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GS News

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The Newsletter of the Chartered Institute of
Linguists German Society e.V.

Letter from the Chair

Dear Members,

It's difficult to believe that another year has started. I wish you all a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2017. Hopefully this year will be less turbulent than the last one, although with President Donald Trump in America and the Brexit I'm not sure how it will turn out. However, the GS aims to provide continuity as we enter our fourth decade.

2016 was another successful year for us, and the final event was the excellent Translators' Workshop in Berlin. We had some fascinating presentations, ending up with a lively discussion on translating poetry. Some of the results are in the report on page 2. I had no idea that we had so many poets among our translators.

The first event of 2017 will be the AGM on 4 March in Mainz. We have chosen a more central location this year in the hope that more members will be able to attend. The agenda and other details are on page 6. **Please let me know if you are planning to attend.**

We now have more information about the study weekend in Lübeck in mid-September, and details are on page 8. Jadwiga has been putting together an interesting programme, and we look forward to hearing more about the Hanseatic League. It was quite an amazing achievement in mediaeval times to have a trading cooperation which stretched from the Baltic to east England and also included river ports such as Frankfurt an der Oder, which is some 200 kms from the Baltic Sea.

To brighten up the start to the year I have some new quotes from my English students. One of them was excited because she is going to be a big grandma. However, my current favourite was when a very respectable lady in her seventies said that they had a striptease table at home. A new variation of pole dancing or lap dancing? The explanation was quite a let-down, as she was only looking for a translation of Ausziehtisch ... The perils of using a dictionary.

All the best from me and the committee

Stephanie

Translators' Workshop in Berlin, 5 November 2016

For this year's workshop the German Society returned to the Sorat Ambassador hotel in Berlin. Once again the participants and speakers (21 in total) were well-looked after, and although the venue is near major tourist attractions (you can even see Berlin's answer to Harrods, KaDeWe, from the hotel) the location itself is a quiet side street.

Stephanie Tarling, the GS chair, opened the proceedings by greeting everyone and mentioning that the workshop is almost as old as the German Society itself, which celebrated its 30th anniversary this year.

Our first speaker was **Ilse Freiburg**, who talked (in German) about "Internationale Befragungen – die Kunst, weltweit die richtigen Fragen richtig zu stellen." Anyone who has ever filled in a survey or questionnaire will now be tempted to think that translating a few little questions can't be that difficult. Far from it! International surveys are designed to gather comparable information from, for example, 45 different countries covering a wide geographical range. Every translator has their private thoughts about the quality of source texts from time to time, but the English questions that formed the starting point had obviously been formulated to be as non-country specific as possible and thus more readily comparable – but also vaguer. Working in a team of translators in order to arrive at the best solution for each question may seem like absolute luxury, but Ilse gave us some examples of where this is very useful.

A social survey, for example, asked respondents to indicate how far they trust their head of government. One translator rendered the concept literally and neutrally in German, one wrote Bundeskanzlerin – the workshop discussed which was better suited to the target audience and there was general agreement that "Chancellor" was much clearer to Joe Public; we were pleased to learn that the surveys' makers had thought so too! A similar issue arose with Supreme Court – translated correctly in one case as Bundesgerichtshof and inaccurately as Bundesverfassungsgericht (constitutional court) in another. Interestingly, it emerged that the incorrect term had been selected, as most people in Germany would identify this court as the country's most important and it was thus a better indicator of trust in the judicial system. Among other words which had produced headaches, this time in connection with workplace harassment, was "upset", a versatile, deceptively easy word in English with no direct German equivalent (verärgert, betroffen, besorgt, belastet?) Varying sensibilities regarding ethnic origin also emerged. Whereas the English survey asked people to identify their "race or ethnicity", the direct translation of race = Rasse is a big no-no in Germany, being too closely associated with Nazi ideologies. To get around this problem, Hautfarbe = skin colour was chosen. But in the English-speaking world, that would be considered an indelicate question. The time flew by and the lively debate it provoked carried into the coffee break.

