

The AALITRA Review

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Special Issue

Enriching the Global Literary Canvas: Celebrating Less Translated Languages



The AALITRA Review

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The AALITRA Review

aims to publish high quality material concerned with literary translation, as well as translations of literary texts from other languages into English, or vice versa. It hopes to foster a community of literary translators and to be a forum for lively debate concerning issues related to the translation of literary texts. All submissions are subject to anonymous peer review.

We welcome submissions in the following areas:

- scholarly articles on aspects of literary translation (both fictional and non-fictional, practical and theoretical)
- original translations into English of literary texts accompanied by a critical introduction and commentary by the translator
- original translations of Australian literary texts into LOTE accompanied by a critical introduction and commentary by the translator
- interviews with established translators or Translation Studies scholars on aspects of their work
- book reviews of major Translation Studies publications
- book reviews of literary translations into English, or of Australian writing into other languages

We also welcome proposals for Special Issues.

Submissions, prepared according to the Guidelines for Contributors (available from our website), should be submitted via the journal website (both available through our website).

The Australian Association for Literary Translation (AALITRA)

is a national organization that promotes an interest in all aspects of literary translation. In addition to publishing *The AALITRA Review*, AALITRA sponsors public lectures and events on literary translation and holds periodic conferences with university bodies interested in the theory and practice of literary translation. We also distribute news of events, conferences and other initiatives relevant to translators. If you have an interest in literary translation, and especially world literature in translation, please consider joining the Association.

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Translating Ukrainian literature into English: The Australian-Ukrainian literary field 1949-1991

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Abstract

This paper will document the translation of Ukrainian writing into English as it was produced in Australia, within or in connection with the Ukrainian-Australian literary field. To do this it is necessary to account for three groups of texts: anthologies of Ukrainian-Australian writing; individual books by a sole Ukrainian-Australian author; and Ukrainian literature from outside of Australia, namely that of the diaspora and Soviet Ukraine. The time frame begins with the arrival of post-war Ukrainian refugees in 1949 and covers the period up to 1991, the year Ukraine achieved independence. The paper describes the products and processes of translation of Ukrainian writing into English in Australia, together with the institutional and infrastructural realities which faced Ukrainian writers as part of a minority non-English literary culture in Australia. Themes and subjects of the translated works reflected the experiences of Ukrainians as they endured dictatorship, Russification, war and eventual resettlement as refugees. This may be seen to reflect poignantly on the current situation in Ukraine. Hence there is reference to the war now being waged by Russia, as Ukrainians are again fighting for their lives and for the survival of their nation and culture.

Introduction

In 1949, the first of 21,000 Ukrainians began arriving on Australia's shores. They were part of a larger group of refugees from war-torn Europe, so-called 'Displaced Persons', who came to Australia under the auspices of United Nations International Refugee Organization resettlement and the Australian government's Displaced Persons Scheme. They immigrated in a single wave as persons displaced through the Second World War and Soviet occupation of their homeland.

Victims of both Nazi and Soviet occupation, the lives of the Displaced Persons had been marred by suffering and tragedy. Amongst them were prisoners of war, soldiers, homeless civilians, enforced labourers, political dissidents, and those who had been deported or evacuated or otherwise forced to escape. They had witnessed harrowing experiences and endured heartbreak. Collectively Ukrainians had experienced persecution, incarceration, starvation, together with other forms of State institutionalized murder at the hands of a totalitarian Communist regime. Even before the horrors of the Second World War and subsequent Nazi occupation, Ukraine, a captive nation within the Soviet Union, would suffer both the *Holodomor* genocide of the 1930s and years of sustained Communist repression, now known as the Great Terror.

On arrival in Australia, Ukrainians quickly formed a networked community and organized social and cultural institutions and infrastructure. They acquired property and built meeting halls, churches and schools, where they kept culture alive through dance troupes, choirs, theatrical societies, women's groups and youth associations. A lively literary life also flourished. Authors, many of whom had begun writing prior to arrival in Australia, wrote largely in their native Ukrainian language. They wrote across all genres, producing poetry,

prose, novels, plays, memoirs and essays in a wide range of subjects and styles. Literary texts were produced, distributed and consumed within the Ukrainian community and a distinct and dynamic literary culture evolved, comprising writers' associations and readers' clubs, recitals and festivals, competitions, and the production of periodicals and books. Plays and theatrical productions were staged. Poetry and prose were recited at community concerts and commemorations and published in community newspapers. A literary journal and several anthologies were published. Texts were also distributed and consumed within an international diaspora located in North and South America and western Europe. Eventually, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, connections would be made with an independent Ukraine.

Literary institutions and agencies related to each other in the form of a network can be called a literary field. The Ukrainian-Australian literary field comprised three parts. Firstly, agencies of production, such as authors, newspapers and periodicals, publishers, literary journals, writers' associations and a literary advocate. Secondly, institutions of distribution, including booksellers and libraries, and thirdly, agencies of reception, such as reading clubs, community events, and the institutions of literary criticism and literary education (see Mycak for a theoretical model explaining the relationship between literary institutions and agencies, positioned within the Ukrainian ethno-cultural community). The Ukrainian-Australian literary field was a self-contained system, which functioned without any reference to the mainstream Australian literary or cultural establishment. The network of literary institutions and agencies were positioned within the Ukrainian ethno-cultural community. The literary culture itself was conducted in Ukrainian. Only a very small amount of anglophone material, written originally in English, was ever produced.

Despite this self-sufficiency, there were occasional attempts to reach a wider audience through the translation of certain Ukrainian-language works. In this paper, I document the translation of Ukrainian writing into English as it was produced in Australia, within or in connection with the Ukrainian-Australian literary field. In order to chart these efforts to give Ukrainian literature visibility within an anglophone Australia, I will account for three groups of texts:¹ anthologies of Ukrainian-Australian writing; individual books by a sole Ukrainian-Australian author; and Ukrainian literature from outside of Australia, namely that of the diaspora and Soviet Ukraine. The time frame begins with the arrival of Ukrainian "Displaced Persons" in 1949 and covers the period up to 1991, this being the year Ukraine achieved independence.

Anthologies of Ukrainian-Australian writing

There were two anthologies of translated works, one of poetry and one of prose. These were substantial collections, containing works by several authors, noted within the Ukrainian-Australian literary scene.

The first of these was *Australia's Ukrainian Poets*, a collection of verse selected and translated by R.H. Morrison. The volume contained forty-four poems by fourteen poets, namely Lidiia Daleka, Volodymyr Bilaiiv, Iryna Narizhna, Vasyl' Onufrienko, Yevhen Zoze, Konstantyn Himmel'rejkh, Zoia Kohut, Ivan Smal'-Stotskyj, Pavlo Dubiv, Dmytro Chub, Klavdiia Roshka, Fedir Koval', Bozhenna Kovalenko and Tania Voloshka.²

Morrison explained that his selection was primarily based on the poets' literary reputation, ranging from internationally established authors to lesser-known poets, thus

¹ Titles and subtitles have been reproduced exactly as they appear in the original works, hence there is some inconsistency in capitalization.

² Transliteration of these names appeared in the book as Lydia Daleka, Wolodymyr Bilajiw, Iryna Narizna, Wasyl Onufrienko, Eugene Zoze, Konstantyn Himmelreich, Zoja Kohut, Ivan Smal-Stotsky, Pawlo Dubiw, Dmytro Chub, Claudia Roschka, Fedir Kowal, Bozenna Kowalenko and Tania Voloschka.

achieving a balance for the benefit of the Australian reader (2-3). Morrison also strove for a miscellany in subject matter, and while the verse imaged the longing of exile, it also went beyond the melancholy often associated with migrant reminiscence. Admitting that “such subjects will be found” among the poems he has translated, he readily assured the reader that “nostalgia is not enough, and there are other avenues of approach”. One such approach was satire. “Another is seen in the poets’ reflection of the new chapter of history which begins with the settlement of these thousands of Ukrainians in our [Australian] continent”. This was a reference to Australian content within the writing, to “poems dealing with Australian subjects, where for a time homesickness is set aside and the poet’s imagination responds to the stimulus of a new and vastly different country....” (2).

