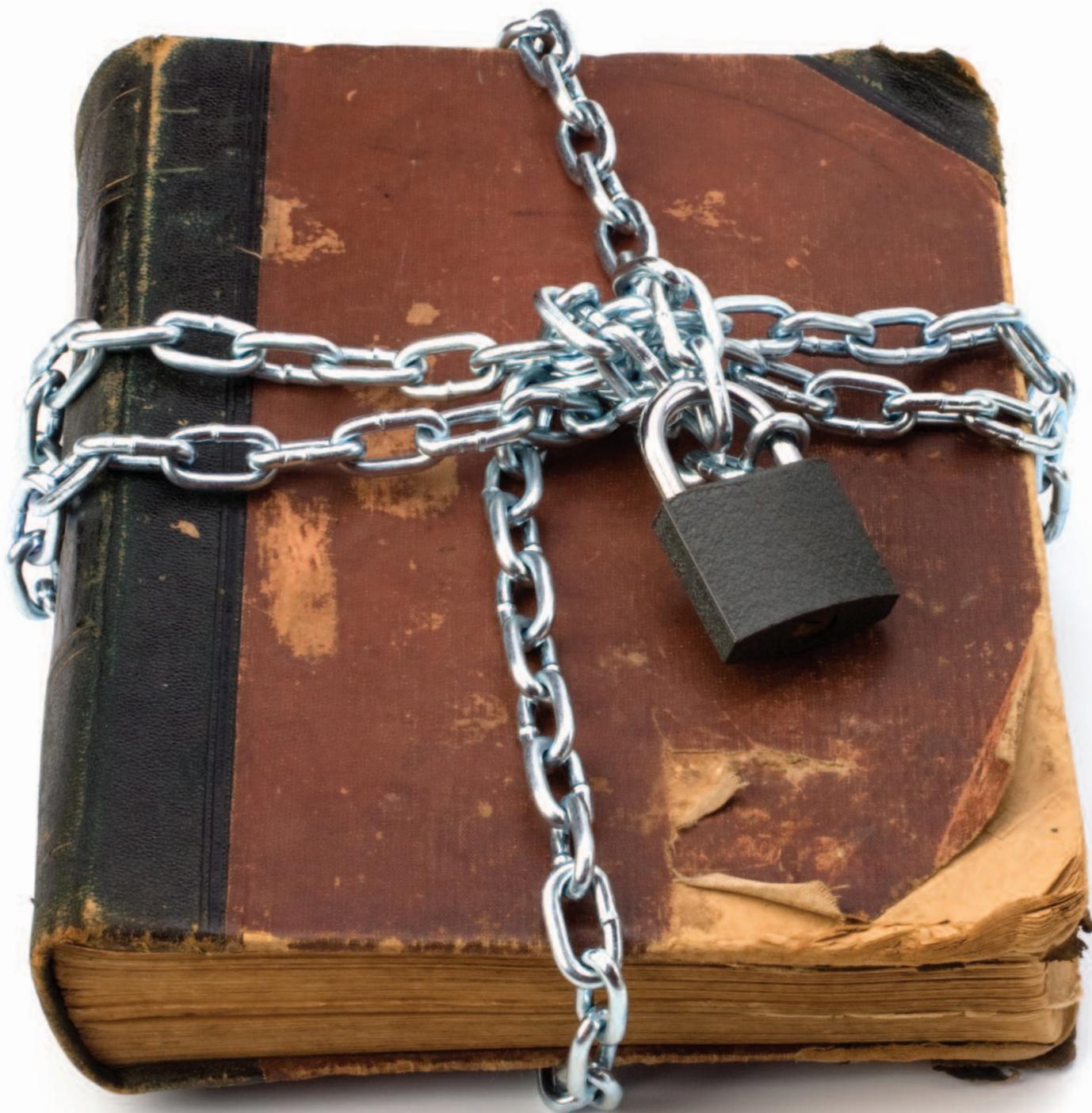


# *The Linguist*



## **Facing the censors**

An inside view of how censorship in Iran affects the work of literary translators

## *Back from the dead*

Charting the revival of Manx, six years after it was declared extinct

## *Getting the message out*

The challenges faced by healthcare experts in multilingual communities

# The Linguist



## The Linguist

The Linguist, formerly The Incorporated Linguist, is the official journal of the Chartered Institute of Linguists.

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# Re-writing HISTORY

*Allison Brown outlines some of the key challenges and strategies for translating history texts*

Among the many specific challenges of translating history texts, especially given that I am not a professional historian, is that of understanding historical concepts and terminology, and rendering them appropriately in the vocabulary of the discourse familiar to English-speaking historians. Over more than 25 years of experience in translating history texts, I have built up extensive background knowledge and, just as importantly, honed my research skills in a wide range of historical fields.

Part of both the challenge and its solution is the internet. Fast DSL and wi-fi have revolutionised my work, relegating my dictionaries and encyclopedias to gathering dust on the bookshelves. Not only do online dictionaries and translation forums offer definitions and translations of each word, but relevant English web pages provide background information and further reading.