The second topic was a talk by **Christin Dallmann** on arbitration, or Schiedsgerichtbarkeit, to give it the German title. Ms Dallmann is a trained lawyer and translator of legal texts. This talk (in German) offered crucial insights into the nature of arbitration in the framework of international and national law and provided, as one participant said, "some very useful vocabulary." Christin explained that the parties have to agree to arbitration in the first place, but having done so, the arbitrator's award is binding. The arrangement remains private unless one side feels impelled to turn to the national courts for execution. The original intention behind arbitration was to make resolving disputes cheaper, quicker and fairer by meeting in private and avoiding expensive legal fees. Frequently, each side will choose their own arbitrator, perhaps because of his/her specific expertise in a field like engineering, construction etc. and will agree on who the third arbitrator should be. There is no rule against having just one arbitrator. However, arbitration has had a very bad press recently and has been one reason continually cited by

the opponents of CETA, the free-trade agreement between Canada and the EU. People fear that big business will take their cases to arbitration – by its very nature private and not public – and shady, secret dealings to the detriment of national governments and their citizens will be the result. However, CETA has adopted the 2014 UN convention on transparency in investor-state disputes. Art. 8.29 of CETA also states that the parties should strive to create a standing multilateral investment court with appeal options – something that is not normally part of arbitration.

This was a fascinating exercise in separating facts from fiction, and a clarification of the differences between arbitration and hearing cases at public courts. It required considerable concentration, so lunch was a welcome break.

Dr Isabelle Thormann is a sworn reviewer of linguistic products, called upon to appraise in an official capacity the quality of for example texts, translations, language teaching or proof-reading services, and she had chosen to share some of her most spectacular/interesting cases with us. Plunging straight into specifics, we looked at a legal dispute between a translation provider and a customer who was not satisfied with what he had received and was therefore unwilling to pay the full price. Many examples demanded specialist knowledge – which the translator had claimed to have – but confusing vegans with vegetarians or getting the decimal point wrong when stating the dosage are elementary mistakes that also reveal a lack of in-house quality control.

On one occasion Isabelle was asked to help test the quality of the five biggest online translation agencies based in Germany. She wrote a 3-page letter, purportedly from a lawyer to his client, dealing with complicated legal, technical and business issues. Isabelle highlighted the particularly tricky parts and how the agencies had dealt with them. It was interesting to see that the agency that was rated best charged a price in the mid-range of the fees demanded.

For light relief, we looked at some texts from profiling cases, i.e. judging how likely it was that a certain person was the author of a specific piece of anonymous writing. Some of them had highly original ideas on spelling! However, to arrive at an assessment of probable authorship or not, the reviewer has to look in detail at the mistakes of grammar, orthography etc. made in reference texts and the mistakes made in the anonymous letters. Modern technology complicates the issue by offering writers an automatic spell-checker! Finally, talking about commissions to assess the quality of proof-reading services, Isabelle reminded us of how important a comma can be. Let's never make the mistake of writing, "It's time to eat granddad".

The final speaker, **Alexandra Jones** (Sandy), talked about poetry translation, "A music of words". A book of her own Gaelic poems, *Crotal Ruadh / Red Lichen*, with English translations, has just won second place in the Donald Meek Award 2016 for the Gaelic Book of the Year.

For at least two of the participants this was the main motivation for attending the workshop. Sandy briefly introduced the philosophy of poetry translation, asking whether it is a betrayal of the original, given the constraints of form and the deliberate multi-layering or opacity of the original. A good translation, she concludes, will respect and reflect the original style, content, register and rhymes, both end and internal, making as few tasteful and well-judged compromises as possible. Herself an accomplished singer, Sandy feels strongly that the sound or music of the spoken word is too often sacrificed in translation. To demonstrate how well music and words complement each other, she sang a poem by Rilke "Das ist die Sehnsucht/This is longing" once in the original, and once in English translation – simply beautiful. It was new to many of us that Donald Swann – of Flanders and Swann fame – had composed melodies to texts that are a world totally apart from his

famous Hippopotamus song. Sandy played an old recording of Swann singing another poem by Rilke and one of "Du bist die Ruh" (Rückert, music by Schubert) sung by Kathleen Ferrier.

Having just experienced how words and music fuse into a new artwork, it was our turn to show how well we'd done our "homework". Ahead of the workshop we had received poems ranging from the intensely lyrical to classical to nonsense, and been invited to pick one or more and attempt a translation. Some poems were in English, some in German. The process of translation really underlined the difficulty of exactly rendering one language into another – stubborn rhymes, picking words that fit the metre but don't sound quite right, or words that are right but won't fit the metre. One young lady found a brilliant compromise and used an *ab, ab* rhyme scheme instead of the original *aa, bb* for her translation of an English poem into German. As several people remarked, this last session of the day really woke us all up again.

The general verdict on the event was, "So glad I came" and "really well organized." Everyone returned home with a host of new insights and impressions. For those who weren't there, here are some examples of translated poems.

**Das ästhetische Wiesel
Christian Morgenstern**

Ein Wiesel
saß auf einem Kiesel
inmitten Bachgeriesel.