Looking more closely at the aspects Morrison described, one sees that the verse was marked by a quasi-Romanticism. Almost all the poems showed a focus on nature and a preoccupation with emotions, one’s inner life and individual experience. Titles of poems revealed the importance of the natural world, as landscapes and seasons, both in Australia and Ukraine, became part of the poetic vision: “On the Sea-shore” (by Lidiia Daleka), “The Chestnut Trees” (by Volodymyr Biliaiiv), “The wide and peaceful valleys” (by Vasyly Onufriienko), “Above the Waterfall” (by Yevhen Zoze), “Dew” (by Konstantyn Himmel’rejkh), and “Autumn Melodies” (by Dmytro Chub), to name just a few.

Nature positioned the poetic voice either in Ukraine (as in Dmytro Chub’s “Autumn is Over”) or in Australia (as in Iryna Narizhna’s “Letter from Australia”). Nature could portray the dichotomy of past and present, Ukraine and Australia, without deep lamentation, as the final verse of Daleka’s “The First Snow” shows: “Four years I’ve lived in warm strange places, and / quite happily....no bitter exclamation.../ but steppes are in my dreams, steppes of my native land, / and first snow’s cleansing and rejuvenation” (9). However, nature could also reflect the anguish felt by the emigre. The speaker of Onufriienko’s poem openly grieved: “Painful to love white winters, woods, and streams / From exile, when the heart that loves is aching”. Amidst nostalgic heartache, the poetic voice asked deeper existential questions: “To live, think, love – is this what exile brings, / Is this the lesson that a strange land teaches?” (23).

Existential questioning was most acute in verse by Zoia Kohut. In the poem “Beauty”, “hungering human souls” searched for loveliness in life (38). In a parallel poem titled “Melancholy”, even the “tedium” of existence was shallow: “Ah! deeply should one’s soul be drowned, / But round us here all’s ankle-deep...” (35). However, ultimate futility was voiced in Kohut’s poem “Do Not Ask...”, which opened with a strong statement: “Do not ask why you live, with what aim / Your soles trudge, while the miles mount behind them.../ Look around you, poor wretch: can you claim / Life has meanings and you have divined them?” (39).

Kohut was well-known not only for lyrical verse but for parodic and comic satire. Such poems also found their way into the anthology. “Political Emigration” commented on the Ukrainian community and a diaspora which is both “visionary and vain” (34), a trope she often addressed. Sarcasm, however, turned to outright anger in the poem “And Quiet Flows the Don...”, addressed not to her fellow Ukrainians but to a western world which ignores the plight of Ukraine and other captive nations within the USSR. Such countries, each with their own customs, history and languages, “...quietly exist. / In fear, in hope, / In hopeless waiting” but the world not only fails to come to their rescue, it refuses to recognize their specificity.

Whole nations!
 Whole countries,
 Which you call,
 In ignorance,
 Just ‘Russia’ you, light-heartedly,

In indolence and smugness,
Deny them even right of difference!.... As if we all were dead,
Already dead,
And never had existed” (32).

A vehement commitment to Ukraine figured elsewhere in the anthology in somewhat more conventional terms. Pavlo Dubiv gave a patriotic statement of belief in his poem aptly named “Credo”: “Here too, at work in far-flung emigration, / Our sweat poured out on foreign earth, / We must stay ever faithful to the nation / Which into this world gave us birth” (41). Bozhenna Kovalenko and Tania Voloshka constructed nostalgic first-person narration in the poems “I Love Her” and “My Ukraine”, respectively. The first poem opened with unequivocal sentiment: “I love her, the beloved land that bore me” (48); the second ended with finality but with a firm resolve: “Wandering on in many a foreign part; / But my Ukraine, my native land, lives on / As an eternal treasure in my heart” (50). Both poems described Ukraine’s picturesque beauty and the “Bright homeland where I spent my childhood days!” (Voloshka 50). Other poets referenced heartache and loss. While Onufriienko remembered a homeland where “...relatives and friends of yours were left behind...” (“The wide and peaceful valleys” 20), the most poignant expression of the pain of separation was found in Ivan Smal’-Stotskyj’s “Distance in the quicksands”, a poem informed by an agonising autobiographical reality. The “Biographical Notes” reported that the poet “Has suffered greatly through separation from his wife, son, and daughter, whom he has not been able to see for twenty-five years” (54).

Morrison, himself a poet and translator, who firmly believed in the worth of acknowledging poetry written by Australia’s immigrants, was conscious of the limitations of translation. He conceded that technical experimentation could not be fully reflected in the target text. Since the act of translation impedes a full appreciation of the literary text, readers would need “to go to the poems in their original Ukrainian” (Morrison 3).

Australia’s Ukrainian Poets was the ninth volume in the series “The Hawthorn Poets”, which had first appeared in 1970. The Hawthorne Press had been founded by Jack Gartner in 1936, a meticulous printer who was keen “to promote fine book publishing in Australia” (Denholm 28). Despite a significant amount of printing being outsourced within Asia, Gartner continued to publish wholly within Australia, commitment noted in the opening pages of *Australia’s Ukrainian Poets*. The Hawthorn Press played “a pioneering role in the publishing of works of Australian migrant poets” (Denholm 29).

Considering both the translator and publisher of *Australia’s Ukrainian Poets*, this volume achieved a mainstream cultural intervention into the Ukrainian-Australian literary field. Such an intervention was a rare occurrence; in the literary life of the Ukrainian-Australian community from its inception in 1949, there had been no systematic connections between the Ukrainian-Australian literary field and the Australian literary establishment. The opportunity to publish translated works within the “Hawthorn Poets” series offered a valuable moment of exposure to a wider audience outside of the Ukrainian community. The initiative by R. H. Morrison was met with support within the Australian-Ukrainian community, evidenced by a photograph that featured in the sixth volume of the literary journal *Novyj Obrij* [*The New Horizon*] showing a meeting of authors with Morrison which had occurred in December of 1973 (12).

Following the publication of *Australia’s Ukrainian Poets*, there was a modest absorption of Morrison into the Ukrainian-Australian literary field. One Ukrainian-Australian writer based in Adelaide, Yevhen Zoze, translated some of Morrison’s poetry into Ukrainian. Two such poems then appeared in the Ukrainian-language anthology, *Pivdennyj khrest: Zbirka poeziyi j prozy* [*The Southern Cross: a collection of poetry and prose*], published in that city

by the local Ukrainian-Australian literary association. In the same year (1980), both these poems together with another written by Morrison and translated by Zoze were published in the sixth volume of *The New Horizon*, edited by Dmytro Chub. More than a decade later, in 1993, Morrison's work again appeared in *The New Horizon*. One of the earlier poems, together with an additional poem translated by Zoze, were published in the ninth volume.

While *Australia's Ukrainian Poets* had largely been produced outside community parameters, the second anthology of translated works, *On the Fence: An Anthology of Ukrainian Prose in Australia*, was a product of the Ukrainian-Australian literary field. Compiled ("Assembled") by author and indefatigable literary advocate, Dmytro Nytchenko (under his pen name Dmytro Chub), the texts were translated by Yuriy Tkach, transliterated as Yuri Tkach or Yuri Tkacz, a much younger literary activist who was unwavering in his commitment to the translation of Ukrainian literature into English. The collection of twenty-five "mainly fictional works" (8) comprised short stories and excerpts from longer works, some previously published, others appearing in print for the first time. For most of the contributors, this was "the first time their work is appearing in English" (8).

On the Fence was published in 1985 in Melbourne under the imprint of Nytchenko's own publishing house, Lastivka Press. While the volume wholly originated from within the Ukrainian-Australian literary field, there had been an infrastructural intervention by way of funding from the Literature Board of the Australia Council, in the form of \$1,000 for translating and \$800 for advertising. While Yuriy Tkach placed no especial importance on these moneys, Nytchenko saw the funding to be instrumental.

Chub felt he had created a volume which was representative of Ukrainian-Australian literature in its entirety, saying "This anthology is a selection of mainly fictional works which reflect the whole diapason of Ukrainian literary creativity in this country" (*On the Fence* 8). Such positioning of *On the Fence* in the context of Ukrainian-Australian writing as a whole was evident throughout Chub's introduction, which was titled "Ukrainian Publishing in Australia" and focused as much on the history and background of Ukrainian-Australian literary activity in general as it did on the individual volume itself. The back-cover of the volume describes the contents thus: *On the Fence* presents the works of twenty-five Ukrainian authors who migrated to Australia in the late 1940s. Their stories tell of the difficult life back in the old country or their experiences in this strange new homeland.

