic knowledge than the reader, as well as the reader's awareness of her dependence on the translator and her inability to confirm the translation's validity. As previously discussed, this suspicion can become heightened in interpreting situations, in which the interpreter's presence continually reminds other participants of their dependence and vulnerability. Although interpreters are expected to obscure their own presence in order to function as clear channels of communication, their physicality persists, attesting to the possibility of manipulation. In reality, most interpreters adhere to a code of professional ethics; the fictional representations in *Lichter*, however, allow for a productive exploration of anxieties and fantasies surrounding translation as a potentially transgressive act.

Interpreting as Intervention

The first interpreter in *Lichter* is Sonja, who works for the German border police. We encounter Sonja during the interrogation of Kolja, one of the Ukrainian migrants caught after crossing the Oder River into Germany. She is introduced as part of a larger state apparatus of border policing; the interrogation scene is preceded by a series of shots showing the Ukrainians being processed in a German detention center. They are photographed, their information is entered into the computer system, and their bags and bodies are searched. The quick succession of cuts suggests repetition and routine—a steady stream of migrants apprehended while attempting to enter Germany. At the same time, the migrants become fragmented by close-up shots of individual objects—a passport opened, a boot inspected, a glove discarded after a cavity search; the state renders them as data points and potential threats to be neutralized.

Interpreting frequently plays an important role in both the performance and policing of state borders. As Emily Apter notes, "In zoning territory and mediating the right to travel across state lines, translation is both a metaphor for border control and a practice availed of by state agents to determine the legal standing of the person at the gate."[17] Apter cautions against an overly metaphorical view of translation and border crossing, calling attention to concrete structures and practices of sovereignty, bordering, surveillance, and "non-transitivity," and asking who does and does not have access to translation at checkpoints or in court cases related to deportation and immigration.[18] She further reminds readers that a translation zone is not always "a porous boundary facilitating supranational comity and regimes of general equivalence" but can also function as "a threshold of untranslatability and political blockade."[19]

Within this system, Sonja is positioned both as a neutral medium of communication and as an "institutional gatekeeper," helping to determine who should be let into Germany and who should be turned away.[20] Despite a professional ideal of unbiased neutrality, studies in linguistic anthropology and socio-linguistics have shown that interpreters tend to align themselves with the larger institutions that employ them, from hospitals and courtrooms to agencies reviewing

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2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 256–75; Abe Mark Nornes, "For an Abusive Subtitling," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 447–69.

[17] Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013), 107.

[18] Ibid., 99–114.

[19] Ibid., 114.

[20] Davidson, "The Interpreter as Institutional Gatekeeper: The Social-Linguistic Role of Interpreters in Spanish-English Medical Discourse."

asylum requests.[21] For example, during registration interviews run by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees in Albania in 2000, interpreters actively assisted caseworkers in their attempts to identify Albanians passing as Kosovar refugees.[22] These interpreters functioned as "communication detectives," evaluating accents, clothing, postures, gestures, and other communication behaviors.[23] More recently, many interpreters working with asylum seekers in Germany have also been tasked with assessing accents, word choice, and speech patterns to determine whether applicants are really Syrian refugees, and thus eligible for asylum, or whether they are economic migrants posing as refugees to gain entry into Germany.[24] This issue of "checkpointing within language"[25] is also taken up by artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan, whose multimedia project "The Freedom of Speech Itself" focuses on the U.K.'s use of voice analysis to determine the authenticity of asylum applicants' accents.[26] Because asylum cases are usually based primarily on individual testimony of persecution that is difficult to prove or disprove without direct evidence, the ability of interpreters to assist the state as linguistic informants takes on particular importance.[27]

However, interpreters also intervene on behalf of individuals in encounters with more powerful institutions, advocating for medical patients or providing advice and support to refugees.[28] In Germany, many current interpreters of languages such as Arabic or Pashto themselves came to Germany as migrants or refugees from countries such as Syria and

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[21] See, for example, Ibid.; Sonja Pöllabauer, "Interpreting in Asylum Hearings: Issues of Role, Responsibility and Power," *Interpreting* 6, no. 2 (2004): 143–80; Morven Beaton, "Interpreted Ideologies in Institutional Discourse: The Case of the European Parliament," *The Translator* 13, no. 2 (2007): 271–96; Galina B. Bolden, "Toward Understanding Practices of Medical Interpreting: Interpreters' Involvement in History Taking," *Discourse Studies* 2, no. 4 (2000): 387–419; Claudia Angelelli, *Re-Visiting the Role of the Interpreter: A Study of Conference, Court and Medical Interpreters in Canada, Mexico and the United States* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004).

[22] Jacquemet, "The Registration Interview: Restricting Refugees' Narrative Performance."

[23] Ibid., 140.

[24] Ruth Eisenreich and Paul Munzinger, "Warum Flüchtlinge zu falschen Syrern werden," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 23, 2015, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/migration-warum-fluechtlinge-zu-falschen-syrern-werden-1.2657804; Ralf Borchard, "Ein Viertel sind gar keine Flüchtlinge," *Deutschlandfunk*, September 12, 2015, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/wiener-westbahnhof-ein-viertel-sind-gar-keine-fluechtlinge.1773.de.html?dram:article_id=330884; Martin Kotynek and Peter Dausend, "Gefälschte Papiere," September 20, 2015, http://www.zeit.de/2015/38/fluechtlinge-asyl-syrer-ausweise-faelschungen; Gabriele Dunkel, *Tagesschau: die wichtige Rolle der Dolmetscher* (ARD, 2015), https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/video/video-118421.html.

[25] Apter, *Against World Literature*, 112.

[26] Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *The Freedom of Speech Itself*, 2012, https://vimeo.com/40869582; Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "The Freedom of Speech Itself," accessed June 28, 2016, http://lawrenceabuhamdan.com/#/fosi/.

[27] Pöllabauer, "Interpreting in Asylum Hearings," 146.

[28] See, for example, Zubaidah Ibrahim, "The Interpreter as Advocate," in *The Critical Link 4: Professionalisation of Interpreting in the Community*, ed. Cecilia Wadensjö, Birgitta Englund Dimitrova, and Anna-Lena Nilsson (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 205–26; Sandra Hale, "The Court Interpreter," in *Crossing Borders in Community Interpreting: Definitions and Dilemmas*, ed. Carmen Valero-Garces and Anne Martin (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008); Claudia Angelelli, *Re-visiting the Role of the Interpreter: A Study of Conference, Court and Medical Interpreters in Canada, Mexico and the United States* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004).

Afghanistan and thus identify strongly with the new arrivals they are assisting.[29] In addition to translating between languages, many interpreters also provide explanations, offer guidance, and bear witness to experiences of trauma.[30] Again, the fact that asylum requests are decided on an individual basis and depend largely on personal testimony highlights the importance of the interpreter's mediating role. How a story is presented is often just as important as the events it describes; decision-makers often look for specific narrative structures and the use of particular terms to determine both an applicant's credibility and a basis for the asylum claim.[31] Based on his study of Canadian refugee hearings in the 1990s, Robert Barsky argues that interpreters should function in the asylum system as advocates and intercultural agents, helping refugees to articulate their claims and ensure their stories are heard.[32] The institutional structures that determine the truth-value and evidentiary weight of an individual's oral testimony also complicate the issue of faithful translation: if an interpreter modifies a translation to better match the applicant's testimony to recognized and institutionally accepted structures, is this an unfaithful translation, or does it in fact reflect a greater fidelity to the source?

In a convergence of interpreter affiliation and neutrality, a study of Croatian interpreters who volunteered for the politically neutral European Community Monitor Mission during the 1991-92 war in Croatia found that the majority volunteered out of a desire to help the Croatian cause by alerting the international community to the aggression of occupying Serb forces.[33]

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[29]Gabriele Dunkel, *Tagesschau: die wichtige Rolle der Dolmetscher*; "Notfallseelsorger: „Flüchtlingshilfe ist Marathonlauf"," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 5, 2015, http://www.derwesten.de/staedte/witten/notfallseelsorger-fluechtlingshilfe-ist-marathonlauf-id11159892.html; Deutsche Presse-Agentur, "Sechs Ehrenamtliche und wie sie helfen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 7, 2015, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/fluechtlinge-in-muenchen-sechs-ehrenamtliche-und-wie-sie-helfen-1.2637866; Deutsche Presse-Agentur, "Fluchtdramen fordern Dolmetscher: 'Manchmal kommen mir die Tränen'," *Focus-Online*, August 4, 2015, http://www.focus.de/regional/stuttgart/fluchtdramen-fordern-dolmetscher-manchmal-kommen-mir-die-traenen_id_4039794.html.

[30] Interestingly, the relatively recent emergence of professional *Sprach- und Integrationsmittler* (Language and Integration Mediators) indicates a growing acknowledgement that the linguistic services of interpreters are often inseparable from the cultural and institutional mediation they also perform. The role of *Sprach- und Integrationsmittler* explicitly positions the interpreter as a guide and advocate rather than a neutral conduit. See, for example: http://www.sprachundintegrationsmittler.org; Sabine Damaschke, "NRW vermittelt Dolmetscher an Flüchtlinge," *Die Welt*, December 31, 2014, http://www.welt.de/regionales/nrw/article135876338/NRW-vermittelt-Dolmetscher-an-Fluechtlinge.html; Antje Schwarze, "Professionelle Sprach- und Integrationsmittler," *MiGAZIN: Migration in Germany*, January 11, 2010, http://www.migazin.de/2010/01/11/professionelle-sprach-und-integrationsmittler/.

[31] Indeed, the English formulation on the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees website stresses this narrative aspect in their information about applying for asylum. The bolded section title reads: "An individual's personal story is the determining factor." The text below it informs the reader that "the decision to grant asylum always depends on what has happened to the particular individual." "BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - Interview and Decision," accessed June 27, 2016, http://www.bamf.de/EN/Migration/AsylFluechtlinge/Asylverfahren/AnhoerungEntscheidung/anhoerungentscheidung-node.html.

[32] Robert Barsky, "The Interpreter as Intercultural Agent in Convention Refugee Hearings," *The Translator* 1, no. 2 (1996): 45–64.

[33] Zrinka Stahuljak, "War, Translation, Transnationalism: Interpreters in and of the War (Croatia, 1991-1992)," in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 2010), 391–414.

These interpreters in fact subsumed themselves in positions of linguistic neutrality precisely due to their strong sense of political affiliation. In practice, however, many were torn between their commitment to professional neutrality and their need to voice their own experiences as historically situated subjects.

Such cases demonstrate the impossibility of the normative ideal of human interpreters as neutral channels. Indeed, depending on the situation, even supposedly neutral behavior—adhering strictly to protocol, refraining from adding explanatory context, refusing to intervene, remaining silent—can be read as an act that supports one side and undermines another. As social agents and participants embedded within relational structures, interpreters interact with speakers and listeners in a multitude of ways. Indeed, interpreting as mediation can be understood as always also a form of intervention.[34]

In *Lichter*, the interpreter Sonja covertly departs from her position of neutrality to intervene in the interrogation of the undocumented immigrant Kolja. The interrogation centers on the question of how Kolja entered Germany, which determines whether he is eligible to apply for asylum there. According to the 1993 amendment of the German Basic Law (Art. 16a), refugees who enter Germany through a safe third country are not eligible for asylum. If the German police determine that Kolja passed through Poland before entering Germany, they can send him back to Poland. [35]

Notably, this discussion of Kolja's mode of entry preempts a question that is not explicitly addressed: whether Kolja is in fact a refugee fleeing persecution, and thus worthy of asylum, or whether he is an economic migrant falsely claiming refugee status.[36] These categories are of course also politically constructed and historically contingent; the binary of "forced political migrants" and "voluntary economic migrants" is anchored by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, formulated in response to the events of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War.[37] In practice, this distinction is not always clear, due to the complexity of factors that can compel migrants to seek refuge in another country. The ethics of this distinction have also been debated; for example, problems such as food insecurity, generalized violence, and environmental change force many people to emigrate from countries that cannot or will not

[34] Ibid., 403; Carol Maier, "The Translator as an Intervenient Being," in *Translation as Intervention*, ed. Jeremy Munday (London: Continuum, 2007), 1–17; Wadensjö, *Interpreting as Interaction*.

[35] In 2002, Poland was not yet an EU member state and thus not yet part of the Dublin Convention (later Dublin Regulation). It was, however, on Germany's official list of safe third countries (countries that adhere to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights). Furthermore, Poland also signed a readmission agreement with the Schengen States in 1991 as well as a bilateral readmission agreement with Germany, which obligates Poland to take back third-country nationals who have passed through Poland on their way to Germany.

[36] German refugee law is based on the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, which defines a refugee as someone who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," 1951, http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html.