Wißt ihr
weshalb?

Das Mondkalb
verriet es mir
im Stillen:

Das raffinier-
te Tier
tat's um des Reimes willen.

**The aesthetic weasel
Christian Morgenstern**

A weasel
floated on an easel
wearing stone-washed jeans from Diesel

Wanna know
why?

I was told on the sly
by a loony on
rum and lime

The beast,
stylish at least
wanted a fashionable rhyme

Transl. Mike and Mair Harrington

Du bist die Ruh, by Friedrich Rückert

Du bist die Ruh,
Der Friede mild,
Die Sehnsucht du,
Und was sie stillt

You are my rest,
My gentle peace,
My yearning quest
And my release.

Transl. Kurt Müller

Ich weihe dir
Voll Lust und Schmerz
Zur Wohnung hier
Mein Aug und Herz

My joy and pain
To thee I plight;
Dwell thou, remain
In my heart, my sight.

Transl. Alexandra Jones

Sehnsucht/Yearning, R.M. Rilke

Wenn wie ein leises Flügelbreiten
Sich in den späten Lüften wiegt, -
Ich möchte immer weiter schreiten
Bis in das Tal, wo tiefgeschmiegt
an abendrote Einsamkeiten
Die Sehnsucht wie ein Garten liegt.

When like wings' tender caresses
A trembling fills the evening air
I would be he who onwards presses
down to the vale, deep in whose lair
of sunset-red lonelinesses
lies Yearning like a garden there.

Transl. Angela Weckler

Bilbo's Last Song, J R R Tolkien
(Set to music by Donald Swann)

Day is ended, dim my eyes,
But journey long before me lies.
Farewell, friends! I hear the call.
The ship's beside the stony wall.
Foam is white and waves are grey;
beyond the sunset leads my way.
Foam is salt, the wind is free;
I hear the rising of the sea.

Der Tag vergeht, die Augen trüb
Doch langer Weg noch vor mir liegt
Lebt wohl Freunde, ich höre den Schrei
Das Schiff lieft schon am steinigen Kai
Weißer Schaum, graue Wellen
Mein Weg führt hinter den Horizont
Salziger Schaum, freier Wind
Ich höre das Auf und Ab der See.

Transl. Alexandra Zens

One of our participants, Michaela Pschierer-Barnfather, was commended for her translation of a poem in the 2015 Stephen Spender Prize competition.
See http://www.stephen-spender.org/2015_prize/2015_Open_commend_MP_B.html

**German Society of the Chartered Institute of Linguists
2017 AGM
Mainz, 11 a.m., 4 March**

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the agenda
3. Approval of the minutes of the 2016 AGM
4. Chairman's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Formal approval by the membership of the committee's actions
7. Formal approval by the membership of the treasurer's actions
8. Election of committee members (treasurer and secretary)
9. Study weekend in Lübeck
10. Other future events
11. A.O.B.
12. Date and place of next meeting

We meet upstairs at the Haus des Deutschen Weines Gutenbergplatz 3-5, at the side of the main theatre and just across from Mainz cathedral, **in time for a prompt 11 a.m. start** to the AGM, after which we'll have lunch in the restaurant. It's about a 15-20 minute walk from Mainz main station. There is a multi-storey car park nearby.

For those interested, there is the option after lunch of visiting the impressive Mainz citadel, which offers good views over the town and beyond, to see a special exhibition in the Stadthistorisches Museum on 'Mainz und der Wein – Die Geschichte einer engen Beziehung'. Please state when registering for the AGM whether you also wish to visit the citadel. Transport will be provided for those reluctant to climb up the hill, and parking is available within the complex.

Please notify Stephanie in good time if you are planning to attend, so that we have an idea of the number coming, also whether you wish to visit the exhibition afterwards.

The editor's rag bag

The German Society is sad to announce the death in October of Angelika Jaeger, formerly of the Hesse BDÜ. Some of you will remember her from our joint workshops in Frankfurt and from various BDÜ and other events.

Thanks to Heidi English for the following:

Wie de Engel gesaht hatt

Weihnachtsgeschichte Aus dem Evangelium nach Lukas – auf Hunsrückler Platt

Domols hott de römische Kaiser Augustus vorgeschrieb, dass alle Leit in seim Weltreich in Liste noteert were sollte. Es war die eerst Volkszählung, so ebbes war noch nie gewes. Unn das war, wie de Quirinius in Syrie so ebbes wie Landrat war.

