

Theme 2

Translation, Transformation, Transposition: Processes of Transfer among Languages, Cultures, and Disciplines (Trans³)

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Translation, transformation, and transposition are terms that not only overlap without being synonymous but they also complement and complete each other because acts of translation and transposition bring about transformation. These intertwining relationships will define the work of this research collaborative. They designate processes of transfer among languages, discourses, genres, forms of knowledge, cultures, and media that collectively help shape and define such broad concepts as transnationality and globalism, but also interdisciplinary modes of communication as well as artistic and sensory forms of intermediality. Not least, they can crucially highlight the significance of textual form. Moving beyond the established parameters in translation theory that hover between loss and faithfulness, here the point of departure assumes that the transfer *process* is itself a gain: hybridization, mutual exchange, circulation, and bridging differences are transitive processes, and the quality of the process will occupy our attention more than the product or result. The group's work will seek a balance between theoretical and methodological issues on the one hand and self-reflexive analysis on the other to encourage a productive combination of deductive and inductive argumentation. Members of the research collaborative will bring to bear their experience and practice in translation and knowledge transfer, including: crossing language boundaries through translation from one language and/or culture to another (Silberman, Mani, Nyhart, Gross), the design of multilingual literary and cultural texts (Gross, Allen), interdiscursivity as knowledge moves from one domain to another (Nyhart, Klug, Vatan), and cross-media transposition and multi-media performance (Gross, Potter, Mani, Silberman, Allen).

CGES Theme 2 – called Trans³ for short – will cooperate with and build on the larger, UW campus Mellon-funded seminar that focuses on interarts processes of translation and transfer in the verbal, visual, and performing arts (art history, music, theater, film). Trans³ is more focused as it carves out an area of investigation in German studies to examine the transfer processes that occur at the peripheries and limits of our related disciplines, encouraging combinations of texts, materials, and media of a kind that is rarely nurtured or carried out in an individual department. Proposed areas of investigation include the following:

1) Channels and obstacles for cultural translation will be examined in Silberman's and Mani's renderings of texts by Bertolt Brecht into English and Hindi, and brought into proximity with Nyhart's analysis of the circulation of ideas about organismal part-whole relations among nineteenth-century German, Danish, Swiss, French, and British biologists. Gross's work on J.G. Herder, a seminal eighteenth-century theorist of cultural relationality and a major agent of intercultural transfer through his translations (Bible, Homer, Arabic and European poetry), provides historical and conceptual foundations.

2) Provisional and transnational identities ground Gross's analyses of literary texts by ambilingual contemporary writers such as Yoko Tawada (German/Japanese), Feridan Zaimoglu (German/Turkish), or Wladimir Kaminer (German/Russian) as well as artists working in multiple media such as Esther Dischereit and Dirk Huelstrunk; Allen's work on the construction of Danish modernity focuses on the mediating dimension of literary critic George Brandes, film star Asta Nielsen, and writer Ruth Berlau, all Danish nationals who spent long periods of time in Germany.

3) The discursive circulation of ideas describes Nyhart's work on the history of knowledge transfer across the disciplines of botany and zoology and more broadly to and from concepts of "the social organism," Vatan's interest in the integration of science into Flaubert's fiction and of experimental psychology into Musil's prose, as well as Klug's investigation into the (mis)applications of social science theories to policy-making that yield problematic results in the reality of legal jurisdiction.

4) Media transposition includes a range of approaches: translation from the verbal to the visual found in Gross's work on classical and contemporary ekphrasis or from word to music and vice versa in Potter's work on musical ekphrasis; Mani's tracking of the circulation of intellectual property in the move from print to digital media through the concept of "bibliomigrancy" within the context of world literature; and Silberman's and Allen's studies of adaptation and remakes in the cinema.