[37] Stephan Scheel and Vicki Squire, "Forced Migrants as 'Illegal' Migrants," in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 193.

ensure their basic rights, but these reasons do not generally qualify as grounds for asylum.[38] Since Germany's institution of the safe third country policy in 1993, however, asylum-seekers entering Germany via an official safe third country can be returned to that country immediately, regardless of their claim's legitimacy.[39] Indeed, in *Lichter,* the border police officer's first recourse in dealing with Kolja is the safe third country policy rather than Kolja's reasons for migrating; the officer anticipates that Kolja will claim asylum and attempts to close off this possibility by establishing Kolja's ineligibility from the start. However, the officer's belief that Kolja is lying about his mode of entry also points to a larger discourse of "bogus asylum seekers" that developed in Europe during the 1980s and 90s. Within this discourse, legitimate refugees are defined by a lack of political agency, while bogus asylum seekers are "conceived as imbued with dangerous or excessive agency based on the suspected 'abuse' of the asylum system."[40]

The film does suggest that Kolja's reasons for migrating are at least partially economic. While still in the woods outside Słubice, Kolja shows his fellow travelers a picture of his brother on a construction site at Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. He explains that his brother worked there from 1995-96, but was caught during an inspection and deported to Kiev.[41] Kolja has promised to photograph the skyscrapers when he arrives in Berlin, so that his brother can see the buildings

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[38] Alexander Betts argues for an extension of asylum to all individuals deprived of fundamental human rights and proposes the concept of "survival migrants," "persons outside their country of origin because of an existential threat to which they have no access to a domestic remedy or resolution." Alexander Betts, "Survival Migration: A New Protection Framework," *Global Governance* 16, no. 3 (2010): 362. See also Andrew E. Shacknove, "Who Is a Refugee?," *Ethics* 95, no. 2 (January 1985): 274–84; Satvinder Singh Juss, *International Migration and Global Justice* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2006).

[39] The 1993 amendment establishing safe third countries and safe countries of origin was added in response to fears of an overwhelming influx of refugees, and these restrictions did decrease the number of asylum applications in Germany dramatically. More recently, emphasis has been placed on expanding the list of safe countries of origin as a way to reduce asylum claims, as with the 2014 additions of Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the most recent 2015 additions of Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. At the EU level, the European Commission has proposed a common EU list of safe countries of origin, which remains under debate.

[40] Scheel and Squire, "Forced Migrants as 'Illegal' Migrants," 194. This discourse has been mobilized in the current European refugee crisis by political figures such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. Although German officials have largely avoided such explicit accusations, the expedited deportation of unauthorized economic migrants is a central part of the German government's current strategy in dealing with this year's dramatic increase in new arrivals. "How Many Migrants to Europe Are Refugees?" *The Economist*, September 7, 2015, http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/09/economist-explains-4; "Merkel hat Verständnis für Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge - will sie aber trotzdem abschieben," *Focus Online*, October 7, 2015, http://www.focus.de/politik/videos/niemand-verlaesst-seine-heimat-leichtfertig-merkel-hat-verstaendnis-fuer-wirtschaftsfluechtlinge-will-sie-aber-trotzdem-abschieben_id_4998035.html; Ralph Bollmann, "Ein Lob dem Wirtschaftsflüchtling," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 8, 2015, sec. Wirtschaft, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/menschen-wirtschaft/wirtschaftsfluechtlinge-in-deutschland-kommentar-13787210.html.

[41] Hito Steyerl's film *Die leere Mitte* engages with the significance of foreign labor in the reconstruction of Potsdamer Platz and the Reichstag during the 1990s, situating it within a longer history of foreign labor in Germany, including the construction of the original Reichstag in the 1890s. Steyerl thus points out the centrality of foreign workers in constructing symbols of the German nation and its reunification. Hito Steyrl, *Die leere Mitte*, DVD (Munich: Produktion Hochschule für Fernschen und Film, 1998).

that he helped build but did not get to see completed. Kolja thus positions himself as taking up where his brother left off upon being deported, both by contributing his labor to the growth of a reunified Germany and by collecting the economic rewards that his brother's deportation cut short. Although Kolja may be an unauthorized economic migrant who requests asylum only when caught by the border police, the scenes leading up to his interrogation position him and the other Ukrainian migrants as victims of the smugglers' scam rather than as savvy manipulators. Their desperation is underscored by their willingness to risk their lives crossing the Oder on their own, and one man does in fact die of exposure.

Although Sonja is initially framed as part of a larger state apparatus of border policing, her translation of Kolja's interrogation also holds the potential to destabilize the power relations of this exchange. The scene opens with a close-up shot of Sonja asking a question in Russian, initially positioning her as an interrogator. The film then cuts to a long shot, which reveals the setting to be an interrogation room; Sonja is shown to be aligned with the actual interrogating police officer as part of the border control regime, in opposition to Kolja. Here the somewhat unconventional order of a close-up followed by a long shot functioning as an establishing shot (rather than a conventional establishing shot followed by close-ups) produces a temporary moment of uncertainty and reorientation for viewers, which further accentuates the inherent instability of Sonja's position as an interpreter. Several reverse-angle over-the-shoulder shots follow in which Sonja continues to be positioned at the officer's side. In her analysis of this scene, Gabriele Mueller further observes that Sonja's linguistic translation itself enacts a distinction that marks Kolja for exclusion, attempting "to artificially maintain the cultural boundaries created by linguistic differences and to act out the rituals established to validate exclusion."[42] The police officer's questions, which Sonja translates from German into Russian, aim to catch Kolja in a narrative inconsistency and get him to admit that he crossed the Oder River from Poland into Germany. Against Kolja's verbal testimony that he arrived in Germany by plane, the officer presents the material evidence of Kolja's wet pants. It is at this point, when the physical has been mobilized against the verbal, that Sonja steps out of her neutral role and employs her linguistic abilities to covertly intervene on Kolja's behalf. Instead of faithfully translating the officer's accusation, she exploits her position to "smuggle in" advice to Kolja. While maintaining the same calm vocal register and neutral facial expression she used when translating the officer's statements, she now tells Kolja that it does not prove anything that his pants are wet and that he should ask for a glass of water. When Kolja does request water and the officer leaves the room to get it, Sonja writes a message to Kolja on her notepad in Russian: "Ask for Asylum."

As Sonja departs from her role as an employee of the state, the camera underscores the change in Sonja's subject position by framing her as an individual agent.[43] Interestingly, this act of independence is prompted by her sense of identification with Kolja, which arises out of her service as a medium. In practice, interpreters must often negotiate between a professional ideal of distanced neutrality and a sense of identification with the people whose thoughts and feelings they convey.[44] Sonja's identification with Kolja can be understood as a kind of generative friction; although Sonja is employed by the state to transmit informational content, as Kolja and the police officer's statements flow through her, they intersect with her own subjectivity,

[42] Gabriele Mueller, "'Welcome to Reality.' Constructions of German Identity in *Lichter* (Schmid, 2003) and *Halbe Treppe* (Dresen, 2002)," *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 4, no. 2 (2006): 120.
[43] Halle, "Views from the German-Polish Border," 90.
[44] Wadensjö, *Interpreting as Interaction*.

creating a friction that opens up the possibility of an alternative course of action. Sonja's assigned role is to bridge the divide between the German and Russian languages, but she also embodies the communicative gap between the officer and Kolja, a gap that is cultural, legal, and socioeconomic in addition to linguistic. When she instructs Kolja to ask for water so that the officer will leave the room, she not only exploits this gap, she widens it and manifests it physically through the officer's absence.

Sonja's act of linguistic smuggling parallels another act of smuggling in the film that also exploits a gap that emerges in the act of border crossing. In another storyline, a group of cigarette smugglers profit from the small spatiotemporal gap between the moment a train crosses the geographic border from Poland into Germany and the time it takes the border patrol officers to make their way through the train and enact the political border with their inspection. As soon as the train crosses the geographic border, the smuggler in the train throws his bag of Polish cigarettes out the window, where his accomplice waits on a moped to pick them up; by the time the border police reach the smuggler in the train, he no longer has the illegal goods. Political borders are thus shown to become blurred by actual practices of movement and exchange in the same ways that the boundaries between individual subjects fluctuate in the course of communicative exchanges.

Importantly, Sonja's intervention does not actually result in a positive outcome for Kolja. When the police officer returns to the room and Kolja requests asylum, the officer switches abruptly into English, barking: "No! No *Asyl* for you! You come from Poland!" Kolja answers in English, insisting that he came from Ukraine by plane, and the two continue shouting back and forth in English while Sonja is sidelined to an observer position. The fact that the officer and Kolja both speak some English might seem to call the necessity of Sonja's presence into question. However, the officer's switch into English also signals an absolute stopping point and an end to the possibility of dialogue or exchange. Rather than facilitating communication, English as a global language is shown here to express frustration and hostility.

Ultimately, the veracity of Kolja's testimony is determined by another piece of physical evidence that invalidates his claim; a second officer finds a paper napkin with the logo of a diner in Słubice in his jacket, and Kolja is scheduled for deportation to Poland the next day. At this point, Kolja and Sonja's storyline moves from linguistic translation into the realm of corporeal translation. In a moment of high melodrama, Kolja breaks free from the guards, encounters Sonja in the station's parking garage, and begs her to hide him in the trunk of her car. Having intervened linguistically on his behalf during the interrogation, she is now faced with the choice to intervene physically. She hesitates, however, and the guards catch up to Kolja. Her feelings of responsibility for this moment of inaction then motivate her to find Kolja in Słubice after his deportation and to smuggle him across the border into Germany.

Sonja's inaction in the parking garage and Kolja's subsequent arrest further emphasize the fictional nature of her neutrality: just as taking action would have significant consequences, her lack of action also directly affects the course of Kolja's life. Sonja's feelings of guilt also raise the question of her role in previous interrogations; the film does not clarify whether, as an interpreter, she has remained in the role of a passive bystander in the past, or whether her guilt over Kolja's arrest is compounded by a realization of the potential consequences of her past inaction. The scene of Sonja's inaction and Kolja's arrest can indeed be read as a visual representation of what Zrinka Stahuljak has termed "the violence of neutrality," referring to the ways in which both interpreters and the institutions that employ them perform neutrality in

attempts to position themselves outside of history and to deny their culpability as historically and politically inscribed agents.[45]

When Sonja tells her boyfriend Christoph of her ethical obligation to help Kolja, she explains her reaction in terms of physical proximity, saying, "You can't possibly imagine what's going on inside someone like that. He has to get to Berlin at any cost." Christoph skeptically replies, "That's what you *think*," and Sonja answers, "That's what I *know*. *I* sat across from him." I would suggest that Sonja's sense of epistemic certainty stems not only from her experience of physical proximity, but also from the emotional proximity, or intimacy, that can arise within an interpreting situation when sharing a speaking position with another person. The film, however, later calls Sonja's certainty into question, and with it any clear support for the role of the interpreter as an advocate.

Interestingly, the handheld camera itself underscores tensions in the interpreter's role as a medium, particularly with regard to perceptions of proximity. Randall Halle argues that the mobile camera allows for a dynamic exploration of shifting European borders and "an imaginative community based in a complex connectivity of heterogeneous individuality."[46] I would add that the handheld camera's flexibility also corresponds with the mobility of the interpreters in the film, who continually cross back and forth across linguistic, cultural, and national borders. In fact, the mobile, handheld camera itself performs a formal border crossing by violating the 180-degree rule of continuity editing. Furthermore, the camera's flexibility allows it to get very close to the actors in numerous settings, evoking a sense of intimacy that nonetheless stands in tension with the film's mediated nature.

As forms of mediation, both interpreters and film have traditionally operated under the belief that a successful medium should obscure itself and provide the impression of unmediated perception. In the same way that interpreters are expected to efface their own presence, continuity editing aims to be as unobtrusive and invisible as possible by smoothing over the disjuncture of cuts. In some ways, *Lichter* does the opposite; the film draws attention to itself as a medium through frequent camera movements and shots from multiple, disjointed angles. On the other hand, however, the handheld camera enables a different type of unobtrusiveness and immediacy; rather than dictating the actors' movements by requiring specific lighting and exact blocking, the handheld digital camera responds to the actors, allowing them to move, interact, and improvise freely.[47] Instead of static long shots, tableaus, or precise framing, Godfrejów's camera exhibits a responsive sensitivity to the people in front of it, evoking a sense of proximity and intimacy similar to Sonja's response to Kolja. In aiming for as little interference as possible, Schmid and Godfrejów thus mirror the interpreter's traditional goal. However, the handheld camera's characteristic wobbliness points in both directions at once; the constant movement draws attention to the camera's mediating presence, yet at the same time, indications of the camera being "on the scene" in the style of live news footage denote authenticity and immediacy. In Sonja's case, she is affected by the very sense of immediacy she has been trained to convey, even as she becomes aware of her own power and responsibility as a mediating agent.

While Sonja searches for Kolja in Słubice, Christoph tries to protect her by finding Kolja first. Christoph secretly offers him 200 Euros to stay away from Sonja and find a professional smuggler instead, but Sonja finds out and feels betrayed by Christoph's intervention. She then hides Kolja in the trunk of her car, and drives him across the border into Germany. She thus

[45] Zrinka Stahuljak, "The Violence of Neutrality," *College Literature* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 43–44.
[46] Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema*, 128.
[47] Halle, "Views from the German-Polish Border," 88.

"translates" Kolja a second time—this time physically and geographically—by carrying him across the border. Here, too, translation is linked to smuggling: after smuggling advice into her translation during the interrogation, Sonja smuggles Kolja into Germany.