Do hott jeder misse in die Stadt gehn, wo sei Familie her komm is. Also hott sich aach Josef von Nazaret von Galiläa aus uff de Wääch gemach, unn weil er vom David abgestammt hott, musst er in die Provinz Judäa noh Betlehem gehn, wo mer die „Davidsstadt“ genannt hott. Do wollt er sich inschreiw zesamme mit em Maria, mit der war er so gut wie verheirat. Die war hoch in Umstänn.

Unn wie se do ware, war's bei ehr an der Zeit, unn se hott ehr eerst Kind – en Buu – uff die Welt braacht. Se hott en in Winnele gewickelt unn in en Furekripp ge-laacht, weil se in der Herberch kä Platz kriecht harre.

In der Gechend ware Heerte jous in der Flur, wo in der Naacht uff ehr Vieh uffgepasst honn. Do is uff ähmoh en Engel komm, unn se ware all mit dem im Liecht vum Hiemel. Se sinn aarich verschrock. Deshalb hott de Engel gesaht: „Dehr braucht kää Ängscht ze honn! Eich bringe Ouch die größt Freid for die Mensche: Hout is for Ouch in der Davidsstadt de Messias uff die Welt komm. Unn do draan könnt der'n erkenne: Dehr find't en nou gebor Kind, in Winnele gewickelt in ner Furekripp im Stall!“

Unn dann war uff ähmoh en ganze himmlische Schwarm von lauter Engel um se rum. Allegare honn se de Herrgott gepries unn laut geruf: „Ehr for Gott in der Höh unn uff de Erd Friere for all Mensche, wo er lieb hott!“

Wie die Engel wiere fort ware, zurück in de Hiemel, honn die Heerte unnernanner gesaat: „Komm, mer gehn noh Betlehem unn gucke uus die Sach emoh aan, was de Engel do versproch hott!“ Uff der Stell sinn se los un honn's tatsächlich genau so aangetroff: Maria unn Josef unn das Kind in der Furekripp. Wie se das Kind gesiehn honn, honn se verzieht, was en von dem Kind gesaht wor war.

Un allegare, wo das gehört honn, honn gestaunt iever das, was die Heerte do verzieht honn.

Maria awer hott sich alles genau gemerkt. Se war tief getroff unn hott lang do drierer simmeleert. Die Heerte sinn wiere zurück bei ehr Vieh, honn de Herrgott gepries for das, was se gehört un gesiehn harre.

Es war jo alles genau so gewes, wie en de Engel gesaht hatt.

Josef Peil

Amidst the stampede on the part of British people resident in Germany applying for German citizenship, it's interesting and rather surprising to find how requirements seem to vary from place to place. Moreover, in translating British birth certificates for people, I've discovered to my dismay that there are different formats with different wording – four to date!

However, if we thought things were difficult here, a British friend resident in a Belgian village tells a worse tale of woe: She has lived in Belgium for a long time, owns a house there and speaks the country's official languages, but because she works for an international organisation and thus pays no tax in Belgium, the authorities aren't sure how to cope with her application. One suggestion has been that she ask people in the village to confirm in writing that she plays an active part in village life!!

A nod's as good as a wink

On top of this, officials have been forbidden to speak English to people unable to converse in French or Flemish, even if they (the officials) can speak English. The friend knows of one instance in which an official followed a frustrated member of the public into the car park and then apologised profusely in English, explaining that he wasn't allowed to speak English at work, but could do so in the car park. Another Brit, forewarned, went in and said to the official that he understood the ban on speaking English, but could the official respond to questions put in English by nodding or shaking his head? He could.

Headline seen in a renowned British newspaper: 'Ten decapitated heads found in Mexico'. Hm. Surely it's the bodies that were decapitated?

GS Diary

2017

Saturday 4 March

GS AGM in Mainz.
For details and agenda see p.6.

9 June-8 July

Shakespeare festival Neuss. The programme will be available from 15 March.

15-17 September

GS Study weekend in Lübeck. The subject will be the Hanseatic League, and the venue is the Hansa Museum.

Speakers confirmed so far:

Dr Paul Richards, from King's Lynn on "England & The Hanseatic League Past & Present". Christoph Sholl on "Lübeck and the Hansa during the Cold War – A personal memoir".

More details in due course. As always, there is a limited number of places, and these will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, with preference given to GS members. **If you are interested in the weekend, please notify Jadwiga by 31 March**, and she will subsequently let people know if there are places available for non-members.

11-15 October

Frankfurt book fair.
Special guest France.

No details are yet available on this year's Anglophoner Tag.