On the Fence contained twenty-five works by twenty-five writers. Several portrayed life in Ukraine prior to emigration. Especially harrowing were narratives which recounted Soviet terror and tyranny, particularly in the context of de-kulakization of the 1920s and the Holodomor genocide of the 1930s. "Nightmare Years" by Nadia Petrenko told of both through a child protagonist's desperate struggle for survival. Klavdiia Fol'ts³ also wrote about the Holodomor, the death by starvation of at least seven million Ukrainians through a famine artificially created by the Stalinist regime, in her autobiographical piece named simply "1933". "Son of a Kulak" by Kuz'ma Kazdoba⁴ was an excerpt from a book of substantial length (367 pages), *The Drifted Road*, published both in Australia and Germany in 1974. In this autobiographical work, Kazdoba documented de-kulakization and the incarceration, deportation and elimination of the peasant class during Soviet collectivization. "Farmsteads Aflame" by Ivan Stots'kyj⁵ described the brutal murder of a kulak family who are locked in their modest farmhouse by "drunk devilish figures" (131) and burnt alive. An excerpt from Serhij Domazar's autobiographical novel *Castle on the Voday* was set in an earlier Soviet era, during the Bolshevik revolution, which far from any promised freedom brought rapists and

³ Transliterated in the book as Klava Folts.

⁴ Transliterated in the book as Kuzma Kazdoba.

⁵ Transliterated in the book as Ivan Stotsky.

murderers into the ordinary lives of Ukrainians. Volodymyr Rusal's'kyj's⁶ "The Idiot" presented two Soviet citizens of Ukraine who are deadened and detached from human emotion, having lived through "...the first years of the revolution", a time when "there were no philosophies in existence" and "those who were simply suspect" were executed "without discrimination" or found themselves in the infamous "...cellars of Kiev's Lukianivska Prison, or off to the concentration camps of Kolyma" (119-20).

Whilst Soviet dictatorship determined the lives of Ukrainians, their lived experience under Nazi occupation also featured in Ukrainian-Australian life-writing and appeared in the anthology of translated prose. "In the Whirlpool of Combat" was an excerpt from a novel of the same name which had been published in 1971 in London, England by the Ukrainian Youth Association. This autobiographical work was by Yuriy Borets',⁷ a veteran who was known for recounting the activity of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in its struggle against both Soviet and Nazi occupation. "The Young Judas" by Liuba Kutsenko gave one account of the horrific Nazi extermination of Ukrainian Jews, describing young "Miriam's capture by the Germans" and the condemnation of this act by her Ukrainian neighbours and friends, who had tried to protect her because "...she was like one of us. She lived among us" (61). The experience of the Second World War in broader terms underpinned two short stories in the collection. Vadym Zhuk's "The Power of Beauty" described an unusual encounter during the evacuation of Kyiv on 19 September 1941. "From the Other World" by Yaroslav Lishchynskyj⁸ was set in a prisoner-of-war camp and tells a story within a story, with the narrator re-telling an anecdote once told to him by a fellow inmate.

Nostalgia and sentimentality did not feature heavily, with only two stories eliciting a wistful sense of longing. The protagonist in Bohdan Podolanko's⁹ short story reminisced about "a wonderful land where I spent several years of my carefree youth" (110) but as the title states, he referred not to Ukraine but to "My Bulgaria" in childhood memories of border crossings from western Ukraine. A more conventional nostalgia was imaged in Fedir Mykolaienko's¹⁰ "A Letter From the Past". Here "old panoramas emerged from the mists of the past..." as the protagonist remembers south-east Ukraine, recalling its "ancient" woodland with "fresh air, forest fragrances" and "bird's song", and the "clean healing waters" of "the playful Donets River bearing myriads of pearls borrowed from the sun in its apron of blue" (95-6).

The anguish of exile which marked the lives of many Ukrainian refugees was poignantly portrayed by Zoia Kohut in "Christmas Eve". This was the story of Stepan Seliansky, a Displaced Person who is "separated from the world by his solitude" (57); he is isolated and unable to adapt to life in Australia having left behind a wife, child, home and happiness in Ukraine. Another tale of loneliness was told by Yevhen Haran in "The Twilight of This World", in which the narrator's relationship with his Australian wife is lifeless and detached. She is "politely indifferent" (43) to that which means the most to him, his "distant Fatherland and its tortured people" (42). This incompatibility of cultural perspectives brought the tale to a painful conclusion: "...I fathomed to the depths of my soul that there was no bottom to my solitude, and all around me there was only a puppet theatre. Australia" (44).

Another author, Opanas Brytva, provided a very different perspective on the post-war refugee experience in "They Liked Us From the Start". Here the journey to Australia and earliest days spent in migrant camps were recounted with satire. The mocking tone began with the travel by boat: "It was a famous ship, I recall: during the war it carried sheep, and after the

⁶ Transliterated in the book as Volodymyr Rusalsky.

⁷ Transliterated in the book as Yuriy Borets'.

⁸ Transliterated in the book as Yaroslav Lishchynsky.

⁹ Transliterated in the book as Bohdan Podolanko.

¹⁰ Transliterated in the book as Fedir Mykolayenko.

war it began transporting emigrants” (21). However, the harshest sarcasm described a “one-sided cultural exchange” whereby the immigrants perform their ethnicity for their host nation: “The minister for immigration had just arrived at the camp and they [Ukrainians] rushed out squat-dancing before him”. As Australian officials begin to come “nearly every week”, “we [Ukrainians] kept twisting and turning before them – dancing the *kozachok*, *metelytsia*, *shchupak*, *dribushechky*” (22). This literal and metaphorical “dance about in front of foreigners” (23) culminates when the representatives of the host nation fail to respect the performers’ cultural specificity. The Australian spectators, we were told,

all bellowed in unison: ‘Oh, good, very good! We like you Russian people very much, and your food too’. At this point our people very nearly became angry: ‘Excuse, but we no Russian, we Ukrainian, please not mix, because we not like this very much...’ The Australians... began to justify themselves: ‘Ah, what difference does it make: you’re in Australia now... What’s the difference?’ (22-3).

Brytva’s narrative was a feuilleton. This was a European mode of writing popular with Ukrainian readers; a short, light form of prose, designed for publication in a newspaper or magazine, usually drawing on parodic or satiric humour to make a polemical point. Other comic pieces in the collection were more conventional short stories, on disparate themes. Nevan Hrushets’kyj’s¹¹ “Look After Your Health” was an ironic tale of a Ukrainian immigrant who cares so excessively for his health that he deprives himself of virtually everything and becomes sickly. In “The Gift of Love”, Hryts’ko Volokyta¹² portrayed one character’s entrapment in gambling (despite his good intentions of donating to a charitable cause) and his very bad luck with “the [poker] machine with its eternally hungry muzzle, gleaming and full of promise...” (140). Ol’ha Lytvyn’s¹³ use of personification in describing one day in the life of a modest farming family culminated in a piece of clothing used by all members of the family, coming to life in “The Ballad of an Overcoat”.

“The Great Race” by Lesia Bohuslavets’¹⁴ was about the “momentous occasion” (13) when Australia won the America’s Cup yacht race. The narrator took great pride in “our yacht *Australia II*” (11) and an unexpected plot twist comes when Ukrainians help achieve victory on the “joyous day” (9). Bohuslavets’ was one of a number of contributors who painted scenes of Australian life through their texts. Dmytro Chub’s “An Unexpected Visitor”, based on the author’s personal experience, told of an occasion when immigrant workers in the Queensland cane fields were terrorized by a deadly snake. This was something of an adventure tale, with suspense created as “Panic-stricken, we saw the giant python crawling towards us, head raised” (26). Other narratives were set in the Australian bush but with a more impressionistic aim. Stepan Radion’s “The Strange Boss” presented a tableau of eccentric characters from post-war Australia, as a group of labourers are caught up in an alcohol-fuelled argument over war experiences. In “Dingo Fence” by Andriy Liakhovych,¹⁵ “two ordinary men whose daily routine involved following the countless miles of a dingo fence through countryside” (73) experience a sense of social exclusion (mirroring that which immigrants might have faced) when they attempt to attend the “Cook Bi-Centenary Celebration Dance” (76) in the local community hall but are not offered entry by those seemingly more refined. The protagonists in Radion’s and Liakhovych’s narratives were Anglo-Australians who seem alienated from

¹¹ Transliterated in the book as Nevan Hrushetsky.

¹² Transliterated in the book as Hrytsko Volokyta.

¹³ Transliterated in the book as Olha Lytvyn.

¹⁴ Transliterated in the book as Lesia Bohuslavets.

