

# Translating Berlin #14

## Ufa-Pavillon

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 Ufa-Pavillon.**
  - a) Where was the Ufa-Pavillon located?
  - b) Which role did the Ufa-Pavillon play in the 1920s in Berlin?
  - c) Who used to meet there, and why?
  
3. **Present the Ufa-Pavillon to your neighbour or group. Your presentation should contain the answers to 2a), b), and c).**



Ufa Pavillon on Nollendorfplatz. Photograph by Martin Höhlig, 1928  
© Fred Richter

In the interwar period Berlin became a world capital of cinema. It was home to Ufa, the production and distribution company famous for its collaborations with Fritz Lang and F. W. Murnau, and to the large film studios at Babelsberg. The Ufa-Pavillon am Nollendorfplatz was one of the glitzy new cinemas that sprang up around the city in the 1920s. Large and brightly lit with artificial light to advertise the latest films, these buildings left a characteristic mark on the urban landscape. The areas around Kurfürstendamm, Nollendorfplatz, and Potsdamerplatz were particularly known for their modern film theatres.

Berlin's thriving film culture formed part of the everyday life of the city. Many literary accounts of this period note the Berliners' passion for cinema-going and the massive presence of picture-houses. Christopher Isherwood loved film, and scattered references to cinema all throughout his writings. His friend Stephen Spender left an account of the two of them making long trips in order to visit the tiny cinemas hidden among the vast workers' tenements of the city's outlying districts. Alix Strachey also spent a lot of her free time in cinemas, but she seldom recorded what she saw in her letters. Watching films was an equally popular activity among short-term visitors. In 1929, Virginia Woolf, together with her sister Vanessa Bell, Vita Sackville-West and other Bloomsbury friends, went to see Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia*. The party disagreed bitterly over the film's portrayal of British imperialism. For British visitors, a special attraction of Berlin cinemas was to see Soviet films, which were subject to severe censorship in Britain. Bryher's experiences of Berlin cinema in the 1920s were instrumental to her introducing Eisenstein and Soviet cinema to Britain.

Stefano Evangelista.



# Bryher

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

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Bryher (born Annie Winifred Ellerman) (1894–1983) was a modernist writer and film pioneer who spent several periods in Berlin in the 1920s to be analysed by Hanns Sachs, and to engage with German and Soviet cinema. An account of her time in Berlin can be found in her memoir *The Heart to Artemis* (1963). Gesa Stedman.



Bryher by Gisèle Freund, 1930s © bpk/ Gisèle Freund

# 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 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.

# Die Kino im Berlin der Weimarer Republik

7. **Read the German text 'Das Kino im Berlin der Weimarer Republik':**
- a) Why did some British directors choose to move their filming to Berlin?
  - b) What are the main differences between Weimar and Hollywood film? Name at least two in your answer.
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.

## Glossary

Wirtschaftszweig (m.)	industry, economic branch
vorübergehend	temporary
Ausstattung (f.)	equipment, facilities
heimisch	domestic
verlegen	here: to move, to relocate

Die deutsche Filmindustrie war zu Beginn der Weimarer Zeit bereits ein etablierter Wirtschaftszweig. Mit einem vorübergehenden Verbot ausländischer Filmimporte sollten ab 1916 die unzähligen kleinen Filmunternehmen in Deutschland geschützt werden. [...] Wegen der besseren Ausstattung im Vergleich zu heimischen Studios verlegten nach 1923 zahlreiche britische Regisseure ihre Dreharbeiten an [...] deutsche Produktionsstätten. Bei der Ufa arbeiteten Filmteams unter der Leitung von Regisseuren. Hier stand vor allem die kreative Vision einzelner Regisseure im Mittelpunkt, während in Hollywood die Produzenten immer mehr Gewicht erhielten. Laura Marcus.

# Be the Kino

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9. Read Bryher's poem (1920s) and highlight all the words you know how to translate already.

10. Translate the poem into German. Choose:

a) Translate the poem directly.

b) Rewrite the poem as prose.

Next, translate your prose version into German.

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*If I say Berlin  
I do not see  
war, hunger or misery  
but all the sharp, white  
overreaching promise  
we call life.  
[...]  
Never be anchorage  
never be safety  
only be the kino.  
where the truant boy  
and the old knitting-cook  
watched shadows  
with carrots in her basket  
and a cabbage.  
And I between them knowing ...*

Bryher.

## Glossary

misery	Elend (n.)
overreaching	übersteigert, übertrieben
anchorage	Ankerplatz (m.)
truant boy	Schulschwänzer (m.)
to knit	stricken
basket	Korb (m.)

# Plenary

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## **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?
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