In his study of smuggling as a metaphor for translation, Sergey Tyulenev notes that it highlights the tension between the translator's visibility and invisibility; smuggling is one way of thinking about being both visible and hidden at the same time.[48] Smuggling also frames translation as a potentially subversive act of border crossing that carries certain risks. Again, these aspects of translation are further heightened when embodied by an interpreter who is physically situated within the scene of translation. Tyulenev examines cases in which translators covertly introduced subversive sexual or political content into their translations; in *Lichter*, Sonja's act of smuggling also introduces a foreign, illegal element into the domestic realm of the nation-state. While the realm of fiction allows this metaphor to be fully concretized as well as dramatically performed, the film here also underscores the material intersections of translation and border policing as emphasized by Apter.

Once over the border, Sonja stops at a rest area to let Kolja out of the trunk, and for a moment their storyline overlaps with that of the cigarette smugglers. Briefly sharing the same frame, Sonja and the cigarette smugglers are shown unloading the cargo they have illegally brought across the border. Here the film asks whether, from the perspective of the German legal system, there is a difference between material goods and human beings.[49] In transporting Kolja illegally across the border, Sonja undermines the nation-state's absolute power to decide whom to let in. At the same time, however, even as Sonja is motivated by altruism, we are reminded of the potentially illicit side of translation. A suspicious view of translation asks: what else is being transmitted and what remains concealed?

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[48] Sergey Tyulenev, "Translation as Smuggling," in *Thinking Through Translation with Metaphors*, ed. James St. Andre (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2010), 109–43.

[49] The German "Kein Mensch ist illegal" campaign points out the multifaceted oppression of labeling a person "illegal." "Kein Mensch ist illegal - Köln," accessed October 25, 2015, http://www.kmii-koeln.de/. In the same way that English-speaking activists have urged the adoption of the terms "undocumented" or "unauthorized immigrants" rather than the pejorative and often inaccurate term "illegal immigrants," German-speaking activists, scholars, international organizations, and government institutions have shifted from using the term "illegale Einwanderung" to "irreguläre" or "undokumentierte Migration." The adjective "illegal aufhältig" is an Austrian legal term that is also used in German-language texts pertaining to Germany and the EU; this term arguably shifts the emphasis of illegality from the person herself to her unauthorized presence in a particular country. German immigration law uses the terms "unerlaubte Einreise" and "Aufenthalt ohne Aufenthaltstitel." For more on these debates and the complexity of applying these terms, see "Irreguläre Migration," *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, December 23, 2007, http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/dossier-migration/56565/irregulaere-migration?p=all; Steffen Angenendt, "Irreguläre Migration als internationales Problem" (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, 2007), 10–11, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2007_S33_adt_ks.pdf; Michael Bommes, "Illegale Migration in der modernen Gesellschaft - Resultat und Problem der Migrationspolitik europäischer Nationalstaaten," in *Illegalität: Grenzen und Möglichkeiten der Migrationspolitik*, ed. Jörg Alt and Michael Bommes (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 95; Hans-Joachim Stange, "Maßnahmen zur Eindämmung irregulärer Migration und ihrer impliziten Annahmen über Motive und Ursachen," in *Illegalität: Grenzen und Möglichkeiten der Migrationspolitik*, ed. Jörg Alt and Michael Bommes (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 139–140.

While Sonja's intervention makes her unfaithful to her job and her state, she is ultimately betrayed by Kolja. He asks her to drop him off at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, and when she arrives home, she finds that he has stolen her boyfriend's expensive camera from the backseat of the car. In the same way that Sonja is emotionally affected by translating Kolja's speech during the interrogation, she is also altered by her translation of Kolja into Germany. The material loss of the camera is accompanied by a loss of faith in communication, empathy, and altruism, and both Sonja and the viewer are prompted to question how well they actually understood Kolja after all. Here the film seems to caution against an uncritical adoption of the "interpreter as advocate" model, pointing instead to the complexity and uncertainty of social interaction and the inevitable risks of communication.[50]

In over-identifying with Kolja, Sonja also over-interprets him; she believes that she understands him and takes action based on this belief, but she fails to consider the full implications of his precarious position.[51] After finding Kolja in Słubice and before driving him across the border, she first requires him to return Christoph's money; instead, he takes Christoph's camera upon arriving in Berlin. On the one hand, Kolja's theft of the camera after the risk Sonja takes to help him is both disturbing and morally objectionable. One could argue that Schmid draws here on stereotypes of bogus asylum seekers who take advantage of the sympathy and generosity of the German people. On the other hand, however, Kolja is alone in Germany without material possessions, financial resources, or access to support from the state; stealing the camera is a matter of basic economic survival. Kolja's theft constitutes part of Schmid's larger exploration of betrayal in human relationships; while some of the duplicitous acts in the film are motivated by jealousy and greed, others are driven by the pressures of economic constraints.

From another perspective, the interactions that contribute to Kolja's arrival at Potsdamer Platz with a stolen camera could also be read as a kind of "productive confusion." In her analysis of global connections as they are locally enacted, Tsing argues that collaborations between individuals and groups with different views often take the form of "productive confusion" rather than "consensus-making."[52] It is indeed, precisely the confused communication between Sonja, Christoph, and Kolja that ultimately results in Kolja's successful passage to Berlin. Tsing's point is not necessarily about deception or even accidental mistranslation, but her argument that global connections are produced and propelled forward in often messy, unforeseen, and uneven ways applies particularly to the numerous, multilayered intersections of a border zone.

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[50] Sandra Hale argues against the intervention of courtroom interpreters as advocates on behalf of disadvantaged participants, noting that such interventions can be patronizing and condescending; that attempts to help may backfire in a legal setting, where legal notions of relevance differ from those of a lay person; and that the assumption that all migrants and asylum applicants are truthful and deserving of help is as patronizing as the assumption that they are all liars. Hale admits that complete impartiality may be impossible, but argues that interpreters should nonetheless strive for the most accurate (faithful) rendition possible. Even though each interpreter's understanding of a given utterance will be subjective to some extent, "it is possible for interpreters to be faithful to their own interpretation of the original utterance, as that is the best they can be expected to do." While I am skeptical of this resolution, I do find her reservations about the advocacy model instructive overall. Hale, "Controversies over the Role of the Court Interpreter," 115.

[51] Mueller similarly notes the "well-meaning, but ultimately patronizing" character of Sonja's view, which she, however, attributes also to Schmid himself. Mueller, "Welcome to Reality," 121.

[52] Tsing, *Friction*, 247.

Sonja also functions as a stand-in for a significant portion of the film's intended audience, namely liberal, well-meaning, bourgeois German viewers who may also be inclined to view Kolja through a somewhat patronizing lens of pity and victimhood.[53] Although the film itself arguably does not completely avoid such a view, in Kolja and Sonja's story, it is dramatically called into question. As Sonja realizes that she has not fully understood Kolja's position after all, viewers are similarly prompted to re-examine their assumptions. The film cautions viewers against assuming understanding, which may be based more on the imposition of a certain meaning than on a thorough engagement with the complexity of an actual individual's situation.

On the other hand, the stolen camera also serves a poetic function as a medium of self-assertion. The last we see of Kolja, he is snapping pictures of Potsdamer Platz, which he had promised to send to his brother once he arrived in Berlin. Rejected by the state apparatus of border control and now in Germany without documents or legal status, Kolja nevertheless testifies to his presence there and to his agency as an individual.[54] As Kolja photographs, the movie camera circles around him and the bright lights of the square become a blurred background, evoking a sense of wonder but also potential disorientation. The camera then pans up to a point-of-view shot of the tops of the skyscrapers that Kolja is photographing, before the film cuts back down to another half-circle around Kolja, ending with a low-angle over-the-shoulder shot looking up at another tall, brightly lit building. The back of Kolja's head briefly occupies the bottom right corner of the frame, but then he takes a step forward and moves out of the frame, disappearing into the city. Both Randall Halle and Claudia Gremler have noted an ominous tone in the construction of this scene,[55] and I agree that the film's emphasis on the buildings' height and brightness evokes the possibility of becoming overwhelmed or swallowed up by the city. Certainly Kolja's small size relative to the skyscrapers around him underscores his lack of social status and the precarity of his position as an undocumented immigrant alone in a city of over three million people. However, although he is a foreigner in Germany, the skyscrapers of Potsdamer Platz are not altogether foreign to him. They are in fact both familiar and familial: he knows them from his brother's photographs, and his brother actually helped to build them.

Furthermore, Kolja is not only an object of the movie camera's gaze; he is also a subject who gazes back. Rather than being passively overwhelmed by the city's bright lights and towering buildings, he actively frames his perception of urban space through photography. According to Walter Benjamin, the movie camera enables a more confident exploration of urban space, assuring us of "a vast and unsuspected field of action" in urban settings that previously

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[53] For more on the tendency in German cinema to portray migrants as one-dimensional victims, see Deniz Göktürk, "Migration und Kino—Subnationale Mitleidskultur oder transnationale Rollenspiele?," in *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland*, ed. Carmine Chiellino (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 329–47. Although particularly prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s, this approach persists in more recent films like Feo Aladağ's *Die Fremde* (2010).

[54] Claudia Gremler also notes that Kolja is the only one from the group of Ukrainians to reach their destination, and that by taking advantage of Sonja's altruism, he shows that he has what it takes to survive as an undocumented immigrant in the city. Claudia Gremler, "Migration und Utopie im deutschen Gegenwartskino am Beispiel von Achim von Borries' *England!* und Hans-Christian Schmids *Lichter*," in *Local/Global Narratives*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Karoline von Oppen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 240.

[55] Randall Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema*, 127; Claudia Gremler, "Migration und Utopie," 234.

"seemed to close relentlessly around us."[56] Kolja similarly engages with his urban surroundings through the medium of photography. The camera, which he holds in his hands and chooses where to direct, gives a stronger testimony of his presence as an autonomous subject than Sonja could as an interpreter.

Intimate Exchanges

While Sonja becomes overinvolved with her work, the film's second interpreter, Beata, fully articulates the intimacy of the interpreting situation. Beata is a young Polish woman who works as a freelance interpreter. As the film progresses, we learn that she also accompanies her wealthy clients to private events and spends the night with them as a continuation of her services. In the same way that Sonja's smuggling of Kolja into Germany dramatizes concerns about interpreter intervention, Beata's sex work illustrates fantasies and anxieties about the intimacy of interpreting. While *Maria Braun* repeatedly implies an association between interpreting and prostitution, and while *Das Bad* names it directly, *Lichter* explicitly and concretely stages Beata as an interpreter-prostitute.

Like *Maria Braun* and *Das Bad*, *Lichter* draws on numerous gendered and sexualized discourses of labor and translation in constructing Beata as an interpreter-prostitute. In a film about border crossings, conceptions of translation as transgressive play an important role; as an interpreter and a sex worker in the Polish-German border zone, Beata crosses linguistic, cultural, geo-political, and social boundaries on a regular basis. Furthermore, her figuration as a prostitute emphasizes the affective nature of her interpreting work and the crucial role of her body as a site of mediation, facilitating both linguistic and economic exchange. Indeed, both parts of her job serve the circulation of transnational capital, as I will elaborate below. Importantly, however, Beata is neither passive nor treacherous or manipulative. In contrast to historical suspicions of female guides and interpreters, Beata as a modern interpreter-prostitute is a professional service provider. She does not betray her clients; she carries out both of her jobs with detached professionalism. Rather, her decision to supplement her income through sex work is perceived as a betrayal by her former boyfriend, Philip.

We first encounter Beata at the planned building site of a factory in Słubice, where she interprets between the city's mayor, the German developer Wilke, and a team of architects from Berlin. The project is a joint German-Polish business venture that will presumably take advantage of cheaper labor costs in Poland. The scene opens with a brief establishing shot in a brown field under a grey sky. There are eight men present, all wearing shades of brown and grey, and one woman, Beata, whose red curly hair and bright red skirt suit single her out and hint at her sexual availability. (This configuration echoes that of Maria Braun as a visually marked female interpreter among businessmen in the negotiation scene.) Wilke and the architects arrive late, and the lead architect Fengler hurries over to the mayor, who mistakes him for Wilke. As Fengler introduces himself in English to clear up the misunderstanding, the handheld camera's rapid back-and-forth pans underscore an atmosphere of nervous energy. When Beata identifies herself as the interpreter, Fengler is visibly relieved. Beata herself makes the official introductions in German and Polish, and the conversation begins to run smoothly, underscored by the sound of her calm, steady translations into Polish. Here Beata demonstrates the value of

[56] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 117.

her affective labor in addition to her language skills. She does not merely assist with the transfer of information, she also facilitates connections through her affective presence, smoothing out the bumps of intercultural transactions.

The importance of Beata's affective labor as both an interpreter and a sex worker is highlighted by a competing demand for her affective attentions; one of the German architects turns out to be her former boyfriend Philip, whom she has not seen since he left the area two years ago. Philip appears to have greater geographic and economic mobility than Beata, who has remained in Słubice, and his return raises the possibility of rekindling their relationship. Beata, however, is aware that Philip might leave her behind again once his job in Słubice is finished.