¹⁵ Transliterated in the book as Andriy Liakhovych.

themselves and others, unlike the main character in Pylyp Vakulenko's "Rain", a Ukrainian immigrant who is strongly connected to his Australian rural setting by way of having run his own small farm for some ten years. His attachment to his land and livestock is profound, his friendship with his neighbours is deep; both are viewed through the prism of a drought which has meant "All around everything was dry, scorched..." (136). This connectedness is palpable in the final words of the narrative, when rain finally falls, and there are "...tears of joy mixed with water rolling down his face, falling in warm drops onto his wet clothes, his windburnt chest, onto the thirsty, cracked Australian earth..." (137).

These short stories signalled an attempt to negotiate the Australian landscape but other Ukrainian-Australian authors sought to also comprehend Australia's location in terms of its position in the Southern hemisphere, notably its proximity to the Pacific Islands. One such author was Ivanna Sirko, a nurse married to a medical doctor who had been stationed in New Guinea. She published two books, a novel and a collection of stories, based on her experience of living there for seventeen years. The anthology featured one of her stories, titled "The Promise". Sirko's works were originally written in Czech and translated into Ukrainian, after which they were published in Melbourne and Adelaide by Nytchenko's publishing house, Lastivka. *On the Fence* contained one story further translated into English.

The anthology of translated prose contained one work of historical fiction, "Hetman Rozumovsky" by Mykola Lazors'kyj.¹⁶ This was an excerpt from a novel with the slightly longer title, *Het'man Kyrylo Rozumovs'kyj*, about the last hetman, a leader who sought to build the Kozak Hetmanate into an independent state and under whose guidance the Hetman state achieved a measure of autonomy (*Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*).

Lazors'kyj's work was amongst the "...fine novels set in Ukraine's historical past" (7) to which Chub referred in his introduction to *On the Fence* and bespoke the important connections between Australian-Ukrainian writers and diasporic literary networks. This aspect of Ukrainian-Australian literary production was something Chub highlighted, saying "It should be said that in spite of the small number of Ukrainians (over 35,000) scattered throughout Australia, they have made a great impact on Ukrainian émigré literature in [the] diaspora" (8). Chub also positioned this and other Ukrainian-Australian literary endeavours alongside the political reality of then Soviet Ukraine. Referencing the repression of cultures and languages and Russification within the USSR, Chub pointed out that Ukrainian literary and cultural activity was thriving in Australia at the same time as "...in Ukraine itself the Ukrainian language, the education system and the publishing programs are being progressively curtailed by Moscow to the advantage of the Russian language and culture" (7). With this, Ukrainian-Australian literary production was not only a community practice but a politicized activity of cultural specificity and determination.

Individual books by a sole author

The second category of translations were individual books by a sole author. Here there are six authors to take into consideration, five of whom each had one publication, resulting in two novels, two novellas (in one book) and one collection of poetry (by two authors). In chronological terms, two of the books appeared in print earlier in the literary life of Ukrainian-Australians and two much later, in 1990, one year prior to Ukraine's independence.

In 1971 *Castle on the Voday: A novel* by Serhij Domazar was published in Sydney. This was an autobiographical tale about the author's childhood and youth during the years of Bolshevik revolution and war in Ukraine, 1917 – 1921 (Nytchenko 661). The opening words of the novel positioned the narrative in historical terms: "My vague and brief acquaintance with

¹⁶ Transliterated in the book as Mykola Lazorsky.

the revolutionary Russian navy took place a long way from salt water in my native town in 1919. It was also my first encounter with the Soviet power” (5). The opening also made clear that the plot would develop in the context of the Ukrainian national liberation movement. The protagonist describes encountering the Russian sailors thus: “We were much restrained with those foreigners and were rather afraid of them. Only three weeks ago they arrived at our town following the Red troops, a detachment of the huge army set into motion by the Russian Soviet Republic in order to subjugate afresh our Ukraine, thus breaking treacherously the solemn pacts and diplomatic recognitions signed not yet a whole year ago. The memory was still fresh and frightening in people’s minds of the first Russian attempt to crush the Ukrainian People’s Republic in January of the previous year” (5).

Also autobiographical was the novel *In the Whirlpool of Combat: A Novel of Our Times* by Yuriy Borets’, published in 1974. The original Ukrainian-language version, which had been published three years earlier in the largest print run enjoyed by any Ukrainian-Australian writer up until that time, with 5,500 copies, was described as an “unexpected appearance” as the author, who had been an officer in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, “with the skill of a fiction writer” described Ukrainian resistance against occupying forces in the territory of western Ukraine (Nytchenko 661). This narrative was also positioned historically; firstly, in terms of the author’s biography (the inside front cover stated “He belongs to that generation of Ukrainians which fought for the independence of Ukraine against Nazi Germany and Communist Russia during the Second World War”); and secondly in terms of the narrative itself (“This book is about real people and true, in historical sense, events which took place in the ‘40s of this century and which the author had experienced, for he himself had been a participant in them” [“Foreword” I. Krushelnysky]).¹⁷ In the Foreword, the reader was further told that translation had put the book “into the hands of the public at large” by which the author had not only contributed to “a general understanding of at least some of the problems which existed and still exist in Eastern Europe” but had performed his duty “to his comrades-in-arms who are still alive and those who lost their lives in defence of their mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, of their towns and villages, of their heritage and honour, in fact of their Ukrainian nation, as a whole” (Krushelnysky [no pagination]).

In 1990, two novellas by Vasyl’ Sokil, “Windows Facing Westward” and “A Night So Long: Recollections of an Elderly Dog”, were published together in one volume under the title *And then there was Glasnost*. Sokil’s life journey had taken a different path from that of other Ukrainian-Australian writers in that he had not been a post-war refugee but had exited the USSR in 1979, first immigrating to the United States then in 1986 to Australia. He had lived through the period of Ukrainian history from the first Russian revolution in 1905, through to the Bolshevik revolution and war in Ukraine, the Holodomor genocide and terror of Stalinist and later Soviet dictatorship. Although not autobiographical, the two prose works translated into English were informed by his lived experience and his having been “witness to most of the hardships” Ukrainians had had to bear: “The two novellas in this volume, though outwardly very different, have in common a deep preoccupation with the state of affairs in the Soviet Ukraine...” (Windle x). Sokil’s style was satirical and the subject matter “bleak and cheerless”, but it was undoubtedly of historical significance. The “Introduction” to the volume affirmed that whilst the prose works were short, Sokil had “...done much to illuminate part of the real history of a dark period...” (Windle xvii).

The second volume to appear in 1990 was a collection of verse titled *Australia, We Salute You: An Anthology of Poems*. The book was divided into two sections: thirty-seven

¹⁷ The historical context was heightened by inclusion of a “Prologue” which was a historical account titled “In the maelstrom of UPA’s struggle on the Syan” and a “Glossary of specific words, names and abbreviations” which was several pages in length.

poems written in English by Stefania Kovalyk; and forty-four poems written in Ukrainian by Ol'ha Terlets'ka but translated into English by Kovalyk. The poetry in this volume touched on many different topics; however, the reader was informed that "Especially poignant is the poetry about separation from the mother country..." (Foreword 3). This was indeed imaged in poems such as Terlets'ka's "The Grains of Soil" in which the narrator receives a letter from Ukraine after which "My heart became heavier and the ache much stronger" (29); and "I Feel so Sinful" which concludes by referencing a long history of struggle:

Ukraine, your sons were killed that you could life forever.
Your soil soaked with blood, from long times past.
But you won't give in to any enemy, not ever, never.
As for me, what can I do? To wait I must. (31)

While Ukraine remained "my dear but so faraway mother" (31) for Terlets'ka, the poetic project was nonetheless situated firmly in Australia, with poems such as "Oh Australia" expressing gratitude and heartfelt appreciation toward the second homeland, "my adopted mother" (37). Despite sharing similar aims and thematic concerns, these four books showed differences in publishing trajectories.

The role of the translator did not feature prominently or overtly in three of the texts. The translator of *In the Whirlpool of Combat* was not named. The reader was left to deduce that the translated book must have been the result of a collective effort in that the title page acknowledged the "Ukrainisches Institut für Bildungspolitik München e.V." as being responsible for the "English version" and held copyright over it, whilst in the Preface the translator was referred to in plural: "...this novel was first published in the Ukrainian language. It is generally accepted that in the process of translation every original work suffers something. The translators of this book managed to retain much of the spirit of the author's narrative in his native language..." (Krushelnysky [no pagination]). The translator of *Castle on the Voday* was not overtly named. From an acknowledgement on the dedication page, the reader was led to assume that the author himself had translated his novel, with assistance from native English speakers: "The author wishes to express his gratitude to Mr. Douglas Watson, who revised English in the last draft of this book, as well as to Mrs. Joyce Challis, for revision of the author's English in the first draft a few years earlier". Whilst Domazar's novel was the product of an author-translator, the translated poetry was the work of a co-author. The title page of *Australia We Salute You* stated simply "Poems by Olha Terlecka translated from the Ukrainian by Stefania Kowalyk". The latter did not comment upon the method of translation in the form of a Foreword or Preface, and from the biographical information provided, it appeared that Kovalyk translated only for her fellow poet.

