



Translating Berlin #5

Nollendorfstraße 17

- 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 Nollendorfstraße 17.**
 - a) Where was Nollendorfstraße 17 located?
 - b) Why was this address significant in the 1920s in Berlin?
 - c) Who used to live and meet there, and why?

 - 3. Present Nollendorfstraße 17 to your Neighbour or group.**

Your presentation should contain the answers to 2a), b), and c).
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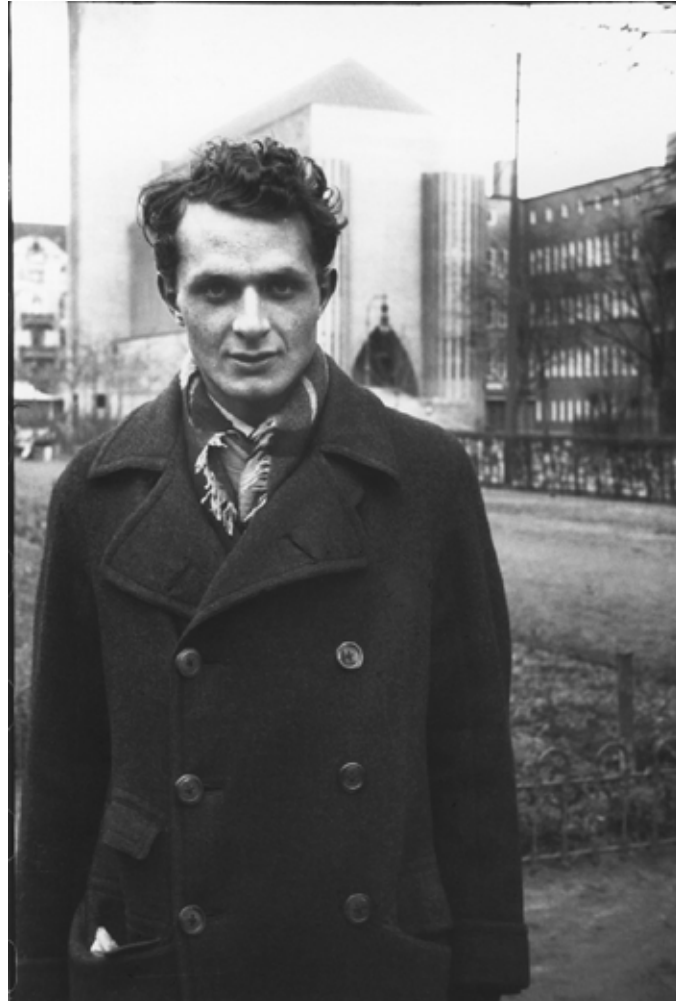
Today, an austere plaque outside Nollendorfstraße 17 in Berlin-Schöneberg commemorates Christopher Isherwood's residency in this building. Isherwood rented a room from a woman called Meta Thureau, whom he immortalised as Fräulein Schroeder in the Berlin stories. The organisation of Thureau's pension was typical of interwar Berlin, where many large apartments in formerly affluent bourgeois neighbourhoods were subdivided into rooms let out to different lodgers, who would share the kitchen and bathroom. In drawing his memorable Berlin characters, Isherwood was clearly inspired by the mixture of intimacy and detachment created by this social setup. With its bohemian and cosmopolitan atmosphere, Nollendorfstraße 17 was a meeting point for Isherwood's circle, including Gerald Hamilton, Jean Ross, Stephen Spender and his brother Humphrey, as well as Isherwood's Berlin lovers. In his autobiography *World Within World* (1951), Spender also left a vivid account of the place as a laboratory for Isherwood's novelistic imagination. The house on Nollendorfstraße escaped the worst of World War II bombings. Isherwood and Thureau were briefly reunited there in 1952, during the writer's only visit to post-war Berlin. Stefano Evangelista.



Stephen Spender

4. Who was Stephen Spender? Scan the QR code to find out.

In the early 1930s, Stephen Spender (1909–1995) spent long periods of time in Berlin, in the company of Christopher Isherwood. He wrote about the city in several poems and memoirs. Stefano Evangelista.



Stephen Spender.
Photograph by Humphrey Spender, 1934
© National Portrait Gallery, London

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 / 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.

Stephen Spender und Christopher Isherwood

7. Read the German text 'Stephen Spender und Christopher Isherwood':

- a) Choose three adjectives to describe the relationship between the two writers Spender and Isherwood. Explain your answer.
- b) How does Spender describe Isherwood?

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

sich niederlassen	to settle down
Anstellung (f.)	appointment, employment
maßgeblich	essential
zeugen von	to bear witness to sth.
Eifer (m.)	zeal
Impulsgeber (m.)	instigator

Im Jahr 1930 zog Spender von Hamburg nach Berlin. Isherwood, der sich fest in Berlin niedergelassen hatte, nachdem Auden im Juli 1929 für eine Anstellung als Lehrer nach England zurückgekehrt war, hatte maßgeblichen Einfluss auf seine Erlebnisse in der Stadt. Spenders Berichte über seine Berliner Zeit zwischen 1930 und 1933 in *Welt in der Welt* zeugen von einer symbiotischen Beziehung mit seinem älteren Freund [...]. Er bezeichnet Isherwood, der Armut und Elend mit fast schon enthusiastischem Eifer hinnahm und sich vollkommen von allen Konventionen oder Standards der institutionellen Anerkennung befreit hatte, als wichtigen Impulsgeber seiner persönlichen und künstlerischen Selbstverwirklichung. Sandra Mayer.

World Within World

9. Read the excerpt from Spender's autobiography *World Within World* (1951) 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.

Perhaps Bobbi the bar-tender would shoot fish-like through this central tank and escape into another room, or perhaps Sally Bowles would appear, her clothes dishevelled, her eyes large onyxes fringed by eyelashes like enamelled wire, in a face of carved ivory. Christopher lived in this apartment surrounded by the models for his creations, like one of those portraits of a writer by a bad painter, in which the writer is depicted mediating in his chair whilst the characters of his novels radiate round him under a glowing cloud of dirty varnish, not unlike the mote-laden lighting of Fräulein Thureau's apartment.

Stephen Spender, 'World Within World', p. 120.

Glossary

bartender	Barkeeper (m.)
dishevelled	unordentlich
onyx	Onyx (m.)
fringed	gefranst
ivory	Elfenbein (n.)
varnish	Lack (m.), Glasur (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?