



Translating Berlin #10

The Cosy Corner

- 1. Starter activity: What do you know about Berlin?**
 - a) Name five facts about Berlin.
 - b) Name one cultural connection between Germany and the UK.
 - c) Name three English writers in the 1920s.
 - 2. Read the English text below about the Cosy Corner.**
 - a) Where was the Cosy Corner located?
 - b) Which role did the Cosy Corner play in the 1920s in Berlin?
 - c) Who used to meet there, and why?
 - 3. Present the Cosy Corner to your neighbour or group. Your presentation should contain the answers to 2a), b), and c).**
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The Cosy Corner was a shabby gay bar located in the working-class district of Kreuzberg, just around the corner from W. H. Auden's lodgings on Fürbingerstraße. Auden and Christopher Isherwood were regular customers, using it as a place to meet working-class men and boys. In *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), Isherwood fictionalised the Cosy Corner as the 'Alexander Casino'; and he revisited it many years later, in *Christopher and His Kind* (1976), as the site of his sexual initiation.

In Isherwood's self-mythology, the Cosy Corner became symbolic of the complete rejection of bourgeois morality that Berlin enabled him to achieve. This was not a commercialised venue that catered for queer-curious straight customers and tourists, like the Eldorado, but a truly decadent place. Isherwood introduced other English visitors to the Cosy Corner, including John Lehmann, who left a candid account of his visit in his erotic memoir, *In the Purely Pagan Sense* (1976).

While these English writers used the Cosy Corner imaginatively to escape their social privilege, the working-class men and boys who sold their bodies there for money must have had a very different experience of the place. Their voices have remained unrecorded. But it is important to remember that Weimar Berlin's internationally famous sex industry created exploitation as well as emancipation. Isherwood became aware of this problematic aspect of his narrative of sexual liberation in Berlin later in life, describing it as a 'colonial situation'. Stefano Evangelista.



John Lehmann

4. Who was John Lehmann? Scan the QR code to find out.

John Lehmann (1907–1987) was an influential writer and editor linked to the Bloomsbury Group. He visited Berlin in the early 1930s and immortalised his experience in his sexual memoir *In the Purely Pagan Sense* (1976).

Stefano Evangelista.



(Rudolph) John Frederick Lehmann; Beatrix Lehmann; Rosamond Nina Lehmann. Howard Coster, half-plate film negative, 1938. NPG x24885
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Translation Theory

5. Answer the following questions in pairs or in your group:

- a) Can you think of a German or English word or phrase that you cannot translate verbatim (exactly word for word) into the other language? What strategy would you use to translate it?
- b) Would you like to become a professional translator? Why or why not? What do you think would be the most interesting aspects of being a translator?

6. Read and discuss the text on translation theory.

- a) What is the difference between micro- and macro-level translation?
 - b) What is the difference between domestication and foreignisation?
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Translation theory often distinguishes between micro- and macro-level translation. The micro level refers mainly to the accurate translation of single words, terms, or shorter segments of a text from the source language into the target language. In this context, the emphasis is placed on linguistic accuracy. For the sake of precision, decisions on the micro level are often made independently.

The macro level, on the other hand, rather looks at a text in its entirety and takes into account not only linguistic accuracy, but also social and cultural aspects. For the sake of consistency, decisions on a macro level are often made for the entire text. How can local dialects be translated from one language into another? Should personal names be translated in such a way that their meaning can be understood in the target language? And how should certain cultural references be approached, especially those that foreign readers may not understand? All of these questions belong to macro-level translation.

Translation decisions, whether on the micro or macro level, can always be located between the poles of domestication and foreignisation. Domestication means not only translating a text, but also adapting its content to the culture of the target language. Foreignisation, on the other hand, means keeping a translation as close to the original as possible, both in terms of content and style.

Bloomsbury und Berlin

7. Read the German text 'Bloomsbury und Berlin':

- a) What was Bloomsbury group?
- b) What were the political views of the group?

8. Translate the text into English. Choose:

- a) Translate the text directly.
 - b) Rewrite the text in simpler German.
Next, translate your simpler version into English.
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Glossary

Beitrag (m.)	contribution
in Verbindung (f.) stehen	to be connected
Angehörige (m./f.)	here: member
Zirkel (m.)	here: circle, clique
Umgang (m.) pflegen	here: to handle something

Ein besonders wichtiger und anhaltender Beitrag kam von Schriftsteller*innen, die mit der Bloomsbury Group in Verbindung standen. Diese Gruppe hatte sich nach dem Stadtteil im Zentrum Londons benannt, in dem die Mehrzahl ihrer Mitglieder wohnte. Die Angehörigen dieses in Großbritannien ausgesprochen einflussreichen literarischen Zirkels waren politisch liberal und pflegten einen offenen Umgang mit Sexualität.

Stefano Evangelista, Gesa Stedman.

In the Purely Pagan Sense

9. Read the excerpt from Lehmann's memoir *In the Purely Pagan Sense* (1976) and highlight all the words you know how to translate already.

10. Translate the text into German. Choose:

- a) Translate the text directly.
- b) Rewrite the text in simpler English.

Next, translate your simpler version into German.

One of the first things William did to further my education, was to take me on a tour of the homosexual bars and night-clubs. We started with one of the most popular non-smart lokals, the 'Cosy Corner'. This lokal was a sensational experience for me, a kind of emotional earthquake, and I think William was right to throw me in at the deep end. Things unimagined by me in all my previous fantasies went on there. The place was filled with attractive boys of any age between sixteen and twenty-one, some fair and curly-haired, some dark and often blue-eyed, and nearly all dressed in extremely short *lederhosen* [...].

John Lehmann, 'In the Purely Pagan Sense', p. 44.

Glossary

to further	voranbringen
earthquake	Erdbeben (n.)
sensational	sensationell, beeindruckend
to throw sb. in at the deep end	jemanden ins kalte Wasser werfen
unimagined	ungeahnt

Plenary

11. Talk about your translation process.

- a) Did any difficulties or problems arise?
- b) Which translation strategies did you use ...
 - I. ... to translate from German into English?
 - II. ... to translate from English into German?