The only text in which the translator had an obvious presence was *And then there was Glasnost*. His name – Kevin Windle – was on the cover of the book. The act of translation featured in the construction of the text by way of Windle's statements contained in the opening pages of the book. Formalities such as the transliteration of proper names and place names, and the inclusion of footnotes were addressed in his "Note on the Translation". Windle recognized those individuals who had supported and assisted him in the "Acknowledgements".¹⁸

Looking at these four books together, there were also discrepancies in the standing and reputation of the publishers. Most enigmatic was Zeta Press, which had published *Castle on the Voday*, and about which nothing is known today. The collection of poetry, *Australia We*

¹⁸ "It is a pleasure to record the translator's thanks to Mrs Halyna Koscharsky, of Macquarie University, Mrs Olga Odlyha, of Adelaide, and Dr Marko Pavlyshyn, of Monash University, for their interest and support for this project. All of them read a draft of the translation of *A Night So Long*, and offered valuable comments."

Salute You, was self-published and acknowledged as thus with the words “Proudly published in 1990 in Australia by the authors”. *In the Whirlpool of Combat* was published in a print run of 3,000 by the institution which had apparently translated it, the “Ukrainisches Institut für Bildungspolitik München e.V.”. However, the book was printed in London, England by the Ukrainian Publishers Limited, which had also printed the earlier Ukrainian-language version of the book. *And then there was Glasnost* was published in Canberra by The Leros Press. Phillip Grundy, the owner and operator, later described the beginnings of his publishing venture in the 1980s by way of a grant received from the Commonwealth Schools Commission, “...with enthusiastic support from the then Federal Minister for Education, Susan Ryan...” (32), to publish four bilingual books. In his words, “The Leros Press was on its way” (32). By 1996, he was able to report: “Since then we have published another seven bilingual volumes of poetry in a variety of languages, and one prose work in English only which consists of two novellas translated from Ukrainian” (33).

Grundy’s account featured in an article he wrote titled “Non-English Publishing in Australia”. Not referring solely to translated works, he outlined dynamics which were applicable to the Ukrainian-Australian literary field. He described the situation thus: “...the relevant linguistic communities were too small to offer a reasonable market. Occasional books were published but often at the author’s expense or with the help of friends and community groups, and they did not generally appear for sale in mainstream bookshops” (31). The inside front cover of *In the Whirlpool of Combat* described exactly this dynamic: “The publication of this long-awaited book has been made possible by the financial help of the author himself, the Ukrainian Cultural Club in Sydney and Rev. Father Shevtsiv from Lidcomb [sic]”.

Whilst not necessarily financial, institutional support by way of affiliation came from within the Ukrainian diaspora. Yuriy Borets’s publisher was a Ukrainian institute in Munich, Germany, while the original Ukrainian-language edition had been published by the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Youth Association in Brussels, Belgium. Two of the authors had a connection with the premier literary and scholarly journal of the diaspora, “the émigré monthly *Suchasnist*” (Windle), in which their original texts in Ukrainian had been published. Sokil’s *Taka dovha nich* was published in 1984 in numbers 1, 2 and 4 of *Suchasnist*, after which it appeared in book form and became the basis for Windle’s *A Night So Long*. *Vikna vykhodyat’ na zakhid* was published in *Suchasnist* in 1986 (in numbers 3, 4 and 5). This was the basis for Windle’s translation under the title *Windows Facing Westward*. Domazar’s original work had also featured in *Suchasnist*.

Considering individual books by a sole author translated into English, most prolific was Dmytro Nytchenko, publishing under his pen name Dmytro Chub. Five such works were authored by him. In 1980, his first book in English appeared, titled *So this is Australia: The Adventures of a Ukrainian Migrant in Australia*. This was a collection of fifteen short stories, perhaps better described as short prose works of life writing, considering the extent to which they drew on the author’s autobiographical experiences. Beginning with the journey to Australia, “Farewell Pompeii” outlined in detail the voyage by boat by which the author-narrator, together with fellow Ukrainians, travelled to Australia. The second story, “The Australian Bear”, described arrival and the first days spent in immigrant holding camps: “The night was dark and forbidding as the train carried us European refugees from Melbourne to the transit camp at Bonegilla” (Chub, *So this is Australia* 15). Subsequent stories illustrated the early years of settlement in Australia, describing practical aspects of everyday life. Work experiences featured prominently, for example “An Incident at Work” and “Snake Island” particularly when part of the “compulsory two year contract” (Chub, *So this is Australia* 26) under which post-war ‘displaced persons’ were required to accept employment in any job in any part of the country as determined by government agencies, a policy which induced cultural

shock and anguish due to family separation. The narratives also exemplified eventual adaptation to a new life. Several stories illustrated an attempt to negotiate the Australian landscape, particularly confrontations with native animals and reptiles, as seen in texts such as “In the Bush” and “A Nocturnal Encounter”. Despite the Australian setting and content, however, a political consciousness informed the narratives, as the opening words of the back-cover blurb showed: “They came in the early 1950s, migrants from Eastern Europe fleeing the terror of communism”. A commitment to national and cultural determination for Ukraine underpinned the storylines. In the short piece “Alla”, a school student feels compelled to correct her geography teacher, who has shown a map to the class but failed to recognize Ukraine, saying “‘Where you’ve just been pointing, from the Black Sea and north for a thousand miles, there is no Russia. It’s Ukraine. The area is inhabited by fifty million Ukrainians...and you’ve called it Russia’” (Chub, *So this is Australia* 76).

So this is Australia, arguably the most significant literary account of immigration and early experiences in Australia, also recounted interactions with indigenous peoples of Australia and Papua New Guinea. The next of Chub’s books to be translated into English was a travelogue titled *New Guinea Impressions: In the footsteps of Myklukho-Maklay*. Travel writing was a relatively popular form of life-writing within the Ukrainian-Australian literary field, and a number of writers dealt with Australia’s location within the Pacific. In 1976 Dmytro Nytchenko, together with fellow writer Pylyp Vakulenko, travelled to Papua New Guinea, fulfilling a long-held dream as they retraced Myklukho-Maklay’s journey, visiting the village in which he had lived, meeting descendants of those who had known him. Three publications resulted, one of which was Nytchenko’s Ukrainian-language account *Z novogvinejs’kykh vrazhen’: na slidakh Myklukhy-Maklaia* published in 1977 which later appeared in English as *New Guinea Impressions: (In the Footsteps of Myklukho-Maklay)* in 1981. Given the proportion of factual material presented, including photographs and a biography of Myklukho-Maklay, this book bordered on creative non-fiction.

Not surprisingly, experiences of the Second World War featured prominently in the work of Ukrainian-Australian writers. In 1958, Chub’s war memoirs were published in Munich under the title *V lisakh pid Viaz’moiu: Reportazh – spohady pro druhu svitovu vijnu [In the forests near Viazma: Memoirs about the Second World War]*. A second enlarged edition was published in Melbourne in 1983. In that same year, it appeared in English translation as *West of Moscow: (Memories of World War Two and German Prisoner-of-War Camps)*. The table of contents listed seventeen chapters, some of which were titled “Towards the Western Front”, “A New Assignment”, “The Retreat”, “An Attack From the Air”, “Gripped by Panic”, “An Anxious Night”, “In a Prisoner-of-War Camp” and “Amid the Ruins of Kharkiv”. A connection with Ukrainian writers and scholars elsewhere in the world was alluded to in the Australian text by way of a citation from *Books Abroad* (based at the University of Oklahoma).

The last two books by Chub which were translated into English were markedly different from the first three, which had been works of autobiography and life-writing. *How Moscow Russifies Ukraine* which appeared in 1983 in a print run of 1,000 and *Shevchenko the Man: The Intimate Life of a Poet* which was “Published simultaneously in Canada, USA and Australia” (front matter) in 1985.