Invaluable, also, are primary and secondary sources with full-text search capability, which are available on the internet. This may have made my job easier, but expectations have grown along with the new capabilities. Prior

*While fact-checking is not the responsibility of the translator, it comes with immersing myself in the subject*

to the internet, I was not expected to submit translations with footnotes, bibliography and main text all completely formatted, and it was not assumed that I would find all English-language citations or identify English-language bibliographic references to replace their German counterparts.

I am currently translating *Die Franken* ('The Franks') by Bernhard Jussen. Published in German by C H Beck in its 'Wissen' series on scholarly topics for a general audience, it dispenses entirely with footnotes and a full bibliography. The English edition will be published by an American university press, so

EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE: *Some of the many books Allison has translated (above)*

source information will be inserted. Translating the multitude of quoted passages of German translations of medieval (Latin) texts, and adding footnotes listing the German sources, would not be appropriate, as a translation of a translation should be avoided (even if I were to reference the original text in the footnote). Since I have no Latin skills to translate them myself, I must instead locate published English translations from the original Latin.

Finding a source containing the specific passage of a cited text in English translation requires key internet research skills, plus a good dose of persistence and imagination to determine effectual search terms. For example, correspondence between kings and popes, or chronicles and annals cited in *Die Franken* in German translation were taken from the *Latin Codex Carolinus*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (MGH) and other sources. I was able to cite English translations of the Latin from volumes in Harvard University Press's renowned Loeb Classical Library, as



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well as from numerous secondary sources. In the course of the project, I learned which authors and works are respected by English-speaking medieval historians and scholars.

If a cited German work exists in English translation, or if the citation is from a German translation of an English original, the research is easier. Even so, finding the precise details, down to page numbers, for a proper citation and bibliography is time-consuming. And every new project means becoming familiar with a new subject area.

For the exhibition 'Between the Lines? The Press as an Instrument of Nazi Power' in the Topography of Terror Documentation Center in Berlin, even the translation of a Nazi newspaper excerpt required English source research, as it quoted (in German translation) a passage originally written in English:

A Stürmer *display case with a quotation by Jewish-English politician Benjamin Disraeli: 'Die Rassenfrage ist der Schlüssel zur Weltgeschichte' (Original: 'the principle of race ... is the key of history.'*)

The ellipsis was necessary since the actual wording of the original was: "No man will treat with indifference the principle of race. It is the key of history," which I found in Disraeli's novel *Endymion* (1880; London, Wildside, 2006, 180).

*'Crystal Night' might be retained in English texts whereas German scholars tend to avoid such euphemisms*

While doing internet research, I have always discovered at least a few errors in the text I am translating, whether a name is misspelled or source data is cited inaccurately. I often also find content errors. While fact-checking is not explicitly the responsibility of the translator, I think it comes part and parcel with immersing myself in the subject matter. Authors and publishers are always appreciative when mistakes are discovered, so my resulting questions generally increase their trust in and respect for my work.

DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Aside from these detailed research aspects, the translation of history texts also demands an understanding of different sensibilities and knowledge of history for different audiences.

SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

*A Jewish-owned printing business in Berlin, attacked during Kristallnacht, known in German as 'the November Pogrom of 1938'*

Regarding the Nazi regime, for example, German people's sense of moral and historical responsibility has affected the way they write about the period. To emphasise their dissociation from Nazi vocabulary, German authors usually put words such as 'Aryan' and 'Third Reich' in quotation marks, whereas English texts tend not to, using the terms as they were used at the time and not sensing a need to create an explicit distance. Similarly, *Kristallnacht*, or a direct translation as Crystal Night or Night of Broken Glass, might be retained in English texts, since it is recognisable as a historical term, whereas German scholars today tend to avoid such euphemisms, referring instead to the November Pogrom of 1938. Based on the context of the source text, a translator must decide which strategy, or combination, is best.

Since the background historical knowledge of English speakers often differs from that of Germans, especially regarding German history, an explanation is frequently necessary in order to convey the same information as the German original, since assumed or



Ein Stürmer-Kast  
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## RE-SOURCING:

*Catalogue for the 'Press as an Instrument of Nazi Power' exhibition at the Topography of Terror Foundation in Berlin*

implied knowledge must be made explicit. Such glosses do not actually add to the original, they simply compensate for gaps, raising English readers' knowledge to that of their German counterparts. There are various methods of doing this: retaining the German term along with a translation (with one or the other in parentheses); adding a parenthetical explanation; expanding the main text to include a brief explanation (possibly set within commas or dashes); or adding a footnote or glossary entry.

