

**HOW
TO**

TRANSCREATE



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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

These three videos came about after we were successful in receiving support from ASSITEJ following their Call for Ideas in 2019. With oversight from a small team, we wrote the video scripts and were prepared for filming when COVID19 sent the world into turmoil. We've been fortunate to be in Western Australia and have managed to complete filming and editing despite the on-going health crisis.

Many thanks to our oversight team consisting of Barbara Connell, Sue Giles, Prof. Helene Jacomard and Cecilie Lundsholt.

Each of the 3 videos has a specific purpose.

Video One outlines the problem recent arrivals face in a new country, particularly if they want to continue their creative theatre practice.

Video Two outlines the process that has evolved between us as two playwrights and poets who share a common desire to build inclusivity and accessibility within children's theatre.

Video Three, will, we hope, inspire you to embark on your own transcreation partnership by highlighting our achievements.



Afeif Ismail and Vivienne Glance

COMMENTS OF AFEIF'S WORK

"Afeif's plays make a unique contribution to Australian theatre and challenge Western audiences' understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural artistic practice. Afeif's work cannot be pigeonholed as "African", although it sometimes employs African storytelling practice and takes an uncompromising position on African and international politics. His theatrical inspirations include the Absurdist theatre of Beckett and the political theatre of Augusto Boal and Berthold Brecht. His writing is dense with topical and historical references and always spiced with his wry humour that invites us to laugh at humanity and ourselves,"

We are working with a cross-cultural text and the challenge will be to retain its authentic African-Arabic voice while making it accessible to our audience.

Theatrically, the challenge is to create, with limited resources, the experience of an African village, including the landscape, a multitude of characters and unfamiliar cultural rituals. We want the experience to be both intriguing and accessible to our audience.

Jeremy Rice, Artistic Rationale, Artistic Director Barking Theatre Company WA (2006 - 2010).

Son of the Nile is a magical, hilarious and moving play set on the banks of the great River Nile in Sudan where the story is told by the River itself. Son of the Nile speaks of our contract with the earth, and of the importance of honour and trust, and keeping your word. ...Son of the Nile never becomes too heavy handed or moralistic; this play is simply a great helping of theatrical fun for all ages!

I have appreciated Afeif's work and his talent over many years, and have had the honour to work with him, teach him and learn from him.

Director, Son of the Nile, Dr. David Moody.

WHAT IS TRANSCREATION?

Transcreation is an essential element of our writing partnership. Together we've pioneered this cross-cultural creative process where a text in its original is transformed into a new rich, cohesive and poetic or dramatic work in the language of the migrant writer's new homeland. Transcreation encompasses more than language, and honors the social, cultural, mythical and humorous aspects of the original writing, and of the writer and their way of creating. Transcreation is distinct from translation in that it is always carried out in dialogue with the original creator of the writing throughout the process.

DEFINITION OF TRANSCREATION

Transcreation can be defined as an artistic reworking of a literal translation that aims to maintain the beauty and vibrancy of the original work. Transcreators attempt to re-create writing in another language that is accessible to a local contemporary audience. They pay attention to the cultural, linguistic and artistic nuances in the writing, to honour the original atmosphere and environment intended by the writer.

Transcreation requires time and conversation with the original creator of the work to ensure the accuracy of language and artistic intent or cultural references. It is an opportunity for recent migrants with a first language other than that of their new homeland, to maintain their artistic practice within a short time of arriving.

Through their transcreated work, artists have had an opportunity to interact and network with a wide range of international artists, publishers, producers, audiences and readers.

PRAXIS: THE CO-TRANSCREATOR'S COMMITMENT:

- **P**rofessional boundaries
- **R**espect for both parties' Knowledges and Experiences
- **A**rtists are committed to developing their practice
- **eX**change - supports Cross-culture Exchange and multiculturalism
- **I**ntegrity, openness and honesty
- **S**ensitivity to cultural diversity

BENEFITS OF DOING IT

Integration should not be a one-way street but should be two-way, and meet at the intersection where they can exchange political, humanitarian and social climates equally.

Forced migration has become a daily reality in our modern times due to dictatorial regimes, the downturn of economies, environmental destruction, or when skilled immigrants look for a better future for their families. The immigration system for refugees in Australia cares mostly about the parents as they expect them to have the resilience to somehow make a new life possible because they understand one fact from their survival experiences: the sea is behind you and the enemy is in front of you.

BENEFITS OF DOING IT CONT'D

Children and young people fall in-between the cracks. For this reason, Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) is a necessity. It can bridge the gap experienced by these young vulnerable souls in the diaspora who are torn between two identities, during that stage in their life when they are finding out who they are.