The former was a translation of *Iak Moskva Rusyfikuiie Ukraïnu* published one year earlier than the English version in 1982. This was a short treatise, of fifty-two pages, about the history of the Ukrainian printed word in the context of how Ukrainian language and literature had for centuries been subjected to Russification.

Shevchenko the Man: The Intimate Life of a Poet was a much longer work, 159 pages in length. The original Ukrainian version, *Zhyvyj Shevchenko (Shevchenko v zhytti) [T. Shevchenko – The Man]*, had been published in 1963 in Melbourne and Munich by publishers

Dniprova Khvyliia. In the Foreword to the translation, Chub notes that the aim of the book is to give readers an insight into the private life of Taras Shevchenko. Titles of the twenty chapters showed that such personal issues would be addressed: “The Women in Shevchenko’s Life”, “Favourite Songs”, “Illness and Death”. Aside from this very human profile of Ukraine’s greatest literary figure, the scholarly purpose was reinforced by a citation from Dr Marko Pavlyshyn, of the Ukrainian Studies at Monash University, which featured on the back cover of the book.

The infrastructural realities so succinctly outlined by Grundy were also factors in the translations of Chub’s work. The author acknowledged the instrumental role benefactors had played in the production of *New Guinea Impressions* in the front matter of the book and support from Ukrainian-Australian community organizations was acknowledged in the opening pages of *How Moscow Russifies Ukraine*. The opening pages of *So this is Australia* showed that Chub acted as his own distributor, as potential readers were informed that “Copies of this book may be ordered direct from the author”.

Literary translator, Yuriy Tkach: literature of the diaspora and Soviet Ukraine

Although not always publicly acknowledged, all translations of Chub’s work into English had been undertaken by Yuriy Tkach, a literary translator and a publisher and distributor of books. His company, Bayda Books, played three distinct yet interconnected roles within the Ukrainian-Australian literary field.

Tkach began the work of literary translation in the early 1970s, motivated by the desire to bring Ukrainian literature into public view. His first venture was a magazine of which four issues were produced during 1975 and 1976 under the auspices of the Melbourne University Ukrainian Students Association (MUUSA), of which he was president. The aim of *Kiev Quarterly: Presenting Ukrainian Authors in English* was to present to the Australian public an inexpensive magazine containing the translated works of some of Ukraine’s most popular fiction writers.

Still under the imprimatur of the MUUSA, Tkach next published his first book-length project *Across the Bridge*, a collection of short stories by Anatoly Dimarov which appeared in 1977. No funding was forthcoming from the university; however, individual patrons offered \$20 upfront with the promise of future copies to that value, and Melbourne-based Ukrainian bookseller Vasyl’ Fokshan sponsored the publication to the amount of \$500. This was an interesting arrangement: Fokshan funded the print run at \$1500 and held the stock, Tkach purchased from him to on-sell to customers. All but 150 copies of the book were sold.

Tkach then embarked on a period of sustained work. He translated and published Igor Kaczurowsky’s *Because Deserters are Immortal*, the dramatic story of a young man caught up in the Second World War. This proved to be very popular and was serialized on Australia’s Radio Special Broadcasting Service. These institutional connections came about as a result of the book being favourably assessed in *The Age* and the *Australian*, with major review articles appearing in both newspapers. With this, Tkach’s work began receiving some mainstream visibility.

Kaczurowsky was an émigré writer living in Germany who was very prominent within the diaspora but soon Tkach turned his sights to the literary culture of Ukraine itself. He began to travel regularly to Ukraine (visiting in 1975, 1978, 1984 and 1988), meeting writers such as Dimarov in person. He became acquainted with Vasyl Shevchuk and translated and published his book *Blood Brothers: The adventures of two Cossacks on land, sea and under water*, a riveting tale of kozaks which, in the words of Tkach, “really took off”. It was a handsome volume which brought to life Ukraine’s adventurous past, and while it met with a good review in the Australian press, it became something of a cult book amongst Ukrainians in North

America. One of Tkach's friends, a book distributor from America who frequented all the regional Ukrainian cultural festivals to sell books, "couldn't supply them fast enough". In order to produce the book, Tkach had borrowed \$10,000 from his father, a loan he was able to pay back within a year. Proceeds from the book comfortably covered its costs, and as Tkach himself explained, the publication "made a reputation for me in Canada and America".

Because Deserters are Immortal was published in 1979 and *Blood Brothers* in 1980. Both were published under the imprint of Bayda Books, Tkach's own company which had come into being a few years before. His attempts at being published within the mainstream literary world had largely failed, with only one journal taking one short story to print. It was then he "... decided that I needed to become a publisher". Realising he had to form his own company in order to see his translations in print, in January of 1976 he registered the company Bayda Books as a sole trader.

Over the next two decades, Tkach went on to produce a substantial catalogue of both diaspora and Soviet Ukrainian literature translated into English. He translated and published the work of Soviet Ukrainian writers: *Behind the Curtain* by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych in 1980 and *Hard Times: A Collection of Satire and Humour* by Ostap Vyshnia in 1981. Mykola Ponedilok was a reputable writer who had emigrated to the United States after the war. Tkach translated his book of short stories and it was published under the title *Funny Tears*, through Svoboda Press in New York in 1982. In 1984, Tkach published his translation of *Apostle of Immortality*, the work of another Soviet Ukrainian writer, Oles Berdnyk. Two years later his translation of Borys Antonenko-Davydovych's *Duel* appeared under the imprint of Lastivka Press. In 1986 Tkach's translation of Ivan Bodnarchuk's *The Generations Will Come Together* was published in Toronto by a Ukrainian community organization, UCWA Slovo. The anthology of translated works *Before the Storm: Soviet Ukrainian Fiction of the 1920s* was published in the same year by Ardis Publishers in Ann Arbor, United States. In 1989, two works by two Soviet Ukrainian writers translated by Tkach appeared in print: Anatoly Dimarov's *In Stalin's Shadow* and Oles Honchar's *The Cathedral* (published in Philadelphia by the St Sophia Religious Association).

In Volume 8 of the Australian-Ukrainian literary journal *The New Horizon* published in 1988, Tkach's work was described thus:

Of the young writers, after the publication of several interesting adventurous tales, Yuri Tkacz has come forth as the leading translator, having already translated more than a dozen valuable works, in particular those of contemporary writers who live and write in Ukraine. As a translator, he is well recognised not only in Ukraine but in America and Canada, not to mention Australia (273-4).

Despite such praise and recognition, Tkach faced political pressures throughout his literary career. Dealing with Soviet Ukraine was for many years a contentious undertaking¹⁹ and some of the more ardent nationalists within the Ukrainian community suspected Tkach of having Communist sympathies. However, in Ukraine, authorities disapproved of him because he was not translating the Soviet authors whom they endorsed. Ironically, they deemed he had been sent to Ukraine by nationalists from the diaspora; Tkach has documents proving that the KGB saw him as an "ochen' opasnyj emissar OUN" which in Russian means "a very dangerous

¹⁹ Regarding Soviet Ukraine, Tkacz later explained his reasoning and the principle underlying his work writing on his FaceBook page "Ukrainian Literature in English" in 2016: "Yes, there was a lot of propaganda, and a lot of drivel, but there were some amazing writers such as Dimarov, Vasyl and Valeriy Shevchuk, Mushketyk, Hutsalo, Antonenko-Davydovych, to name but a few. And I felt the pearls needed to be picked out and shown off to the English-speaking public."

emissary of the Ukrainian nationalists”. During his 1984 visit, Tkach was detained and then deported from Ukraine. Soviet authorities came to his hotel to interview him, accompanied by a film crew. Excerpts from the filmed interview, together with a statement that he had spied for nationalists and was being deported, appeared on the evening news that night. At midnight he was escorted to the railway station, told he would never be able to enter the Soviet Union again, after which he travelled by train to Belgrade. A thirty-minute newsreel about him was later produced and shown in Soviet cinemas as a feature short before the main attraction.

Paradoxically, at one stage, both those of anti-Communist and pro-Communist political persuasions were convinced that Tkach was being funded by the other, on the grounds that publishing literature alone could in no way be profitable enough to live on. Despite such assumptions as to his motives, in actual fact, Tkach “tried to transcend politics”, his aim being to promote good quality literature. In the late 1970s, he was approached by Roman Kupchinsky, head of the organization “Prolog”, and the organization’s publishing arm *Suchasnist’*, and asked to smuggle dissident manuscripts across the border and relay information. Tkach declined, on the grounds that he did not believe in supporting literature for the sake of politics or nationalism alone.

