

METM23 Chronicles: Kate Sotejeff-Wilson & Kathryn O'Donoghue

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Language breakout: interactive translation session (DE-EN)

A highlight of METM23 in Mantua for me was the German-English snippet slam led by [Kate Sotejeff-Wilson](#) and [Kathryn O'Donoghue](#). Since there are fewer MET members working with German compared to Spanish, for instance, it was great to see our language combination included in the programme. Our group comprised around ten participants, including three Berliners. Most of us, but not all, had English as our first language. Kate and Kathryn divided us up into smaller groups of three or four to work on the carefully chosen snippets. These were challenging to translate, particularly when taken out of context, but were intended to prompt lively discussion, which they certainly did.



One snippet was the compound noun *Kinderfleischwurststreppe*, referring to a small stepladder for children to access a shop's meat counter (see photo). A creative translation for this with nice alliteration was "Kiddies' cold cut corner".

Another apposite example of alliterative translation was the phrase "The church doesn't cherish the childless" for "Wer die Welt nicht vermehrt, ist den Kirchhof nicht wert" (literally: Anyone who does not multiply is not worthy of the churchyard). This was from an early modern German source that Kate had translated: *Infertility in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Premodern Views on Childlessness*. A more modern translation suggested for this phrase was "Every sperm is sacred" (title of a [song](#) from the Monty Python film *The Meaning of Life*).

A longer excerpt was from the novel *Blutbuch* (Blood Book) by Kim de l'Horizon. The protagonist feels neither male nor female, leading one participant to express reservations about translating that book, because she did not identify as non-binary like the narrator. She likened it to the controversy surrounding the translation of Amanda Gorman's poetry into Dutch, after the publisher was criticised for choosing a writer who, unlike the poet herself, was not black. In response, Kate suggested that she could consult with someone who is non-binary. That seemed to me like a sound strategy. Particularly given the limited time available, some groups produced some very impressive literary translations for the book excerpt. It was also striking that different groups independently arrived at similar ideas for certain translations.



Another snippet, "Sterne können wir überall sehen, wenn Zuversicht im Herzen wohnt" (literally: We can see stars everywhere when confidence lives in the heart), also prompted some poetic translations, such as "The sky is full of stars when there's hope in your heart." This led to a discussion about whether substituting "hope" for "confidence" was moving too far from the original, but we concluded that a freer translation works well here.

The choice of texts that Kathryn and Kate prepared for this session was excellent and, as another participant said, the pace was perfect. It was also very efficiently run, with Kate putting our suggestions straight into a Google Doc, so we had immediate access to the results.

There were also two interactive editing sessions at the conference (one on education, one on medicine) and three other interactive translation sessions (IT-EN, ES-



EN and FR-EN) plus the translation slam, which was Italian into English this year. And at the general assembly there was a proposal to add PT-EN/EN-PT another year.

We all enjoyed the interactive sessions at this year's METM and this one was certainly fun as well as thought-provoking. I would love to participate in more of these in the future.

This METM23 session was chronicled by [Linda Jayne Turner](#). Chronicle edited by [Robin Finesilver](#).

Featured photo by METM23 photographer [Leonardo Rizzato](#); embedded photos by [Linda Jayne Turner](#) and [Kate Sotejeff-Wilson](#).