The inequality of their relationship is also reflected in their differing language skills; while Beata speaks fluent German, Philip does not speak Polish. When they get into an argument, she expresses her frustration by cursing at him in Polish. He reminds her that he does not understand Polish, and she answers that if she had really been important to him, he would have learned Polish by now. Here language functions not primarily as a means of conveying information but as a mode of performance and as a space of intimacy. When Beata speaks angrily to Philip in Polish, she is well aware that he is unable to understand the semantic content of her utterance. In fact, it is precisely this lack of understanding that she performs and thereby communicates, saying essentially: 'You don't understand me, and you haven't made an effort to consider my (cultural, geographic, socioeconomic, gendered) position. I am the one who always accommodates you by entering into your German linguistic and cultural realm.' From a perspective focused on language as a means of transferring informational content, one could argue that there is no need for Philip to learn Polish in order to communicate with Beata. For Beata, however, Polish represents an integral part of herself as a subject and thus constitutes a space of intimate knowledge that Philip is unable or unwilling to enter.[57]

After their reunion, Beata and Philip attend a business dinner arranged by the German architect Fengler and the German developer Wilke. Beata and her colleague Monika, another attractive Polish woman, are ostensibly both there to interpret for the Polish investor Borowiak, the only non-German speaker present. This seeming numerical excess of having two interpreters for one client underscores the role of their physical presence. While interpreters normally attempt to obscure their presence, here the women are seated in the middle of the table rather than off to the side. Their clothing is business-like—Beata wears her red suit and Monika wears a leopard print jacket—but can also be read through traditional discourses about sexually assertive women.[58] Monika is the most brightly lit, and her face is at the center of the establishing wide shot of the group. Borowiak sits to one side of the frame, with his face in shadow as he flips through the proposed contract and states his terms of participation. In contrast, when Monika translates his words into German, the camera cuts to a medium close-up of her brightly lit face, with Borowiak's face only partially visible to one side of the frame. The film thereby highlights

[57] On the ways in which multilingual subjects experience and affirm different aspects themselves when speaking different languages, see Claire Kramsch, *The Multilingual Subject* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). However, while Kramsch emphasizes the importance of multiple perspectives on and experiences of one's own subjectivity, this scene in *Lichter* could also be read as a conservative view of translation, in which Beata translates herself into German, but this translation is a less authentic version of her authentic, Polish-speaking self. In this view, translation creates a realm of betrayal, while the mother tongue denotes a realm of fidelity.

[58] For example, the terms "fiery redhead" and "wildcat" in English come to mind.

the aesthetic and affective importance of Monika and Beata's physical presence, which exceeds the necessity of linguistic transfer.

After a deal is reached, the group goes to Wilke's house to celebrate. A subsequent scene there opens with a shot of Beata dancing; she is shown first from behind, suggesting that the shift in emphasis from her linguistic skills to her pure physicality is now complete. The sexual availability that her red clothing hinted at earlier is now on full display; she has taken off her jacket to reveal a shiny sequined red top, and she shakes her red curly hair as she dances.

When Philip realizes that Beata will be spending the night with Wilke (and Monika with Borowiak), he reacts with outrage. Philip accuses his boss of employing the women as a bribe, and Fengler's response makes the intersection of sex and economic exchange clear: "[Wilke und Borowiak] wollen eine gute Zeit haben, und wenn ein bisschen Geld dabei rausspringt, umso besser." Both in their capacities as interpreters and as sex workers, Beata and Monika serve to facilitate economic exchange; linguistic border crossing and bodily transgression both serve the movement of capital across the border. However, Philip's view—that Fengler essentially gives the two women to Wilke and Borowiak as gifts in return for a larger contract—does not fully describe the situation. Instead, the women's physical presence and affective labor actually creates a space favorable to the flow of capital. In the same way that Beata and Monika appear to let their hair down after hours (while actually still being very much on the clock), Wilke and Borowiak are encouraged by their presence to loosen their purse strings and "live a little." Fengler goes on to assert: "Offenbar läuft das hier so." He imagines Poland and its border areas as a liminal space of transgression, where social mores and job descriptions are looser and more fluid. At the same time, this imagined space could also be extended to the realm of transnational business as existing above national laws and ethical restrictions. As an integral component of global business transactions, the interpreter also serves as a focal point for these fantasies of transgression.

While Philip pleads with Beata to return to Germany with him and offers her financial support, she resists being placed in a position of economic dependence, preferring instead to remain in Słubice and work on her own terms. To Philip, Beata's refusal to let herself be saved constitutes another betrayal, but, in fact, Philip is betrayed by his own assumptions regarding her motivations and wishes. Like Sonja with Kolja, Philip misinterprets Beata; he imagines that he knows her more fully than he actually does and is surprised by the complex ways in which she exercises agency.

Philip and Beata's unequal abilities to accurately recognize one another as individuals reflect a larger asymmetry of knowledge between Germans and Poles. In general, groups with less societal power pay closer attention to groups that have more; knowledge about a group with more relative power can aid a less powerful group in navigating social interactions and outcomes. On the other hand, those in a more powerful position often do not feel the same need to understand the less powerful in a nuanced way.[59] Randall Halle has shown this to be the case in a comparison of German and Polish filmic representations of the Other across the border.[60] Linguistic abilities on both sides of the border also attest to this dynamic, as many Poles in

[59] Todd D. Nelson, ed., *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination* (Taylor Francis: New York, 2009); Manuela Barreto, Naomi Ellemers, and Susan T. Fiske, "What Did You Say, and Who Do You Think You Are? How Power Differences Affect Emotional Reactions to Prejudice," *Journal of Social Issues* 66 (n.d.): 477–92.

[60] Halle, "Views from the German-Polish Border," 80.

Słubice speak at least some German, while the majority of Germans living in Frankfurt (Oder) do not speak any Polish.

As in the case of Sonja and Kolja, Philip's misrecognition of Beata attests to the pitfalls of human communication and the difficulty of fully understanding another person's uniquely situated position, whether linguistically translated or not. Importantly, misrecognition does not occur here due to the interference of a third-party interpreter, nor do linguistic translation errors play a role. Instead, Sonja and Philip misrecognize Kolja and Beata because their nationality, unequal mobility, and socioeconomic status limit their ability to recognize the Kolja and Beata's positionalities, even as they cross certain borders in their attempts to do so.

As interpreter-prostitutes, Beata and Monika depart from traditional model in which the interpreter facilitates transmission by obscuring her presence and acting as a clear channel; instead, the very frictions created by their physical, affective presence as both interpreters and sex workers actually facilitate both communicative and economic exchange. Tsing also reminds us that "the cultural specificity of capitalist forms arises from the necessity of bringing capitalist universals into action through worldly encounters."[61] In *Lichter*, the potential materiality of such encounters is pointedly manifested in the physical interaction between the interpreter-prostitutes and the investors that propel their investments forward. In some ways, *Lichter*'s depiction of transnational investment is almost old-fashioned when compared to the abstract circulation of risk, derivatives, and speculative capital that, according to Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, characterize the shift from production-based to circulation-based capitalism.[62] However, Lee and LiPuma also call for attention to the culture and social structures of financial circulation, and the ways in which capitalist circulation actively constitutes agents, identities, and environments. In fact, interpreters are exemplary figures of labor in a circulation-based economy, in which the surplus value of commodity production decreases while the surplus value attached to the circulation of knowledge, data, and technology increases. In *Lichter*, Beata acts as a mediating agent within larger structures of transnational capitalism while indicating the continued importance of affective labor and staging the border zone as a space of intimate entanglements and productive frictions.

Multidirectional Intersections

As I have shown, *Lichter* draws on gendered stereotypes and traditional notions of fidelity to stage both fantasies and anxieties about translation in the realm of transnational exchange. At the same time, the film exposes the limitations of these models and indicates the interrelational complexity of the interpreter's position as a socially embedded—and embodied—subject. In Sonja's case, her emotional identification with Kolja creates a moment of friction in the flow of translation, prompting her to depart from her gatekeeping role within the state's border regime and to instead facilitate Kolja's passage across the border. Beata, on the other hand, facilitates economic exchange through her bodily presence; rather than being a source of distraction or interference, her physical and affective qualities smooth the flow of transnational capital. Although she attempts to negotiate a middle ground between her professional role and her personal relationship with Philip, she ultimately chooses based on her desire to exercise independence within the constraints of economic necessity.

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[61] Tsing, *Friction*, 4.

[62] Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity," *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2002): 191–213.

In the same way that the film performs the constructed nature of political borders, it also raises the question of cultural and linguistic "foreignness" and the ways in which "the foreign" is designated in language. While characterizations of translators as traitors have become less common in the field of translation studies following the cultural turn, contemporary conceptions continue to draw on Friedrich Schleiermacher's seminal model of translation between the "foreign" and the "domestic." (The terms "source" and "target" language are arguably more neutral designations.) Building on Schleiermacher, Lawrence Venuti celebrates the potential of the foreign to enrich the domestic, calling for a "foreignizing" method of translation, in which translators foreground cultural and linguistic differences rather than obscuring them.[63] Venuti is motivated by a desire to redress global linguistic and representational inequalities, particularly those exacerbated by the hegemony of English and Anglo-American culture. He asserts that "domesticating" translations commit ethnocentric violence against the source culture and promote nationalist, neo-imperialist tendencies in the target culture. While I largely agree with Venuti's assessment and fully support his aim, I would suggest a complication of the categories he applies. Venuti may in fact be strategically mobilizing the terms "foreign" and "domestic," employing "the necessary error of identity" in a particular political context, which will, at some point, outlive its usefulness.[64] Nonetheless, I would argue for a more complex, multi-perspectival view of translation, in which linguistic and cultural elements circulate in multiple directions through intersecting networks of relationality, calling the very categories of "domestic" and "foreign" into question as socially and historically situated constructs.[65]

Instead of viewing translation as the transportation of "foreign elements" into the "domestic" realm, which then either confront the reader with their "foreignness" or sneak by unnoticed, we might conceive of translation as a space wherein translators and readers/listeners alike are prompted to reevaluate their ideas about the very "foreignness" of a particular text, language, or culture. This is by no means to suggest equivalence between languages or cultures, nor to promote a simple universalism that asks us to look beyond our differences to our shared humanity. Languages, particularly as they are used in culturally and historically specific contexts, vary profoundly, and these differences can be exciting, frustrating, distressing, and productive. Rather, by conceiving of translation as a particular linguistic interaction situated within a longer history of multidirectional interactions, we avoid presupposing both "familiarity" and "foreignness" as fully distinct entities and can better engage with the multilayered intersections of translational encounters.

Recalling historical points of connection, circulation, and exchange is a crucial component of this view. Examples include the historical unity of Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice as well as the larger history of territory shifts between Germany and Poland, particularly concerning the former German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line; the mixed Polish-German ancestry of many German and Polish citizens;[66] shared experiences in relation to the Soviet Union between

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[63] Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*.

[64] Butler quoting Gayatri Spivak: Butler, *Bodies That Matter,* 229.

[65] See Kristin Dickinson's work on "translational connectivity", which builds on John Tomlinson's concept of "complex connectivity" in a globalized world. Kristin Ann Dickinson, "Translation and the Experience of Modernity: A History of German Turkish Connectivity" (Dissertation, University of California, 2015); John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2.

[66] For example, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Polish grandfather, celebrated in the Polish press: Christina Hebel, "All in the Family: Chancellor Merkel's Heritage Pleases Poles," *Spiegel Online*

East Germany and Poland under communist rule; and more recent negotiations of English as a global language. Within such contexts, the figure of the interpreter exemplifies a rich point of convergence through which to explore the multiple interactions and productive frictions of transnational translation. In particular, the acknowledgement of the interpreter as an intervenient human agent who is both physically embodied and socially situated offers the chance to develop new understandings of both translation and the crossing of geopolitical borders that extend beyond unidirectional models.

International, March 25, 2013, http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/all-in-the-family-poles-pleased-to-learn-of-polish-heritage-of-angela-merkel-a-889207.html; Konrad Schuller, "Merkels polnische Wurzeln," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 22, 2013, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europa/merkels-polnische-wurzeln-grossvaters-krieg-12124653.html.

Conclusion
Global Disorientations

The literary and filmic works I have surveyed in the preceding chapters were produced between 1968 and 2004; several of them look back to the Second World War and the early postwar period, as well as to the collapse of communism in Europe in 1989/1990. In different ways, these works all utilize interpreter figures as lenses through which to explore the "complex connectivities"[1] of European convergences, encounters, and shifting borders during a period of increasingly global circulation. From the Allied occupation of Germany and Austria, the Nuremberg Trials, and the Cold War internationalist orientations of Western and Eastern Europe, to the rise and expansion of the European Union following the Cold War and the numerous forms of migration and settlement that have marked the years since 1945, interpreter figures have offered writers and filmmakers an avenue for engaging with larger processes of historical change that nonetheless converge in the subjective, embodied experiences of particular socially and materially situated individuals.