At the time of writing, Ukraine is under attack, following a full-scale invasion by the Russian military as part of a war which began in 2014, when the Russian Federation annexed Crimea and Russian and Russian-proxy forces invaded and occupied parts of eastern Ukraine. Cities, towns and villages have been devastated. Using artillery, missiles and bombs, Russian forces have destroyed residential apartment buildings, hospitals, shopping malls, schools and universities, museums, agricultural and industrial infrastructure. Innocent civilians have been slaughtered by shelling or abducted, tortured and murdered on the ground. Many are buried in mass graves. Areas under Russian occupation are facing the Russification of civil society, which targets language, schooling and local government. Residents in occupied areas are incarcerated and indoctrinated in “filtration camps”. Millions are displaced and many have fled Ukraine to take refuge in neighbouring countries in what is a catastrophic humanitarian crisis and the most profound geopolitical crisis since the Second World War.

What Ukrainians are experiencing today is eerily similar to the experiences of war, dictatorship and genocide which had been lived by Ukrainians who immigrated to Australia after the Second World War as refugees fleeing the Soviet occupation of their homeland. Then, as today, literature became one means of psychological survival as Ukrainian immigrants wrote, documenting personal, social and historical realities through poetry and prose. Ukrainian refugees who settled in Australia after the Second World War drew strength from writing and publishing; the significance of literature in processing trauma and lived experience of war is manifest in Ukraine today.

In the current war with Russia, famous poets like Serhij Zhadan and singer-songwriters such as Sviatoslav Vakarchuk are travelling the country performing their verse, to soldiers in bunkers on the front, and to groups of civilians in bomb shelters. Soldiers are writing poems about their war experiences and posting them on-line on the internet. Civilians are writing poetry and prose works of life-writing to share their grief. Such literary texts abound on FaceBook groups and in social media. On 1 September, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recited poetry and quoted the names of poets Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukraiinka, Vasyl’ Stus, Vasyl’ Symonenko, Oles’ Honchar and Lina Kostenko in his regular daily address to the people of Ukraine. The occasion was Ukraine’s official Day of Learning, the day schools and universities re-open for the new academic year. However, Zelenskyy

broadened the function of literature by describing it as a foundation of Ukrainian cultural specificity upon which the Ukrainian population can draw to find resilience and resistance. He positioned literature as a creative source which will support and sustain the people of Ukraine.

From 1949 until 1991, a vibrant and dynamic Ukrainian literary culture developed in Australia, in which the vast majority of texts were written in Ukrainian. A small number were translated into English, within or in connection with the Ukrainian-Australian literary field, in an attempt to reach a wider audience. Chronicling the products and tracing the processes of translation of Ukrainian writing into English in Australia, one perceives themes and subjects which reflected the experiences of Ukrainians as they endured war and dictatorship and eventual resettlement as refugees, while witnessing institutional and infrastructural realities which faced Ukrainian writers as part of a minority non-English literary culture in Australia. The relevance of what Ukrainian translations in Australia showed may be heightened as it comes to reflect poignantly on today's war in Ukraine.

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Translating to Convert, Translating to Describe and Create: The Many Roles of translation in Mexico's Multilingual Landscape

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Abstract

Mexico's rich linguistic diversity, which includes sixty-eight indigenous languages in addition to Spanish, remains dramatically absent in the national literary and publishing fields, as most materials are only published in Spanish. The efforts to preserve and promote this diversity include the founding of public cultural and educational institutions and a few translation projects from and into these languages. Although most of these initiatives have been historically state driven, other players have also organized and implemented a myriad of projects involving the translation of political, educational, religious and literary materials. Drawing on a sociohistorical approach, this paper offers an overview of said translation initiatives to offer insight into the different roles played by translation and how it has been a key practice for the positioning of Mexican indigenous languages and literatures. Likewise, to highlight the tension derived from the competition at stake between the agents trying to position their languages in the national literary canon, I refer to the written and literary production in P'urhépecha which, unlike other more prestigious languages such as Nahuatl and Maya, has not benefited from a sustained effort of study, preservation, or diffusion.

Introduction

Translation has long been one of "the main consecrating practices" (Casanova 291) in the international literary field. However, some languages are less translated than others (Branchadell 8). As a result, the international publishing field is dominated by only a few languages (Heilbron 444-494) and literary traditions. Multilingual states also tend to exhibit a similar structure (García González 105-123). That is, a language, generally designated as official or national language will dominate translation¹ and publishing flows. This is the case of Mexico, a country where the official multilingualism has not permeated the different fields composing its social space, and Spanish is the language that dominates textual production and translation flows. Some of the reasons behind this are, for example, the lack of a comprehensive, long-term national project to address the country's multicultural and multilingual reality, the tardiness with which public policies have considered this reality, and the little social value placed on indigenous populations, their cultures, and languages. Nonetheless, intercultural contact and communication have required the implementation of linguistic policies to enhance the interaction and exchanges between the different communities. Over time, these policies have varied according to the "linguistic ideologies" (Snow 121) of the political, cultural and religious elites; for it was not until very recently that the indigenous communities, who were directly affected by these policies, began to voice their needs and demands. Translation has played key, yet varying, roles in these policies, as the languages, the type of texts and production and recipient agents have also changed in accordance with the

¹ This dominance applies to both intranlation, the importation of foreign texts via translation, and extranlation, the exportation of translated texts (Ganne and Minon 55-96).

objectives of said policies; confirming translation, as the practice that supports and enables the prosecution of political and religious projects and ideals, and, lately, the emergence and development of literature in the Mexican indigenous languages (Lepe Lira). Other factors (Sapiro 82), such as the small number of writers, editors and readers, as well as the fact that most of these languages have only recently adopted a textual system, necessary to access the national and international literary scene (Lefevre 76-89), have hindered the production and circulation of literary texts produced in these languages.²

Mexico's rich linguistic diversity, which in addition to Spanish includes sixty-eight indigenous languages, remains dramatically absent in the national publishing field (divided into two major sectors – the private and the public), as most books and reading materials are published only in Spanish. To date, there are no reports that offer a comprehensive account of the production, circulation, and marketing figures of both sectors. However, to illustrate the proportion of production between them, I refer to a survey conducted by the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ProChile), which indicates that out of a total production of 300 million copies, the public sector produced or distributed approximately 217 million (72.3%). Together these sectors produce and distribute most books. However, the public sector, via the Ministry of Public Education and other public organizations such as the National Institute of Indigenous Languages, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, is practically the only one involved in the publication of books written or translated to the Mexican indigenous languages. Among the reasons that could explain the relatively late emergence of literature written in these languages, one might consider its anonymous character as literature “is considered as a collective creation and it is disseminated via non-institutionalized mechanisms, i.e., via oral tradition from generation after generation – every time a story is narrated a variant takes place at the same time, the stories have different versions according to the narrators or the geographic origin” (Scheffler 7-8).

Following the main roles played by translation in the configuration and positioning of Mexican indigenous languages, the article is divided into four sections. The first section offers a brief panorama of the role that translation held during the colonial period (1521-1821), emphasising its subordination to religious and political ends. In this scenario, indigenous languages are the target rather than the source language, and the translation of literature from or into these languages is practically non-existent.³ The second section follows the trajectory of the projects that were implemented in Mexico to homogenize the population, both culturally and linguistically, and thus create a single Mestizo (mixed race) Nation. I argue that, in this period, translation was used to elicit data from the indigenous languages as they were considered as objects of anthropologic and linguistic concern. The third section follows the emergence of actors of the academic and cultural fields to illustrate the launch of the first literary projects translating and/or producing literature in these languages. By way of conclusion, the last section outlines recent addenda in Mexico's legal and educational

² There are no records documenting Mexico's editorial production in Spanish or in the indigenous languages. Therefore, the data for this article has been collected from catalogues and indexes of Biblioteca Nacional de México, Biblioteca Daniel Cosío Villegas of El Colegio de México, Enciclopedia Mexicana de las Letras, *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*, *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, *Índice Bibliográfico sobre tradición oral* (Scheffler), *Catálogo de obras escritas en lenguas indígenas o que tratan de ellas* (Ugarte), Biblioteca de la Universidad Michoacana, and Biblioteca Luis González of El Colegio de Michoacán. Unless otherwise stated, I have translated to English the Spanish and French references used in this article.