New arrivals to any country face a multitude of challenges, culturally, linguistically, and adapting to a new climate. To have a safety net they need special consideration for their general mental health, financial support and the recognition of their professional skills (such as a theatre maker or artist). This will help them continue a life that has been turned upside down, until they can become productive citizens in the new society.

TYA is not a place for rigid preaching and strict guidance but is an educational tool to encourage valuable and noble messages that most of human society can agree upon, like supporting one another, friendship, doing good deeds, and protecting the environment. TYA has its own ways to address the mindset of young people, and at the same time play a part in social change, combined with many other factors that will lead to a better future for humankind.

TYA is a medium for bridging the gap between cultures because it is conceived from universal ideas, rooted deep down in the history of humankind, from which has grown similar stories shared across all continents, that have been kept through the oral traditions of former civilisations. It has its own practice and rituals; a carnival that the adults and young people can enjoy together.

BENEFITS OF DOING IT CONT'D

When a playwright from another culture writes a play, celebrating his culture, it is a true bridge that shortens the distance between cultures. It enriches the new country he or she now belongs to, and at the same time maintains a sense of attachment to the culture that formed him or her. It draws ontological connections across several dimensions: the relationship between the past, the future and the present. To have a sense of belonging geographically to a place in the world where most of a person's character was grown and shaped, can make this person proud of their genetic heritage, language, rituals and cultural environment. It will bring about a sense of dignity, pride and belonging when experienced through the reception of making theatre.

Some countries pay a great deal of attention to the mental health of the first generation of forced immigrants. They follow a common saying, "When you treat the trunk, the branches will grow healthy". This is debatable in this case, because if the parents came from a harsh dictatorial regime that practiced imprisonment, torture and they witnessed horrific events, such as genocide and burned villages, then they will be suffering from the effects of trauma. It can take months or even years before they get the correct treatment and sometimes this may never happen. While they are struggling with the stigma around mental health they are not caring properly for their children.

TYA can support the fight against the stigma of poor mental health by helping the adults see themselves reflected in a more truthful mirror. I believe TYA delivers healthy, pleasurable messages and positive ideas that can be the cure for a debilitating nostalgia (as opposed to a productive nostalgia), one that can make you live in a shell of isolation and slow down the process of integration into a new society. Productive nostalgia, on the other hand, helps you celebrate the beauty of your culture within your new place or country, and TYA draws from this unlimited source of positive energy and spreads it throughout the two cultures.

BENEFITS OF DOING IT CONT'D

Refugees are not a curse but are a cosmic blessing, given to humanity through a complex situation that determines how power and wealth are distributed in the world that created this diaspora. TYA can contribute to the realisation of harmony between cultures only when politicians and decision-makers change their limited views that integration can only mean assimilation into the new culture for an immigrant. What TYA does best is to create opportunities to make the collective state of minds of a nation walk step by step towards their shared human identity.

by Afeif Ismail



Afeif with Andrew Denton at the Kit Denton Award

EXERCISES

VIDEO ONE

EXERCISE 1

As a transcreator, what advice and help can you offer a newly arrived writer to introduce them to the local writing community?

Review the resources available to a migrant writer to help find opportunities for access to and support within the writing community where you live. Local libraries may be able to help you with this research.

Are there community or government-funded resource centres that could advise you on contacting local writing groups?

Can you help organise local weekly or monthly readings by writers in public venues and invite newly arrived writers to them?

Are there any government grants or support schemes to assist multicultural writers with a different first language to their new homeland?

What personal contacts or networks do you have that would be able to provide the information you are looking for?

As a newly arrived migrant writer what are you hoping to achieve?

How would you like to continue writing in your new homeland?

What kind of writing do you do, and would you like to continue that writing, or look at different forms of writing?

Share your findings with your transcreation partner.

EXERCISES

VIDEO TWO

EXERCISE 2

Find a piece of writing you want to transcreate as an exercise. At this stage, keep it short (less than 100 words).

Example of an original text in Arabic:

"المكان قرية مجموعة من الاكواخ المتناثرة بلا نظام مسورة
بالأشواك، امام أحدها فناء بإحدى اركانه زريبة تعيش بها معزة
وحمار وديك".

"الديك: "غاضباً

لا يمكن ان يستمر هكذا لا بد يعود هذا الطفل المدلل إلى اوروبا
حيث جاء.