To conclude, I consider the European present in a global and digital context, taking stock of interpreters and their cultural representations in the second decade of the 21st century. This is a time of ongoing globalization and digitization, but also of growing populism and xenophobia in Europe. As a result of its eastward expansion, the European Union currently includes 28 countries and 24 official languages, but as a long-term project of European integration, the EU also faces numerous uncertainties. In 2015 and 2016, several Schengen countries instituted temporary border controls in response to major terror attacks in France and Belgium as well as the influx of refugees from Syria and other countries; by some accounts, these measures could threaten the long-term existence of the Schengen Agreement and the free movement it enables. While a Greek departure from the Eurozone was prevented in 2015, the U.K. became the first EU country to vote to leave the European Union with the "Brexit" referendum of June 2016. Although the future, as always, remains uncertain, it is quite likely that human interpreters will continue to facilitate interlingual communication in both formal institutions and everyday community settings for some time to come. Neither Global English nor machine translation has yet replaced the crucial functions of human interpreters, particularly in situations of political and economic turbulence. In the near future, decisions about the direction of the EU will continue to be reached through negotiations that rely on interpreters, and while machine translation is rapidly improving, it is unlikely that asylum officials will be using Google Translate to evaluate refugee testimony anytime soon. This is not to say that technology, particularly digital communication technology, does not play an increasingly important role in various forms of interpreting. Rather, the embodied human labor of interpreting continues to be a vital mode of interlingual mediation, even as it increasingly interfaces with digital technology.

For simple, standardized communication, automated translation/interpreting technology such as Skype Translator and the recently announced Pilot earpiece may find widespread adoption as the technology develops and improves in the coming years. Machine translation of more complicated linguistic input, whether written or spoken, that is of acceptable quality for legal, political, health care, or business situations, remains further off. On the other hand, the coupling of human interpreters with new mediating technologies has progressed significantly

[1] Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, 2.

since simultaneous interpreting first brought about the formalized interface of human interpreters with communication technology. Simultaneous interpreters today use similar (although vastly improved and often wireless) systems of headsets, microphones, and audio channels, but this intersection of technical and linguistic mediation increasingly takes place within additional layers of mediating technology. Simultaneous interpreters today take laptops or tablets with them into their booths, receive PowerPoint presentations in advance via email or Dropbox, make use of digital glossaries and terminology databases, and may have video screens in their booths to provide close-up views of speakers' faces.

Furthermore, remote interpreting has advanced significantly in recent decades. Telephone interpreting—which was first introduced in 1973 as a public service in Australia—is now widely used in many countries, particularly in legal and health care settings. For deaf and hard-of-hearing clients, video remote interpreting (in which an off-site sign language interpreter interprets between deaf or hard-of-hearing and hearing parties who are in the same location) is often employed when a qualified sign language interpreter cannot be present, and video relay service (in which a sign language interpreter facilitates the equivalent of a telephone conversation between deaf or hard-of-hearing and hearing parties who are in different locations) is widely used by deaf individuals in countries where funding structures make it affordable. In addition, video-conference interpreting of spoken languages grew during the 1990s and 2000s as video-conferencing technology improved, particularly in legal and commercial fields. In 2013, Austria became the first European country to offer video remote interpreting in hospitals as part of a pilot project, with Germany and Switzerland following soon after. Since then, the Vienna-based company SAVD Videodolmetschen GmbH has grown rapidly, particularly in the German market, providing video-interpreting for numerous public and private institutions, above all in the legal and health care branches. In March 2016, in response to the recent influx of refugees and the shortage of interpreters with the language skills needed to process their claims, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees began using "Video-Dolmetscher" in asylum hearings; interpreters at any of the Office's nationwide locations can now connect securely with hearings at another location.[2] In recent years, several video interpreting services have also begun offering downloadable apps that enable customers to access their staff of video interpreters on any mobile device. Although still in development, the web-based company Babelverse seeks to provide "on-demand interpretation powered by a global community of human interpreters, for any language or situation" via mobile device.[3]

Technological developments, especially in the realm of remote interpreting, have made interpreting more mobile and accessible. In particular, this has helped avoid misunderstandings in medical settings and expedited legal proceedings by eliminating the need for certain parties to travel. There are, of course, also downsides. The flexibility that mobile technology enables can also lead to labor precarity, as critics of the "part-time," "sharing," or "Uber" economy have argued.[4] When Babelverse announced a pay-per-minute, on-demand interpreting business model

[2] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, accessed July 16, 2016, http://www.bamf.de/DE/DasBAMF/BAMFdigital/Video-Dolmetscher/video-dolmetscher-node.html.

[3] Babelverse, accessed July 16, 2016, http://babelverse.com/.

[4] See, for example, Derek Thompson, "The Uber Economy," *The Atlantic*, January 23, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/01/is-uber-a-middle-class-job-creator-or-not/384763/; Arvind Malhotra and Marshall Van Alstyne, "The Dark Side of the Sharing Economy … and How to Lighten It," *Commun. ACM* 57, no. 11 (October 2014): 24–27; Arun Sundararajan, *The Sharing Economy : The End of Employment and the Rise of Crowd-Based Capitalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts:

in 2012, many professional interpreters reacted with skepticism, pointing out, for example, that different interpreting jobs call for different degrees of preparation and expertise:

> If I am to interpret the President's State of the Union speech, I prepare days before. I listen to other speeches the President made, earlier State of the Union speeches, read up on different political analysts' predictions, and also hopefully at one point I would get some sort of background notes. [...] So knowing all this, would I be happy to sit at home in front of my computer (3 am in the morning my time) to wait for a possible client who would like to hear the speech translated into my language and then be paid per minute for my performance and preparation? No, I would not![5]

It appears that after some debate, Babelverse clarified a multi-tiered pricing plan that compensates trained professionals at more traditional rates and provided additional information about scheduling, technical support, and "virtual booth-mates" for remote conference interpreting.[6] As of 2016, Babelverse appears to be functioning like a more traditional agency, and the mobile and on-demand elements are still listed on the website as "coming soon." The future direction of these developments remains unclear.

More broadly, most interpreters prefer to work in person rather than remotely, and studies of remote video interpreting have shown that interpreters tire faster and report increased stress when interpreting remotely. Interpreters report feeling alienated from the communicative interaction, as if they are just speaking to a monitor rather than to a person, and researchers hypothesize that increased interpreter fatigue stems from the extra work of searching out additional cues when certain sensory information is missing. While technical improvements such as a wider field of view or individual head tracking may prove helpful, the broader questions of interpreter adaptation to virtual communication and the potential to virtually transmit a sense of presence remain undecided. The affective dimensions of physical presence explored in the fictional works I have discussed here are repeatedly acknowledged by both researchers and interpreters, and should not be discounted due to the use of remote interpreting as a cost-saving measure. Whether or not the technological possibilities for conveying the complex, affective, multi-sensory aspects of human communication and interaction are ever fully satisfactory, it is crucial to acknowledge the ongoing importance of these issues to the way we think about language, interpreting, and mediation.

Interpreting on a Mobile Stage

In taking stock of the present and looking to the future, I consider a recent short film in relation to these technical developments and the forms of global circulation they enable. *Die*

The MIT Press, 2016); Steven Hill, *Raw Deal: How the "Uber Economy" and Runaway Capitalism Are Screwing American Workers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015).

[5] Elisabet Tiselius, "Babel Precarity?," *Interpretings*, February 13, 2013, https://interpretings.net/2013/02/13/babel-precarity/.

[6] Elisabet Tiselius, "Babel Precarity – More Questions," *Interpretings*, February 19, 2013, https://interpretings.net/2013/02/19/babel-precarity-more-questions/; Michelle Hof, "An Open Letter to the Founders of Babelverse," *The Interpreter Diaries*, February 20, 2013, https://theinterpreterdiaries.com/2013/02/20/an-open-letter-to-the-founders-of-babelverse/; "Babelverse: Disruptive Innovation, Opportunity or Threat?," *Babelverse Blog*, February 16, 2013, http://blog.babelverse.com/2013/02/disruptive-innovation-opportunity-or-threat-babelverse-and-the-interpreting-profession/; "Babelverse Professional Interpreter FAQs," *Babelverse Is Bringing the Babelfish to Life!*, accessed July 16, 2016, http://babelverse.com/black-belt-faq/.

Falten des Königs is a little-known 32-minute film by the young Austrian filmmaker Matthias van Baaren; it was filmed in 2010 and has since been screened at various festivals and broadcast on Austrian public television.[7] It is, however, also part of a larger trend in recent artistic works that focus more closely on the technical aspects of simultaneous interpreting, both in terms of the interpreter's interface with simultaneous interpreting technology and with the professional skills required to perform this incredible linguistic feat. Many of these works engage with themes already prominent in Ingeborg Bachmann's "Simultan," such as the relationship between human interpreter and technical apparatus, feelings of disorientation and detachment on the international conference circuit, and questions of global interconnectedness. However, unlike "Simultan," in which the protagonist reflects on her job from the critical distance of a brief vacation, these more recent works directly stage the drama of the simultaneous interpreting process itself.

These works include Sydney Pollack's *The Interpreter* (2005), about a UN interpreter who overhears an assassination plot on her headphones when a microphone is accidentally left on. The film is a fictional Hollywood thriller, but it also exhibits a realist fascination with the UN as an institution and with the simultaneous interpreting system that enables multilingual communication there. In fact, *The Interpreter* was the first film ever to receive permission to shoot inside the UN headquarters, including the General Assembly room. Intensive focus on the particular professional demands of simultaneous interpreting does not, however, require an exclusively realist approach, as demonstrated by both *Die Unvermeidlichen,* a play by Austrian writer Kathrin Röggla that premiered in 2011, and *Prolongations* (2008), a novel by French writer Alain Fleischer.[8] *Die Unvermeidlichen* depicts in detail the work of simultaneous interpreters at an unspecified international conference and is based on Röggla's extensive interviews with simultaneous interpreters working for international organizations; it also veers into the realm of the supernatural as the interpreters begin to mysteriously disappear, literalizing their professional invisibilty. *Prolongations* similarly depicts a conference interpreter at the *Congrès de l'Europe* in Kaliningrad, who fills the empty void of the conference setting with multiple love affairs, leading to an act of violence that suspends him in a dream-like state between life and death.

Like these works, *Die Falten des Königs* similarly explores questions of visibility, disorientation, performance, and technical mediation through a closer focus on the concrete particularities of simultaneous interpreting. Like *Die Unvermeidlichen* in particular, *Die Falten des Königs* foregrounds the physical presence of interpreters in an era of increasing digitization and global mobility. It does differ, however, in one crucial respect: rather than presenting a fictional narrative, the film is an artistic staging of two real-life professional simultaneous interpreters demonstrating their work. Van Baaren's short film—the title of which refers to a passage in Walter Benjamin's essay on "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers"[9]—highlights several

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[7] Matthias van Baaren, *Die Falten des Königs,* DVD (Vienna: Golden Girls Filmproduktion, 2011).

[8] Fleischer, *Prolongations*. *Die Unvermeidlichen* was first performed on February 6, 2011 in Germany at the Nationaltheater Mannheim. It has also been produced as a radio play and published in a collection of Röggla's essays and plays: Leopold von Verschuer, "Die Unvermeidlichen" (Bayerischer Rundfunk, February 5, 2012); Kathrin Röggla, *Besser wäre: keine* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2013).

[9] "Das Verhältnis des Gehalts zur Sprache [ist] völlig verschieden [...] in Original und Übersetzung. Bilden nämlich diese im ersten eine gewisse Einheit wie Frucht und Schale, so umgibt die Sprache der Übersetzung ihren Gehalt wie ein Königsmantel in weiten Falten. Denn sie bedeutet eine höhere Sprache als sie ist und bleibt dadurch ihrem eigenen Gehalt gegenüber unangemessen, gewaltig und fremd."

interrelated elements of simultaneous interpreting discussed in this study that take on new importance in an era of intensified digital communication. These include the interpreter's physical presence as an indication of individual agency, the social and material containment of that presence and agency, and the slippages of subjectivity that can destabilize clearly delineated speaking positions. The minimalist film presents two simultaneous interpreters in an interpreting booth on an otherwise empty studio set, who take turns interpreting previously recorded statements from English into German. These statements are all related to interpreting and translation, and the majority are statements by simultaneous interpreters about their work. They also include statements attributed in the final credits to a cognitive psychologist, a philosopher, a diplomat, and two interpreting studies researchers. The original recorded statements are only audible as low background murmurs when the interpreters are not speaking, and the original sources themselves remain invisible, named only in the final credits. Instead, in stark contrast to standard practices of interpreter self-effacement, the two interpreters are foregrounded as the object of primary interest. Ironically, this doubly remote interpreting situation—in which a) the original speakers are absent and mediated via audio recording, and b) viewers/listeners are situated in a different time and place from the interpreters, watching and listening via video recording—actually foregrounds the interpreters' physical presence. They are positioned "center stage," and viewers are invited to study and admire the very acts of mediation that they would normally try to ignore. The booth further creates the impression of a display case, framing the interpreters inside it as a special attraction.

Indeed, the interpreting booth has a multivalent function as the stage on which these interpreters perform, evoking both confinement and mobility. The first full minute of the film is devoted to the assembly of the booth, underscoring its importance. The opening shot of an empty studio set is framed by lighting equipment and a sound recordist holding a microphone boom, which initially foregrounds the technology of filmic mediation. While this mediating technology is subsequently obscured in the rest of the film, another mediating technology becomes visible, namely the system of headphones and microphones that enables simultaneous interpreting. Onto the empty set, two technicians roll the portable booth equipment and proceed to assemble it.[10] The sounds of this assembly—the wheels of the cart, the technicians' footsteps, the rattle of metal beams, and the clicks of the booth's walls being snapped into position—index the materiality of both the equipment and the scene as a whole.[11] At the same time, this sequence emphasizes the portability of the interpreting booth, which also indicates the interpreters' mobility. The booth can be delivered and quickly assembled wherever it is needed; many simultaneous interpreters similarly travel to conferences around the world "on demand."