Unless it occurs within a direct quote, I usually prefer an expansion that does not interrupt the reading flow, rather than a parenthetical translator's note. Here is an example from a general readership book set in Nazi Germany: "the *Volkssturm*, a territorial militia of older men and young boys unsuited for regular military service". In the exhibition on the press in Nazi Germany, some terms could be glossed as an appositive or using parentheses: e.g. "Brownshirts, the Nazi storm troopers (SA)"; "'national comrades' (*Volksgenossen*)". Others, such as *Das Blaue Buch*, required a more extensive explanation:

*The popular author Erich Kästner (1899-1974) remained in Germany after 1933 even though he was banned from publishing his work. In his 'blue book' (Das Blaue Buch, his war diary published posthumously) he secretly made critical notes about everyday life in the Third Reich.*

Another option is to add a translator's note. When translating the memoirs of the now deceased German-Jewish mathematician Abraham Fraenkel, for instance, I was asked to elucidate even aspects that were unclear in the original German edition. The added footnotes required independent research:

*he... became a settler in the 'German egg village'\* of Ramot Hashavim.*

*Footnote: \*Ramot Hashavim was founded by German immigrants, largely academics without university positions and lacking agricultural skills, who thus started chicken farms.*

## TO TRANSLATE OR NOT?

Puns and wordplays are often lost in translation. Whereas novels can use a suitable alternative, in historical texts accuracy and detail are a priority, necessitating a gloss. Here the author Fraenkel provided an adequate parenthetical explanation for German readers; the footnote was added for an English-speaking audience:

*he said that contemporary Berlin philosophy needed to be eliminated 'mit Stumpf und Riehl'\* (Stumpf and Riehl were two philosophy professors at the University of Berlin).*

*Footnote: \*This is a pun on the German idiom: to eliminate something 'mit Stumpf und Stiel' (root and branch).*

Translating names of organisations can be problematic, as the name is often both a description (which would be translated) and a proper name (which could be retained). An organisation's website might use its preferred translation, but a web search can even reveal multiple 'official' translations, making it difficult to determine the most common or most appropriate name in English. Pitfalls can be avoided by also mentioning the German original or retaining the German acronym.

The translation of titles and names of rulers also depends on the type of text (academic vs. general), the target audience, and the publisher's preferences. For example, when would an emperor be called a *Kaiser*? When does Friedrich become Frederick? And which would you choose in what context: Karl der

Grosse, Charlemagne, Charles the Great, Charles I or King of the Franks; and Holy Roman Emperor or Imperator Romanorum?

The context and time period of the subject matter itself must also be considered. Place names often change with the geopolitical situation, so depending on the time period of a historical text, one must decide, for example, if German Lemberg should be kept or translated as Lwów (Polish), Lviv (Ukrainian) or Lvov (Russian). Also time- and context-dependent, the German *Bürger* can be burghers, bourgeois, members of the middle class, citizens or townspeople.

Particularly within a Nazi context, *Volk* and the attributive form *völkisch* take on semantics other than simply 'nation' or 'people', so they are sometimes rendered in English to denote the Nazis' intended ethnic or racial connotation as 'national community' (with quotation marks) or by retaining the German. Apparently minor differences can also have substantial implications. Thus, while *Gefängnis* and *Zuchthaus* are often both translated as 'prison', in some historical contexts the distinction that the *Zuchthaus* involves penal servitude or hard labour is significant.

All of these decisions demand the informed judgment of a translator, shaped in part by insights gleaned through research and immersion in the subject. Although I am neither a historian nor an expert in the field, I have the responsibility to speak in the author's voice, transporting the text to the target language. And the publisher needs me to offer a link back to the content and context of the source text. A translator thus does not only simply translate words, but acts as a linguistic mediator across history and cultures.



## Representing your interests

*Jane Galbraith looks back at her first months as Head of Membership and explains what's in store for the year ahead and beyond*

Over the next three years, my main focus is to drive up membership by actively seeking ways to encourage a wider range of linguists to join CIOL, in addition to ensuring that our current members continue to be well supported. We will undertake proactive campaigns to raise awareness of the Institute, explaining how membership supports professional development and provides valuable recognition within the profession. This means talking to employers and other stakeholders, and also targeting the linguists of the future. A range of member testimonials will be created to showcase our membership and to illustrate clearly who our members are, what sector of the language world they represent and how membership has benefitted them.

There are some exciting developments planned for our CPD programme. Working with the CPD Standards Office, we are looking at the feasibility of accrediting a number of external training providers. This will enable us to offer a wider range of CPD activities, including web-based opportunities. Members will be notified of the accredited providers and the courses they offer as they come on board, so watch this space. The portfolio of benefits will also be reviewed, so if you have any suggestions please email [membershipteam@ciol.org.uk](mailto:membershipteam@ciol.org.uk).

I am a strong believer in the power of the member network and have been to a number of events organised by the Interpreting, Translating, and Business, Professions and Government divisions. These provided a great opportunity to meet a range of members and to understand what being part of CIOL actually means. The team at Dunstan House will be looking at the viability of resurrecting the Education Division, so if this is something that you are interested in, please contact us. (For more information about the divisions and societies, see page 7.)

It's been a whirlwind six months. The first thing that struck me when I joined is just how dedicated the membership team – Jack Sellen, Paul Whitehouse, Soheila Dayani-Phillips and Julie Hobbs – is to supporting our members; and with nearly 400 new member applications each year, the team's working week is busy and diverse. My thanks to them for their continued support and hard work.

It looks like the next six months will be just as busy and enjoyable, with the Language Show, Members' Day, and a visit to Hong Kong and China planned, plus the chance to meet members through events run by our many societies. Most of all I am looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead, to representing your interests and to ensuring that membership of CIOL remains relevant and of value to you all.

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