المعزة:

هو جاء من استراليا؟ وهى بلد وقارة

الديك:

لا يهم، كل تلك البلاد قريبة من بعضها البعض و تتشابه يغطيها
الجليد في ديسمبر، سكانها بيض، ويتحدثون الإنجليزية مثل هذا
الطفل المدلل الذي افسد على حياتي.

المعزة:

أولاً استراليا بعيدة جداً عن اوروبا، وسكانها الاصليون سود،
ويحدثون لغات كثيرة، وشتاءها لا يأت في ديسمبر وهو في الغالب
ممطر وليس به جليد، ثم أن الأوروبيين يتحدثون عدة لغات
كالفرنسية والألمانية، والبرتغالية والاسبانية و الروسية ...

الديك:

كيف تعرف كل هذه المعلومات؟

المعزة:

انت تقضى النهار كله في مطاردة الدجاجات، وانا استفيد من زمنى في
القراءة، وعندما تأتى منهكاً وتنام بعد غياب الشمس بقليل، انا استمع
الى صوت الراديو الذي يأتى من خلف حائط الجيران.

الديك:

ما علينا: "هذا الطفل المدلل لقد افسد علي حياتي على كل حال.

EXERCISES

Example of trancreated text

SCENE 1

Circular African mud huts, each with a straw roof, are scattered around. The village is surrounded with a high thorny fence. A pen containing various farm animals is seen, with its own low thorny fence.

Rooster is angry.

ROOSTER

It can't go on like this! This spoilt child must return to Europe where he came from.

GOAT

He came from Australia which is a country AND a continent.

ROOSTER

It doesn't matter. Those European countries are all near to each other and they all look the same, all white people look the same, you can't tell them apart. In December their land is covered with snow, and they speak English, just like this boy child who has made my life miserable!

GOAT

First – Australia is far away from Europe; second - her indigenous people are black and they speak many languages; third – their winter never comes in December, and when it comes it rains, and there is no snow. And finally, the Europeans speak many languages - French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Russian and –

ROOSTER

How do you know all this information?

GOAT

When you're running around all day after hens I make good use of my time and enjoy reading. And when you come back, at the end of the day and just after the sunsets and you sleep, I listen to the radio coming through the neighbour's fence.

ROOSTER

It doesn't matter, this boy child makes my life awful!

EXERCISES

Whenever the DONKEY speaks he stutters

DONKEY (*stuttering*)

Wh- what did h-he do to you?

ROOSTER

Since he came here I've lost my main job.

DONKEY

H- how?

ROOSTER

Since I was born, my mum taught me one thing, to sing with my beautiful voice just before sunrise and wake up all creatures. This spoilt boy child has brought with him a mysterious small device, blinking with light, that imitates voices, even mine! And it does so at the same time early in the morning.

[End of sample text]

THINGS TO NOTE

Locate a suitable translation dictionary, either a book or online resource.

Also locate a thesaurus in the original language and in the transcreated language

Make sure you have lots of paper and pens, for writing, drawing, taking notes etc.

Find a space where you can talk, and move around, if necessary.

Make a first translation of the writing. Do not focus too much on grammar or on finding exactly the right word, that comes later. This first translation is so you can share the subject and story of the writing.

If something is unclear, don't try to fix it straight away. This first stage can take as long as you need, but you will not end up with a perfect piece of writing.

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 3

This second look at the piece of writing is an opportunity to dig deeper into the use of language and the writer's intentions. You could use drawing, mime, storytelling, and conversation to try to gain a closer understanding of the intention of the writing.

If there is a word, phrase, activity or behaviour that is confusing, or that you are unfamiliar with, it may help to do some research. Use the internet, books, films and other cultural resources to help you both navigate these confusions and find clarity.

This phase of Transcreation is where the subtle conversations on meaning, culture and symbolism occur, and also where trust and understanding grow between co-transcreators. It is this unique and personal understanding and exchange that makes the story subtly different from a translation carried out in isolation.

If you can, take up any opportunities to share and engage with one another's cultures through community or family gatherings, watching films or plays from relevant cultures, or other research. This is a way to experience cultural exchange first-hand and bring that understanding to your co-transcreation partnership.

EXERCISE 4

Review the text and see if there are any words that would be better left in the original language or translated.



EXERCISE 5

Read the transcreation out aloud.

Notice where the language needs to be reviewed, such as where it sounds forced, or where grammar might need reviewing. This is an editing process to ensure the writing is the best it can be in its transcreated form.

It is important to ensure the original writer understands what the new translation means; that they are happy with how it 'sounds'; and that they have the final say on any further changes to the text.

EXERCISE 6

Research opportunities for writers to have readings of their work by professional performers.