While the booth puts the interpreters (and their mobility) on display, it also indicates the technical, material, and social constraints within which they operate. First, they are embedded within a larger technical apparatus; although simultaneous interpreting systems have developed

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Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Tillman Rexroth, vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 15.

[10] Although the video does not explicitly address issues of gender, I would note that the two technicians are male (associated with heavy lifting and mechanical abilities) and the two simultaneous interpreters who then occupy the booth are female (associated with language and interpersonal communication). In contrast to the female interpreters, the men are silent as they work.

[11] Michel Chion uses the term "materializing sound indices" to describe acoustic details that convey the concrete materiality and reality of the objects and scenes depicted by the camera. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 223.

significantly since the initial Filene-Finlay model, they still fundamentally depend on an interface of human and technological mediation. Second, in its containment of the interpreters, the booth symbolizes the conventions, expectations, and regulations within which the interpreters can exercise agency as individuals. In the tradition of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's signature style of framing, the interpreters are shot from outside the booth and are almost always framed by one or more of the booth's four windows.[12] In one of the statements, an interpreter also describes interpreting as exercising creativity within certain restrictions. Watching the film, viewers are confronted by this interplay of intervention and restriction inherent to the interpreter's mediating role.

The film also stages these tensions by producing a sense of disorientation when the first interpreter begins speaking. After the booth is assembled, the film cuts to a black title screen before cutting back to the booth, in which two middle-aged, professionally dressed women wearing headphones are now seated. Two seconds of muffled background noise can be faintly heard before the first interpreter begins speaking, which in fact indexes the original recording playing over her headphones that she then interprets into German. However, this auditory clue is easy to miss. Indeed, the film is designed to intensify an inherent uncertainty about who is "actually speaking" that stems from the professional interpreting practice of keeping pronouns the same. Watching the film, viewers hear the interpreter say "I" as she speaks about the experience of simultaneous interpreting. For viewers who do not immediately deduce the significance of the faint staticky sound, as well as for viewers who guess at its meaning but wait for further evidence to confirm this guess, it is not totally clear whether the interpreter is speaking about her own experience or whether she is translating someone else's statement. She explains that learning to simultaneously interpret is a bit like learning to play the piano: first you learn to play with your right hand, and then your left hand, and at a certain point, you are able to bring them together. She speaks spontaneously, her voice is animated, and her face is expressive; it would certainly appear that she is speaking about her own experience. Without additional information, it is initially quite possible to think that the film simply shows two simultaneous interpreters sitting at their work station and explaining the work that they do there (the way a construction worker might be filmed wearing a hard hat at a construction site while talking about the challenges of the construction business, or a chef might be interviewed in a restaurant kitchen wearing an apron). However, as the film continues, and the two interpreters switch off translating different statements with various tones and from various points of view, it becomes clearer that the interpreters are indeed translating a number of other people's statements.[13] Nonetheless, even once viewers figure out what is going on, a slight feeling of disorientation remains; deeply ingrained habits of linguistic comprehension continually interfere with a strict rationalist division

[12] There are a few close-up shots of an interpreter in profile, which are framed by her microphone, her headphones, and her reflection in the glass window behind her.

[13] This was my own experience upon first watching the film. I knew only that it was about simultaneous interpreting, which made the misperception that the first interpreter was speaking about her own experience plausible. When the film first cut to the interpreters sitting in the booth, either my attempt to orient myself visually or the conventional force of the first interpreter's use of "I" overrode my auditory perception of the sound indicating the recording being played. As the first interpreter spoke, I was thus unsure whether she was interpreting or speaking for herself; I weighed these possibilities and searched for further clues. The second interpreter's statement, which was also preceded by a pause with a faint staticky noise, supported my hypothesis that they were both interpreting, and the following statement, from a different perspective, seemed to confirm it.

of source and medium. Indeed, van Baaren's film stages and intensifies the ambiguity of attribution inherent to all interpreting situations; without hearing both the source and target statements, and without knowledge of both languages involved, one can never be sure if, how, or where an interpreter has intervened. This ambiguity, as theorists such as Sandra Bermann, Judith Butler, and Jacques Derrida have noted in different ways, is in fact present in all linguistic utterances; due to the inherent citationality of language, we can never fully discern "who is actually speaking."

Nonetheless, key moments of individual assertion persist throughout the film, as the two simultaneous interpreters comment on, identify with, or distance themselves from the various statements that they interpret, sometimes in asides to each other, but also through smiles, nods, and other facial expressions and body language. Unlike Nadja at the beginning of "Simultan," who imagines herself as a language machine on auto-pilot with no room for thoughts of her own, these interpreters clearly indicate signs of comprehension, consideration of meaning, and self-positioning in relation to their translations. For example, the first interpreted statement, which compares interpreting to piano playing, ends with the phrase, "Und irgendwann kann man's," to which the interpreter adds, after a slight pause, "oder auch nicht." A slight change in her tone of voice and the smile she shares with her colleague indicate this to be her own self-ironizing commentary on the statement she has just translated. After interpreting another statement, in which the speaker describes a feeling of linguistic disorientation after a long day of simultaneous interpreting, this interpreter expresses identification by saying, "ist mir auch schon passiert," to which her colleague responds, "ich glaube, uns allen." Even as they explicitly identify with the original speaker of the statement, the interpreters also assert their individuality; relating to someone else also means there is a difference across which one relates.

Interpreters are thus once again revealed to move not only between languages and physical locations but also between subject positions, even as this mobility is articulated within particular social and physical restrictions. These tensions, explored to varying degrees in all the works discussed in this study, are situated here in relation to globalized mobility through the minimalist set, which foregrounds the interpreting booth's portability and contains no indications of locational specificity. The interpreters in the booth are identifiable as native German speakers with light Austrian accents, but the set could be almost anywhere in the world. By 2010, the frequent international travel that still connoted a certain cosmopolitan glamour in the mid-1960s had become commonplace in many professions, and interpreters, as noted earlier, can be viewed as part of a larger global service sector.

This globalized mobility, along with its attendant constraints, is underscored by the supplementary 12-minute film *Not the Real World* (2011), also by Matthias van Baaren, that accompanies *Die Falten des Königs* on the DVD release.[14] *Not the Real World* confronts viewers with the placeless anonymity of the conference centers in which simultaneous interpreters often work, depicting empty meeting rooms in several conference hotels that could be located in any number of cities around the world.[15] There is no additional information provided on the DVD case or menu about this bonus material beyond its title; viewers are thus left to determine its relationship to *Die Falten des Königs* for themselves. *Not the Real World* seems to evoke the genre of behind-the-scenes footage, but with an ironic twist: *Die Falten des Königs* is filmed on an empty set and begins by highlighting its own construction—there are no illusory scenes to go behind. *Not the Real World* also does not provide any information about the making of *Die*

[14] Matthias van Baaren, *Not the Real World*, DVD (Vienna: Golden Girls Filmproduktion, 2011).
[15] The final credits inform us that they are in fact located in Vienna.

Falten des Königs; it does not, for example, show the interviews in which the original statements were recorded, nor are the conference rooms it depicts directly related to *Die Falten des Königs.* Indeed, the very title *Not the Real World* undermines the notion that this bonus material will provide clarification about a stable reality as a point of reference. Nonetheless, the conference halls it depicts are where simultaneous interpreters do, in reality, normally work (rather than on film sets in front of cameras). Watching *Not the Real World*, viewers are invited to imagine the acts of interpreting they have witnessed in *Die Falten des Königs* taking place in the empty conference rooms, a move which invokes another tension of presence in absence without a guarantee of stable reality.

Following Marc Augé, these spaces could be categorized as "non-places," Augé's term for spaces of "supermodernity," or late capitalism, that "cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity."[16] Indeed, the conference interpreter whose statement opens *Not the Real World* describes the continual movement between the non-places of various conferences required by her profession as a form of disengagement: "We tend to live and act in an almost virtual world, a world that is not real. Although all these congress participants discuss issues of the real world, they meet under specific circumstances that are not the circumstances of everyday life." In this two and a half minute statement, which is accompanied only by a black screen, she explains that for conference participants, a conference is a state of exception in which they come together in special cities and meeting rooms apart from the normal world; when the conference ends, they return to their regular professional lives. Conference interpreters, on the other hand, move on to the next conference and the next state of exception, leading to a feeling of separation from the real world. After this statement, the remainder of the film depicts the setting of this "virtual" world; with no narration, a handheld camera shoots huge conference halls, hotel hallways, a midsize room with adjustable lighting and audiovisual equipment, an executive meeting room with water cups, pens, and pads of paper laid out precisely around a large table, and numerous stacks of chairs.

However, although these spaces are depicted between conferences, they are not entirely empty of people: a few minutes in, a wide shot of an enormous ballroom shows two members of the cleaning staff rolling carts of supplies across the empty floor. Hotel staff are also shown dusting a chandelier, setting out coffee cups, and installing audio equipment in a large conference room. These workers are part of what Sabine Hess has called "Bodenpersonal der Globalisierung," whose localized (and often domestic) labor supports and enables work more typically associated with the transnational flows of globalization.[17] As Saskia Sassen has shown, the low-wage, often informal labor of immigrants and women plays a crucial role in supporting the concentration of highly paid professionals in global cities, where global economic processes are managed and coordinated.[18] Although the film depicts the hotel workers relatively anonymously (in long shots, without close-ups of their faces, and without speaking), their laboring presence calls the earlier assertion that these are not spaces of the real world into question. Because of course the economic conditions of capitalism also obtain in international conference centers and the employees who work there live complex, locally situated lives. These facts, however, are obscured by practices of self-effacement that mirror those of interpreters and that are intended to minimize friction in the global flow of capital. For Augé, non-places are characterized by a high degree of automation and non-human mediation (automatic turnstiles,

[16] Marc Augé, *Non-Places*, trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995), 77–78.
[17] Hess, "Bodenpersonal der Globalisierung."
[18] Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*.

ATMs, notices on screens, etc.). Following Sassen and Hess, however, I would add that many globalized spaces of what Augé calls "supermodernity" continue to rely on local human labor (from Starbucks cashiers to the janitors who clean airport restrooms), but that the particularity of this labor is muted in the pursuit of frictionless global flows regulated by clear-cut contractual interactions. Furthermore, the local hotel workers recall Anna Tsing's assertion that aspirations to the universal are in fact enacted in locally specific, friction-generating ways. Within such a framework, the hotel employees remind us that the interpreters depicted in *Die Falten des Königs* also work within particular social situations subject to various local specificities. Their work may contribute to the illusion of frictionless global flows cultivated by a regime of invisibility—in this case the illusion of language equivalence and the transparent transmission of meaning. Language, however, like the universals Tsing discusses, is in fact always a site of "sticky engagements" shaped by the social and material conditions of the real world.[19]

In his study of *Translation in the Digital Age*, Michael Cronin also calls attention to the labor hidden in processes of automation and digital consumption, highlighting the "transferred or devolved costs" that can be masked by "an ideology of convenience."[20] Cronin argues that contemporary perceptions of both translation and the use of a global language (such as English) are distorted by the phenomenon of "disintermediation," a social and economic practice of the digital age in which technology enables the transfer of labor costs from producer to consumer.[21] In the same way that consumers using ATMs, automated phone menus, and self-checkout stands assume the labor of an absent human agent, language labor is also displaced in systems where non-native speakers are expected to learn a global language. In this situation, the cost of hiring a professional translator or interpreter is transferred to the non-native speaker, but is thereby also rendered invisible. Similarly, automated translation technologies such as Google's "Translate This Page"-function constitute another form of disintermediation that makes the labor of translation invisible:

> The disembodied, instantaneous execution of the translation task implies that translation is an agentless, automatic function that can be realized in no time at all, and that translation is fundamentally a matching or substitutive operation, the text changing as the language is translated, but the layout remaining the same.[22]

In what Cronin deems a paradigm shift, translation is represented "as a form of instantaneous language transfer akin to the automated sub-routines of digital processing."[23] This shift has repercussions for everyone who engages with translated texts or relies on other forms of linguistic mediation, but it particularly affects human translators and interpreters. When it comes to interpreters, their physical presence still serves as a reminder of their linguistic and affective labor, although the ability of others to accurately recognize that labor has always been uneven. Moreover, the broader invisibility of various forms of labor due to automation and increased anonymous, contractual interactions would seem to compound traditional practices of interpreter self-effacement. In light of these developments, interventions such as *Die Falten des Königs*, which make the complex, individualized, and embodied labor of interpreters visible, take on additional importance.

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[19] Tsing, *Friction*, 6.
[20] Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 44–45.
[21] Ibid., 45.
[22] Ibid., 46–47.
[23] Ibid., 47.

