

## Translating Berlin #2

### Hotel Esplanade

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- 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 Hotel Esplanade.**
    - a) Where was the Hotel Esplanade located?
    - b) Which role did the Hotel play in the 1920s in Berlin?
    - c) Who used to meet there, and why?
  - 3. Present the Hotel Esplanade to your neighbour or group.**

Your presentation should contain the answers to 2a), b), and c).
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Hotel Esplanade Remains Under a Glass Cover, integrated into the Sony Centre. Photograph by Fred Romero, Paris, France, 2016. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin\\_-\\_Hotel\\_Esplanade\\_remains\\_in\\_Sony\\_Center.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin_-_Hotel_Esplanade_remains_in_Sony_Center.jpg) CCBY 2.0

The Hotel Esplanade on Bellevuestraße, where the Anglo-German couple Count and Countess Blücher spent part of the First World War, was only slightly smaller than the Adlon, with 400 rooms, and only very slightly cheaper. It was situated off Potsdamer Platz, within walking distance of the Tiergarten park. It was considered one of the leading hotels during the

1920s and '30s. Aristocratic visitors from all over the world, many of whom were not in favour of the newly established Weimar republic, were its most frequent visitors. Its neo-baroque and neo-rococo style was considered highly desirable when it was established between 1907 and 1908. Evelyn Blücher described the sumptuous rooms: 'the wide flight of steps leading up so gracefully into the brilliance of the dining-room [...]; the soft luminance falling from the crystal chandeliers on the rosy redness of silken curtains and screens – style of Louis XVI. – what an enchanting setting for those gay festivities of but a few short years ago!' Some of the remains of the hotel, which was bombed during the Second World War, have been integrated into the Sony Centre on Potsdamer Platz. The surviving Kaisersaal, a favourite location of Kaiser Wilhelm before he was forced to abdicate during the November Revolution in 1918, features in Wim Wenders' iconic Berlin film *Wings of Desire* (1987), as well as in Bob Fosse's film *Cabaret* (1972), based on the Berlin novels of Christopher Isherwood.

Gesa Stedman.



# Evelyn Blücher

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## 4. Who was Evelyn Blücher? Scan the QR code to find out.

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Evelyn, Countess, later Princess, Blücher (1876–1960), née Evelyn Stapleton-Bretherton, was an English aristocrat and catholic, married to the German Count Gebhard Blücher. She was exiled with her husband at the outbreak of World War I and wrote a famous diary about her war experience in Berlin and the revolution that immediately followed the war in November 1918.

Gesa Stedman.



Evelyn Blücher.

Photographic frontispiece of *An English Wife in Berlin* (1920), based on a photograph, c. 1896. Photographer unknown. Private collection

# Translation Theory

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## 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 / 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.

# Beobachterin hinter geschlossenen Fenstern

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## 7. Read the German text 'Beobachterin hinter geschlossenen Fenstern'.

- a) Why was Evelyn Blücher in Berlin?
- b) What did Evelyn Blücher experience in Berlin?

## 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

Ausbruch (m.)	outbreak
verfolgen	here: to observe
knapp	scarcely
entgehen	to escape, to evade
Verarmung (f.)	pauperisation
Verkleidung (f.)	disguise

Als die englische Katholikin Evelyn Fürstin Blücher 1914 kurz nach Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkriegs nach Berlin kam, verfolgte sie die dortigen Ereignisse zunächst aus dem Hotel Esplanade und später aus dem Palais Blücher nahe dem Pariser Platz. Weil ihr Ehemann Fürst Blücher Deutscher war, wurden sie gezwungen, London als sogenannte feindliche Ausländer zu verlassen und schafften es knapp, den Torpedoangriffen im Ärmelkanal zu entgehen. Von ihrem Fenster aus beobachtete Fürstin Blücher zunächst die mit dem Fortschreiten des Krieges zunehmende Verarmung der Berliner\*innen [...]. Wenn sie ausgehen wollte, konnte sie dies nur in einer Verkleidung oder in männlicher Begleitung tun. Gesa Stedman.

# An English Wife in Berlin

9. Read the excerpt from Blücher's memoir *An English Wife in Berlin* (1920) 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.

In the evening there is usually a large gathering of friends in the lounge of the Esplanade. We are an international collection of birds of passage, united by a common feeling of suspense and anxiety. There were Prince and Princess Wied, he expecting orders to go off any moment, and Prince and Princess Hohenlohe-Langenburg. Prince H. is leaving for the front tomorrow night. He is a cousin to King George, and looks and is English in every way. Prince Stolberg was also of our party besides Countess Seherr-Thoss and her parents.

Evelyn Blücher, 'An English Wife in Berlin', p. 1.

## Glossary

gathering	Versammlung (f.)
birds of passage	Zugvögel (Pl.)
united	vereint
anxiety	Angst (f.)
suspense	Spannung (f.), Ungewissheit (f.)
front	Front (f.)

## 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?