If this is not possible, contact performers in your networks and ask them to help you. It would be great if the actors could also be from the diverse communities in your area

DEFINITION OF DOMESTICATION AND FOREIGNISATION

One aspect of creating a version of someone's play script in a new language is whether to keep the original word for something or to translate it to an equivalent word. In Translation Studies this is known as Foreignisation and Domestication of language.

'Domestication' can make the writing seem familiar, as if the text had been written directly in the transcreated language. It's seen as a way to 'smooth out' the audience's engagement with the work.

'Foreignisation', on the other hand, is seen as a way of opening up the audience to a new engagement with the work, by making it sound closer to the original, although it may at times not seem to be quite so 'natural-sounding' to them.

As theatre is a spoken form, and does not benefit from footnotes, domestication may be preferred. However, many times in our practice we use a blend of both domestication and foreignization within the same text. This is also something that can be discussed and revised during rehearsals to ensure that the best understanding of the words are achieved..

BIOGRAPHIES

Afeif's children plays, co-transcreated from Arabic with Vivienne Glance and produced, include '3 Seeds', " Circle of Return", "Son of the Nile and "The African Magician".

"The African Magician" was commissioned and produced by Barking Gecko Theatre Company in Western Australia, directed by Jeremy Rice, and nominated for an Australian Writers Guild award for Best Children's Play in 2011.

Afeif and Vivienne Glance were selected to workshop Playwright, for Afeif's children play "The Son of the Sun" Canberra Workshop 2008, in the same year Afeif was awarded the inaugural Australian National Playwrights' Conference (ANPC) Bursary. Afeif has published a number of collection of poetry co-transcreated with Vivienne Glance "Mum This World Lies to Us", and " Orphaned Birds."

Afeif's plays (in Arabic) have been produced in many cities, towns and villages in Sudan including Khartoum, from 1986 to 2000. These have included "The Race,, "The Merchant", "Starvation" and "The Centre of the Circle". Afeif published in Arabic six of Poetry Collection: "Traps and some Tracks" , "Bet of the Argil" , "A Passage to the Aroma of Invisibility", " It's your Bird" " There! Where the Storm sleeps without Cover", and "Afeif Ismail The Complete Poetry Collections". Also he published: extra " As the Light Sleeps in Distance" - Hybrid Genre Tales (Short story collection), "Conversation from Beyond the Ocean" (journal article), "The Fragrances of Absence" (Memorial Essay Collection).

Afeif Ismail was born in Sudan, is award-winning writer, and human-rights activist, arrived in Australia in 2003, exacts of his works have been translated into German, Spanish and Swedish.

BIOGRAPHIES

Dr Vivienne Glance has been working with Afeif Ismail Abdelrazig since 2004 co-transcreating his writing from Arabic to English. She was co-commissioned to work with Afeif on the script of *The African Magician* (Barking Gecko Theatre, nominated Australian Writers Guild Award 2010). Other work includes *The Son of the Sun* (Play-writing Australia's National Script Workshop, 2008), *Shrouds or the Dead* (WA Theatre Development Award, 2010), *Son of the Nile* (Nexus Theatre, Murdoch University, WA, 2012), *Unsuitable Hats* (Write Local Play Global, Kennedy Arts Centre, Washington DC, 2013), *Eu-reka!* (International Theater Festival Schaxpir, Austria, 2013), *3 Seeds* (Blue Room Theatre, 2014) and *Circles of Return* (Theatre 459, Perth, 2016).

Vivienne has significantly contributed co-transcreations to Afeif's poetry collection, *Orphaned Birds* and co-transcreated all the poems in the poetry collection, *Mum This World Lies to Us!*

Afeif and Vivienne have presented readings, talks and workshops on transcreation at various writers' festivals and other venues. They also co-wrote the following article: 'Transcreation and the Productive Artist.'

As a playwright and poet, Vivienne Glance's original works have been published and presented in Australia and internationally. She holds a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Western Australia where she is an Honorary Research Fellow. Her interests particularly lie at the intersection of science and art, and cultural diversity.



Afeif & Vivienne, 2019

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about ASSITEJ- International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People visit the ASSITEJ websites:

- <https://www.assitej-international.org/en/>
 - <https://www.assitej-international.org/fr/>
 - <https://www.assitej-international.org/es/>
 - <https://www.assitej-international.org/pt/>
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Afeif Ismail and Vivienne Glance. Proceedings of Synergise! Biennial National Conference of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators. Eds. Annamaria Arnall & Uldis Ozolins. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, pp. 41-46.