Spectators and Subtitles

As I have argued, the interpreter's invisibility is a particularly complex and intense form of the widespread invisibility of translation documented by Lawrence Venuti. In the case of film, subtitles constitute another area in which practices of erasing the work of translation come into conflict with sensory perceptions that indicate its presence. Like interpreting and other forms of translation, subtitles have traditionally aimed to be perceived as transparent, or at least as inconspicuous as possible. Nonetheless, they are visually present on the screen, testifying in conjunction with the original audio to the labor of translation. In the following section, I consider how subtitles work together with filmic representations of interpreters, asking how multiple modes of translation can intersect and indeed mutually illuminate each other.

Subtitles not only give viewers access to the content of languages they do not understand, they also position viewers in relation to interpreters depicted on-screen. *Die Falten des Königs*, which does not include subtitles, illustrates this point when contrasted with films such as *Maria Braun* and *Lichter*, which do. Watching *Die Falten des Königs*, viewers face uncertainty in attributing the interpreted statements to a particular subject position. At the same time, viewers are completely dependent on the interpreters in the film for access to any elements of the original recorded statements. Because these recorded statements are played over the interpreters' headphones and are only perceptible to viewers as an unintelligible murmur, even viewers who understand English are put in this position of dependence. Thus all viewers, including those who speak English, experience a reliance on the interpreters similar to that of real-world clients, conference participants, and audience members who do not understand a particular source language. This reliance is then further heightened in the video by the absence of the original speakers and the prominent presence of the interpreters; viewers cannot, for example, watch the gestures and facial expressions of the original speaker while listening to an interpreter over headphones. Instead, viewers experience an intensified version of the interpreter as both an obstruction of the original source and, simultaneously, as their sole point of access to it.

As multilingual films with interpreter characters, *Lichter* and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* also highlight the physical presence and multivalent roles of these fictional interpreters, but usually in a way that positions viewers as privileged observers rather than as dependent and somewhat uncertain participants.[24] Like many other feature films, *Lichter* and *Maria Braun* generally include German subtitles when other languages are spoken; similarly, on the American DVD release of *Maria Braun*, lines in German are subtitled in English, and on the Polish DVD release of *Lichter*, all languages other than Polish are subtitled in Polish. Assuming viewers are watching the versions that match their language abilities (e.g., that German-speakers are watching the version of *Lichter* with German subtitles), viewers of interpreting scenes have access to both source utterances and the on-screen interpreter's translations thereof. Depending on language configuration, access to source and translation may be varied and differently mediated, but overall, subtitles allow viewers access to both source and translation in a way that on-screen participants, who are reliant on the interpreter, do not have. This position also foregrounds the crucial role interpreters can play in shaping communication, but in a way that is quite different from the viewing position of dependence that *Die Falten des Königs* constructs. Instead, the privileged position of access afforded by subtitles can either prompt viewers to

[24] An exception is the moment of dis- and re-orientation at the beginning of Kolja's interrogation scene, in which framing and editing first position Sonja as the interrogator, before the next shot reveals her to be interpreting for the officer next to her.

identify with the on-screen interpreter or to reflect critically on the changes that occur in translation and on the social contexts in which they occur.

For example, a German-speaking viewer watching the scene in *Lichter* of Kolja's interrogation will "directly" understand the police officer's German statement as soon as he speaks[25] (which Kolja does not) and will understand Sonja's translation into Russian by reading the German subtitles (which the officer does not). In the other direction, that viewer will understand Kolja's statement in Russian via German subtitles, unlike the officer, who must wait for—and rely on—Sonja's translation into German. In this way, viewers can identify with Sonja's position of linguistic access, but they may also identify with the tension of mediating between two dramatically different positions of unequal social and political power. When Sonja modifies the officer's statement, smuggling advice to Kolja under the guise of neutral translation, viewers can compare the officer's statement to Sonja's "translation" and identify the difference right away. Viewers are thus made complicit in Sonja's secret act and are again aligned with her position of knowledge, as opposed to the officer, who does not know that Sonja has covertly modified his statement in translation, but also Kolja, who is initially confused before he realizes what Sonja is doing. More broadly, *Lichter* positions viewers as interpreters in ways extending beyond linguistic translation as well: like liaison interpreters mediating negotiations between multiple parties, viewers must also negotiate between different perspectives and overlapping storylines on both sides of the Polish-German border. Indeed, the irreducibility of this situation, in which spectators with different abilities and perspectives understand various parts of the film in various configurations, but never as a unified whole, in fact constitutes the core of the interpreter's dilemma.

While subtitles enable identification with the interpreter's work, they can also prompt viewers to examine difference in translation by comparing the original statement with its translation. Viewers can then critically reflect on this difference within the specific social context depicted in a particular scene, which, as discussed in the preceding chapters, may involve issues of gender, national and cultural identity, and structures of unequal power. These differences may be subtle matters of tone and word choice, but in fictional narratives, they are often more extreme. They can be exaggerated for dramatic or comedic effect, but they also call attention to the particular social structures that give rise to them. In *Maria Braun,* for example, Maria's blatant mistranslation of her response to Lonely Richard on the train calls attention to the power differential between herself and Oswald but also to her attempts to gain the upper hand by staging herself as both sexually desirable and linguistically experienced. In the negotiation scene that follows, her rather loose translations indicate her growing impatience with Oswald and Senkenberg's cautious approach, as well as the declining importance of linguistic communication as the visual takes over toward the end of the scene.

In Alejandro González Iñárritu's 2006 film *Babel*, an American tourist is accidentally shot in a small Moroccan village, and when local officials inform her husband that no ambulance is coming, he explodes: "What do you mean there's no other ambulance? Fucking move! Fucking find me an ambulance!" According to the film's English subtitles, the Moroccan guide/interpreter translates this to the officials as "He wants to know how he will get his wife out of here." This significant difference, which could be deemed an unfaithful translation, is nonetheless faithful to the needs of the American couple; by moderating the husband's outburst, the interpreter increases the likelihood that the officials may still do something to help. While

[25] Of course, the statement the viewer hears is actually mediated by audiovisual technology, and it is constituted by language, itself another medium.

viewers will likely identify with the husband's frustration, fear, and feeling of helplessness in the face of this foreign infrastructure, viewers can also identify with the interpreter's attempt to work within existing power structures to get help as quickly as possible. Like the viewers helplessly watching these events unfold, the interpreter understands everything that is said but otherwise lacks the knowledge and power to be able to help directly.[26]

Of course, in films like *Lichter*, *Maria Braun*, and *Babel*, the linguistic access that aligns viewers with interpreters in multilingual scenes is at least partly mediated by subtitling, which is also a medium that oscillates between simultaneous visibility and invisibility. We might ask whether these films that call attention to the interpreter as a medium ironically rely on the relative invisibility of another translational medium. Although subtitles are inherently visible (that they mar the filmic image is a common complaint), they have—much like interpreters—traditionally aimed to promote a sense of transparency.[27] In opposition to this tradition of transparency, Abé Mark Nornes proposes a practice of "abusive" subtitling. Much like Venuti's call for foreignizing translations, Nornes argues that subtitlers should foreground their translational interventions rather than obscuring them. While "corrupt" subtitles domesticate, suppress difference, eliminate ambiguity, and disavow the violence of translation, "abusive" subtitles experiment with linguistic and graphic interventions "to bring the fact of translation from its position of obscurity, to critique the imperial politics that ground corrupt practices while ultimately leading the viewer to the foreign original."[28] Nornes's valorization of the traditionally negative term "abusive" draws on Philip Lewis' notion of "abusive translation," which itself is informed by Derridean deconstruction and the multiple connotations of the French cognate "abusive." In addition to meaning wrongful or injurious as in English, the French word "abusive" can also mean deceptive or misleading, which opens the possibility of deconstructive play, contestation, or ambivalence.[29] Lewis is inspired by Derrida's assertion that "une 'bonne' traduction doit toujours abuser,"[30] which Lewis translates as either "a 'good' translation must always commit abuses" or "a 'good' translation must always play tricks."[31] Because translation moves meanings into new frameworks that tend to "impose a different set of discursive relations and a different construction of reality,"[32] Lewis argues for an approach "that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own."[33] For Lewis and Nornes (and possibly Derrida), translation is inherently violent; Nornes's proposal to expose this violence and to actively turn it toward hegemonic structures rather than attempting to disavow it thus constitutes an ethical response.

However, I also believe that the recognition of cultural difference and linguistic multiplicity provoked by the "abusive" practices Nornes describes can be achieved in a number of ways, or in combination with a number of strategies, particularly in the case of multilingual

[26] For a full analysis of translation in this scene and in the film *Babel* as a whole, see Michael Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 99–107.
[27] Also like most interpreting situations but unlike most written translations (with the exception of facing-page translations), subtitles appear concurrently with and in the presence of the original.
[28] Nornes, "For an Abusive Subtitling," 449.
[29] Lewis, "The Measure of Translation Effects," 257.
[30] Jacques Derrida, "Le retrait de la métaphore," *Poésie Paris* 7 (1978): 103–26.
[31] Lewis, "The Measure of Translation Effects," 261.
[32] Ibid., 259.
[33] Ibid., 262.

films. In the examples from *Babel, Maria Braun,* and *Lichter* described above, the subtitles themselves follow the tradition of transparency, but within the context of the scenes of translation, they nonetheless serve to highlight linguistic, cultural, and social difference. For Nornes, "corrupt" subtitles not only domesticate by "smoothing the rough edges of foreignness," they also reduce complexity and provide the illusion of hermeneutic mastery, "convening everything into easily consumable meaning."[34] In *Lichter*, the subtitles that align non-Russian speaking viewers with Sonja's position of linguistic comprehension do seem to promise a hermeneutic understanding of Kolja's position. However, as discussed in Chapter Five, this transparent understanding proves to be illusory. Indeed, the premise that cinema itself can function as a 'translation machine, making peoples from distant lands transparently comprehensible" is also called into question.[35] Assumptions about translation are thus destabilized on multiple levels, and although *Lichter*'s German subtitles do not explicitly call attention to themselves, the film does invite reflection on modes of translation and transmission that could be extended to the role of its subtitles.

More broadly, many viewers will experience the subtitles of a multilingual film differently from the subtitles of a film in a single foreign language. This applies particularly to viewers who understand some (but not all) of the languages spoken in a multilingual film, such as German-speaking viewers with knowledge of English who watch *Lichter*. As the film switches back and forth between German, English, Russian, and Polish, these viewers will be more aware of the intermittent subtitles and their varying reliance on them based on the language being spoken (perhaps ignoring or only glancing at the subtitles when English is spoken, or alternatively, comparing the English original to the German subtitles; paying careful attention to the subtitles when Russian and Polish are spoken). As someone who does not speak Swedish, if I watch a monolingual Swedish film with conventional (i.e. "corrupt") English subtitles, I will generally fall into the groove of reading the subtitles without constantly thinking about the fact that I am doing so, particularly as I become engrossed in other aspects of the film. On the other hand, if I watch a multilingual film like *Babel*, which includes English, Japanese, Japanese Sign Language, Spanish, and Arabic, I am repeatedly reminded of the subtitles' presence and function when the film switches from spoken English (without subtitles and which I understand by hearing) to another spoken language, such as Arabic, with English subtitles (which I understand by reading). Some scenes and some individual characters are subtitled, others are not. Here subtitles might in fact function as a mark of foreignness or distance, rather than providing the illusion of access and comprehension criticized by Nornes.

Returning to filmic scenes of interpreting, it should also be noted that some multilingual feature films do not subtitle such scenes. Often, viewers who do not speak both languages of a given scene are first confronted by the sound and visual embodied articulation of the foreign language without being able to understand its semantic content. Dependent on the diegetic interpreter, these viewers must wait for the interpreter's translation and decide how much to trust it based on extra-linguistic cues. This uncertain viewing position without subtitles is similar to that evoked by *Die Falten des Königs*, but whereas *Die Falten des Königs* focuses on the interpreter's embodied process, scenes without subtitles depicting foreign-language speakers, interpreters, and dependent listeners stage the dynamic relationships between these positions. In a much-discussed scene in Sofia Coppola's 2003 film *Lost in Translation*, the Japanese director

[34] Nornes, "For an Abusive Subtitling," 467.
[35] Abé Mark Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 21.

of a whiskey commercial directs the American actor Bob Harris with the help of an interpreter. As the director gives extensive instructions while pacing and gesturing emphatically, English-speaking viewers without knowledge of Japanese are confronted by their lack of access to this foreign language and perhaps culture as well. These viewers thus share Harris's position, whose stay in Japan is marked by a sense of disorientation and an inability to communicate. The scene takes a comedic turn when the interpreter matter-of-factly and incongruously translates the director's entire speech as, "He wants you to turn and look in the camera." Voicing the suspicions of the non-Japanese-speaking viewer, Harris dryly asks, "Is that all he said?" The scene continues in this vein, with Harris forced to rely on the interpreter's minimalist translations despite their obvious inadequacy, because he is completely unable to communicate with anyone else on the set.

In this scene, the omission of subtitles functions as a strategy for producing disorientation. In the case of *Lichter*, however, the presence of subtitles as an additional layer of mediation ultimately leads to a different kind of disorientation, as the access and understanding they seem to promise proves illusory. In addition to providing or omitting subtitles as a formal strategy, subtitling can also be understood as another technology of mediation that seeks to obscure itself, but in attempting to do so, also reveals areas of uncertainty and instability.

Nornes's proposal of "abusive" subtitling in opposition to "corrupt" subtitling is particularly valuable in that it highlights the negotiation of multiple meanings, cultural contexts, discursive relations, and power dynamics than subtitles inherently involve. We are prompted to question the illusion of transparency offered by traditional subtitling practices and are invited instead to consider alternate ways of engaging with and indeed "revel[ing] in" linguistic difference.[36] I am, however, reluctant to accept the central premise that all translation is inherently violent. Although several of my analyses in this study have focused on hermeneutic violence (in particular *Das Bad*, *Das nackte Auge*, and *Lichter*), I am also encouraged by Tawada's search for modes of non-hermeneutic translation based on shared presence and by alternative conceptions of translation as encounter, connection, and multidirectional exchange.

Mediated Presence, Present Mediations

Currently, the technological advances that make remote interpreting both increasingly possible and practical appear to threaten experiences of shared co-presence that in-person interpreting, at its best, can facilitate. Looking toward the future of remote interpreting, I believe that interpreters and engineers will in time develop and improve techniques, technologies, and modes of interaction that will more fully realize the potential for an "expanded scope" of "embodied human agency" that Mark Hansen sees in various embodied interfaces with digital media.[37] At present, however, perceived threats to the presence effects of interpreting have also drawn attention to the corporeal elements of the interpreting process, as evidenced by recent works such as *Die Falten des Königs* and *Die Unvermeidlichen*, which explicitly foreground interpreters' embodiment. In fact, this attention may go beyond a direct reaction to concerns about digital technologies diminishing the experience of presence; it may also partly stem from the frictions produced by these very acts of layered mediation. Like most mediating technologies, simultaneous interpreting equipment, video recording, subtitles, and video conferencing usually aim to obscure themselves in order to simulate transparency and a sense of immediacy. However, like the interpreter's human body and individual creativity, the materiality

[36] Nornes, "For an Abusive Subtitling," 448.
[37] Hansen, *Bodies in Code*, 4.

and the shaping influence of these technical media can never be fully disavowed. As technologies around interpreting proliferate and forms of mediation intersect and overlap, the possibilities for slippages, sticky engagements, and productive frictions only increase. In some ways, the technology that enables remote interpreting thus also brings new attention to the interpreter's embodied state and the tensions it represents.

Mediated representations of interpreters offer a site to explore and experiment with these frictions and intersections through a unique figure: an embodied human subject who is not only embedded within digital media, but who is also a medium herself. At a time when many global flows of capitalism seem increasingly abstract, as computer programs around the world execute high-speed trades every second, and corporations analyze consumer behavior as huge sets of data, interpreters can serve as tangible manifestations of human intersections with abstract global flows. One reaction to the increasingly abstract and complex nature of global circulation has been to retreat into provincialism, nationalism, and xenophobia; in the U.S., Donald Trump has called for a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border and has proposed withdrawing from the NATO alliance, while Britain has voted to leave the EU, and right-wing nationalism has gained ground in a number of European countries. In this dissertation I have called, on the contrary, for careful attention to both the problems and possibilities of global exchange; this requires a methodology that can address transnational intersections and its possibilities for encounter without simply celebrating or idealizing a world without borders. If we return here to the work of Anna Tsing, we recall that understanding global connections requires attending to the local frictions that arise through messy, complicated, and uneven interactions among different groups and individuals. Within this global system, interpreters offer a point of access to imagine how global connections are produced by the frictions of historically, socially, culturally, and materially specific acts of interlingual communication.

"Simultan" initially presents a very instrumentalized view of the simultaneous interpreter's body; Nadja even imagines her body as an extension of the technical apparatus in which she is embedded, rather than the other way around. Her body, however, expresses through physical symptoms the distress and despair that she attempts to avoid in her compartmentalized usage of the languages she speaks. When she acknowledges and accepts the simultaneous co-existence of a fascist past, a threat of future nuclear destruction, and her individual experience of being nonetheless alive in the current moment, this moment of recognition is initially figured by a unity of linguistic rhythm and bodily movement as Nadja runs back from the shore. However, readers are subsequently warned against glorifying an idealized unity of language and physicality when the televised cheers of a crowd celebrating a bicycle race winner evoke the mass hysteria of fascist rallies. Importantly, Bachmann also shows that this kind of embodied linguistic response and shared physical collectivity can be transmitted via technical media; while Simultan employs a live television broadcast, it also recalls Hitler's effective use of radio in the 1930s and 40s. Technical mediation does not always result in a loss of presence effects, but by the same token, a rejection of technical mediation does not necessarily lead to a more ethical or equitable form of linguistic communication. Instead, Bachmann invites further reflection on the ways in which embodied, historically situated human subjects engage with language while interfacing with mediating technologies in an increasingly interconnected world. In her encounter with a (fictional) line from the Bible, Nadja is unable to extract a stable meaning from the Italian and transfer it into German; instead, her interpretation of this linguistic encounter is translated into a corporeal expression, as her tears signal a productive surrender to linguistic uncertainty, indeterminacy, and multiplicity.

In *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, the protagonist employs her body as a site of sexual, economic, and linguistic exchange. In doing so, Maria demonstrates both the power and the potential risks of accentuating the physical aspects of communication within certain historical, social, and economic structures of power. Her physical presence as a mediator facilitates the flow of international commerce, but her attempts to instrumentalize her own sexuality are undermined when Hermann and Oswald turn her into an object of economic exchange. In this dissertation, I have addressed the value of understanding translation as an intimate encounter in co-presence, in which slippages of subjectivities can produce a re-examination of assumed boundaries between familiar and foreign and in which the multiple instabilities but also possibilities of linguistic exchange can be explored. *Maria Braun* reminds us, however, that such encounters do not occur in a vacuum; they are profoundly structured by larger political, social, and economic forces. As such, forms of technical mediation that modify corporeal presence and shared spaces of encounter may have value in supporting interpreters as they negotiate these forces with a certain degree of critical distance.

Das Bad further stages the potential dangers of interpreting as an embodied form of intimacy when undertaken in settings where the interpreter's agency and complex subjectivity are discounted or disregarded. Throughout the novella, Tawada highlights the violence of hermeneutic interpretation as both extraction and inscription by making it visible at the site of women's bodies. And yet Tawada also suggests the existence of other possible modes of interpreting, translation, and encounter based on shared experiences of embodiment and sensory perception. At the conclusion of *Das nackte Auge*, Tawada returns to the possibility of embodied translation as a form of communion, mutuality, and inter-subjective experience. Importantly, the specific act of embodied translation that occurs at the novel's end involves the technical medium of film, which is in fact valued throughout the novel for its ability to evoke perceptions of presence.

Finally, *Lichter* foregrounds the physicality of interpreters as part of a border regime constructed by linguistic, cultural, political, and economic discourses and practices. More specifically, linguistic translation can help manifest (as well as subvert) tangible borders, and in many ways, embodied interpreters exemplify this connection between language and the directly perceptible material world. Furthermore, the interpreters in *Lichter* depict different forms of productive friction related to the potential intimacy—linguistic and physical—of interpreting. While Sonja's perception of subjective intimacy with Kolja leads her to physically intervene by smuggling him across the border, Beata's physical, affective presence facilitates the transnational flow of capital. Ultimately, the film highlights the agency of interpreters as embodied subjects in an uncertain border zone, while also cautioning against assumptions of understanding and ascriptions of meaning.

In their own unique ways, each of these fictional representations makes the multifaceted, socially situated labor of translation visible at a time when a new regime of advanced convertibility obscures this labor as never before. In a stark real-life example, the U.S. government's disavowal of Iraqi and Afghan military interpreters and its deadly consequences highlight the potential stakes of this visibility. Fiction by itself does not bring about necessary political change, but it does provide an important realm in which to examine questions of ethics and to pursue alternatives to conventional practices and discourses. Fiction enables, for example, alternative modes of theorizing translation as an embodied interaction that may otherwise seem impractical or unachievable in a professional context. Ultimately, the shared experience of presence enacted by embodied translation at the end of *Das nackte Auge* has utopian tendencies;

indeed, it takes place in a "u-topian" non-place of imagination between the cinema screen and the narrator's subjective experience of embodied identification. Nonetheless, it conceives of intersubjective communication in a manner that extends beyond the limits of hermeneutic models. In many ways, this harkens back to Bachmann's invocation of the utopian as a powerful force that—despite its impossibility—shapes our reality and directs our pursuit of new possibilities. Translation, as Derrida, Cassin, Apter, and others remind us, is both impossible and necessary; the untranslatable is precisely that which calls for translation again and again. In this vein, I conclude by returning once more to Lawrence Venuti, this time to his thoughts on translation as a utopian project that we nevertheless repeatedly attempt.

Venuti argues that translation projects a utopian community that is not yet realized: "Implicit in any translation is the hope for a consensus, a communication and recognition of the foreign text through a domestic inscription."[38] This domestic inscription can never be free of exclusion, hierarchies, or asymmetries, yet it nonetheless functions as "a way of imagining a future reconciliation of linguistic and cultural differences, whether those that exist among domestic groups or those that divide foreign and domestic cultures."[39] What is most remarkable about Venuti's account, however, is his choice of community interpreters as exemplary figures of utopian translation. Community interpreters, who work in person, on the ground, in often messy, intimate situations, embedded in the practicalities of daily life and the restrictions of institutional structures, are in fact, according to Venuti, the finest examples of utopian striving. Venuti further draws on Robert Barsky's study of refugee hearings in Canada to discuss strategies used by community interpreters to compensate for the asymmetries that exist between clients and representatives of social agencies: "The interpreting inevitably communicates the foreign text in domestic terms, in terms of the host country, but the domestic inscription also needs to include a significant part of the foreign context that gives meaning to the claim."[40] In such cases, Venuti argues, interpreter intervention is the most ethical choice, as it enables "both the client to participate fully and the agency representatives to arrive at an informed understanding of the claim."[41] However, in trying to achieve this kind of equality, community interpreters must presuppose an improbable and in fact utopian situation, which Jürgen Habermas terms an "ideal speech situation," distinguished by "openness to the public, inclusiveness, equal rights to participation, immunization against external or internal compulsion, as well as the participants' orientation toward reaching understanding (that is, the sincere expression of utterances)."[42]

> In presupposing such conditions, the community interpreter works ultimately to foster a domestic community that is receptive to foreign constituencies, but that is not yet realized – or at least its realization will not be advanced until the client is given political asylum, due process, medical care, or welfare benefits, as the case may be. Even then, of course, the receptive domestic community is primarily a utopian projection that does not eliminate the social hierarchies in which the refugee or immigrant is actually positioned.

[38] Venuti, "Translation, Community, Utopia," 499.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 501.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Jürgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, ed. Maeve Cooke (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 367, quoted in Venuti, 502.

> Still, it does express the hope that linguistic and cultural differences will not result in the exclusion of foreign constituencies from the domestic scene.[43]

Following Venuti, I would add that it is precisely the embodied, situated nature of community interpreting that makes it such a powerful utopian act; in many interpreting situations, people who perceive themselves as "domestic" are directly confronted with the physical presence of people who have been culturally coded as "foreign." For some, the perception of physical attributes such as skin color, clothing, body language, or manner of speech will trigger or intensify responses characterized by racism, sexism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, or other discriminatory ideologies. Nonetheless, the potential for mutual recognition and shared experience exists in every encounter, and interpreters embody the possibility of dwelling together in co-presence, which may ultimately prove to be a higher ethical ideal than that of "understanding" when conceived within a narrowly hermeneutic framework.

In the current moment, as the refugee crisis in Europe and its neighboring countries continues, models of translation as a form of ethical encounter take on renewed importance. Now that the initial reactions of 2015, both welcoming and fearful, have begun to settle into longer-term questions, European citizens, governments, and refugees alike enter a new phase of stocktaking. As tens of thousands of refugees remain indefinitely stuck in the limbo of refugee camps, particularly those in Greece and Italy, far-right parties have gained in popularity across numerous European countries, including Germany, Austria, Denmark, France, Sweden, Hungary, and Poland. Political solutions to the crisis appear uncertain, unstable, and incomplete, while nativist rhetoric feeds on fears of terrorism. Frictions abound.

What does it mean to invoke utopian ideals in such a time of crisis? They are, by definition, unachievable. Nonetheless, they can affect the way we make decisions and interact with others, opening up new avenues of encounter and exchange. As Tsing argues about universals, translational ideals themselves will always be enacted within specific locations and situations, generating frictions but also new perspectives and possibilities. A model of translation based not on violent extraction or inscription but on shared experience and multidirectional interaction will still involve friction. However, it also holds the potential for an encounter with alterity that does not subsume the other to the self, but instead remains open to multiple ways of being human. Such a model of translation can indeed serve as a model for a more general ethical and political relationality, as Sandra Bermann and Judith Butler suggest, but it can also be enacted by concrete, specific instances of linguistic translation. Indeed, as Venuti suggests, the actions of individual interpreters who enable such moments of relationality can have profound collective power. As high volumes of asylum applications continue to be reviewed in Germany and across Europe, acts of linguistic mediation have enormous potential to influence individual lives and collective societies. For thousands of people, such acts of embodied translation may yet offer not loss, violence, or betrayal, but rather hope amidst a landscape of despair.

[43] Venuti, "Translation, Community, Utopia," 502.

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