³ During the first stages of the Christianization, the friars translated to indigenous languages biblical excerpts such as the Nativity and the Last Judgement, which were represented by the natives (Vázquez). This Missionary theatre, however, did not have literary or entertaining purposes (Vázquez). Linguistic and other scientific texts constitute the only instances where indigenous languages are the source language.

frameworks to emphasize the significance of translation for indigenous language writers and speakers.

In order to exemplify the changing roles of translation, in this article I offer examples of the texts whose source or target is P'urhépecha, the main indigenous Mexican language of the state of Michoacán whose number of speakers ranges between 150,000 and 120,000. P'urhépecha, along with other languages such as Nahuatl and Mayan, has records dating back to colonial times and, more recently, it has been used as a source and target language of both literary and non-literary texts. P'urhépecha has been the subject of studies of a linguistic or historical nature; however, little attention has been paid to translation. This article therefore sets out to explore a vein that has been little explored. With this purpose, in each section, I will refer to instances that illustrate the relationship between P'urhépecha and translation in order to highlight the importance of this practice for the gradual positioning of P'urhépecha as a literary language.

Translating to convert

Diversity has been a defining feature of Mexico's linguistic landscape. Before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors and missionary groups, scholars estimate that there were 200 indigenous languages (Castro et al.). Centuries of ideologies privileging Spanish as the national and literary language have significantly diminished the number of these indigenous languages and its speakers. Nowadays, there are eleven linguistic families, sixty-eight indigenous languages, and 364 linguistic variants (INALI, *Catálogo* 10). The total number of speakers, of at least one of these languages, is approximately 7,364,645 people, which represents 6.14% of the Mexican population (INEGI).⁴ With a number of speakers ranging between twenty (Lancandon) and 161 (Papago) to 1,544,968 (Nahuatl) and 776,306 (Mayan) (INALI, *México* 21-25), these languages face varying degrees of risk of extinction. Although at the present time there are governmental actions directed to their preservation, languages such as Nahuatl and Mayan have received more attention historically. P'urhépecha is the main indigenous language of the Mexican state of Michoacán. From the early texts documenting P'urhépecha up to the present day, there has been an oscillation between designating the language and its speakers as P'urhépecha or Tarascan. In this paper I have opted to use P'urhépecha as is the currently accepted designation amongst the academic and indigenous communities (González 17). Currently, its number of speakers ranges from 120,000 (INEGI) to 150,000 (Lafaro), as such, it does not face an immediate risk of extinction. However, like most indigenous communities in Mexico, the P'urhépecha have experienced political neglect, social rejection and have struggled to preserve their culture and their language via literary expression, "as it is through literature, that the continuity of culture is guaranteed, both from one generation to the next" (Aguilar quoted in Hernández-Vargas).

During the colonial period, the linguistic diversity of the new territories was considered as an obstacle for conquest, exploitation, and evangelization (Castro et al.); as well as for the so-called civilization aim of said processes. The imposition of one language, Castilian, and one religion, Catholicism, were considered as key for the consolidation of the Spanish Crown in the new territories. Yet, the political and social particularities of the New Spain, and those derived from the difficulties and misunderstandings of daily coexistence between the Spaniards and the local indigenous population led to a wide range of linguistic policies. Such policies included "from the prohibition of the indigenous populations to speak their own language, to the prohibition of them to learn Spanish" (Cuarón 689). Before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Aztecs dominated most populations inhabiting the Mesoamerican region. Nahuatl was the

⁴ At the onset of the nineteenth century, 26% of the Mexican population spoke an indigenous language.

lingua franca of the Aztec empire, composed of thirteen different linguistic families.⁵ The political and cultural power of the imperial language was thus preserved and used by the Spanish conquistadors to deal with the linguistic diversity of New Spain, and “to facilitate [its] civil and religious administration” (Cuarón 692). However, as Castilian was thought to be the only language via which Evangelization was possible, the Spanish Crown went through great lengths to educate the new populations.⁶

The imposition of a single language was also aimed at securing political stability (Cuarón 691-692). This single language linguistic policy proved to be difficult to apply and, after a few years, most Indians remained attached to their languages and beliefs.⁷ The friars then opted to learn the local languages to convert the Indians; by so doing, they also secured maintaining “their role as mediator[s] between the government and the Indians” (La Rosa 10) and the control on their education and spiritual conversion.⁸ To this end, they produced religious materials, glossaries and other texts relating to the grammars of indigenous Mexican languages to enable the evangelization of the new colonies. These texts were published in monolingual, bilingual or trilingual editions, and Castilian was the only source language: *Doctrina Cristiana Breve y Compendiosa por Vía de Diálogo entre un Maestro y un Discípulo, sacada en Lengua Castellana y Mexicana* written by the Dominican friar Domingo de la Anunciación and published in 1565 by Pedro Ocharte, and *Doctrina Cristiana Traducida de la Lengua Castellana en Lengua Zapoteca* written by the priest Francisco Pacheco de Silva and published in 1687 were the main type of texts circulating in translation at the time. However, according to Castro et al., they may not “correspond to what we considered as a translation nowadays: an original text does not always exist, and many of the texts were actually versions or adaptations of other texts”.

The first records of P’urhépecha date back to the sixteenth century (A. González 23-47). The first printed materials that document P’urhépecha date back to the sixteenth century when the Franciscan Friars produced the following texts about the vocabulary, ceremonies and political traditions: *Arte de la Lengua de Mechuacan* (Gilberti 1558), *Vocabulario en Lengua de Mechuacán* (Gilberti 1559), *Tesoro Spiritual en Lengua de Mechuacan, Diccionario Grande de la Lengua de Michoacán* (Unknown), *Relación de las Ceremonias y rictos y Población y Gobernación de los Indios de la Provincial de Mechuacan* (de Alcalá 1540), *Arte y Dictionario con otras Obras en Lengua Michuacana* (de Lagunas 1574). By 1570, there were more than eighty books describing the indigenous languages (Cuarón 693). The friars also translated doctrines, catechisms, and sermons.

The next significant changes occurred after the Mexican Independence from Spain in 1821, when the new political and cultural elites, mostly composed by Creoles, American born descendants of European born Spaniards (García-Martínez 56-111), and Mestizos, tried to impose Spanish as the official language (González and Maria 94) and to integrate the Indians

⁵ With thirteen families, the linguistic landscape of the Aztec empire was significantly more complex than that of the Spanish peninsula, where most languages except Basque derive from the Indo-European family (Cuarón 690-691).

⁶ Nonetheless, in the case of more established cultures, the arrival of the Spaniards had an imprint on their literary traditions and legacies. Most of the printed materials were burned as they were considered “as bearers of idolatrous beliefs” (Portilla xi).

⁷ Promulgated in 1512, the *Laws of Burgos* obliged “the *encomenderos* (concession holders) to teach the Indians to read and write” (Mignolo 196) and to Christianize them. With this purpose, they hired friars also referred to as *doctrineros*. However, the number of Indians at the *encomienda*, however, was too large for the friars to handle. Thus, they selected a few Amerindians with the hope that they would teach it to the other members of their communities.

⁸ In 1565, the Crown ordered that the missionaries were obliged “to know the language of the natives who lived in the territory to which they were sent” (La Rosa 11).

as citizens of the New Mexican state. Translation should no longer serve to gain new converts, but to create Mexican citizens. Consequently, the indigenous languages were circumscribed to the domestic spaces and were no longer perceived as a religious or political instrument. Instead, they were seen as obstacles to the recently constituted Mexican nation. Once again, the ruling elites considered that the Indians could only be civilized and lead into modernity if they learn Spanish. Nonetheless, “the different governments [...] disregarded the linguistic problems of the natives” (Cuarón 705), and no long-term plans were implemented. By the end of the century, the indigenous languages became the object of philological studies; and gradually, they were “disassociated from the catechisms and notebooks useful to Catholic preaching in its evangelising-translating mission” (Castro et al.). With regards to P’urhépecha, this scientific veneer is illustrated by the publication of texts such as *Onomatología del Estado de México*, published in Nahuatl, Otomi, Mazahua and P’urhépecha and *Toponimia Tarasco-Hispana-Nahoa* [Nahuatl], written by the philologist Cecilio Agustín Robelo in 1902. Ancient texts, such as *Arte de la Lengua Tarasca* (Basalanque, c1714, 1886) and *Diccionario de la Lengua Tarasca* (Gilberti c1559, 1891) were also reprinted, probably to study this language.

The Mexican revolution broke out in 1910, ending thirty years of relative political stability. This had been sustained by the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and laborers and peasants’ exploitation, as there was no legislation to protect the workers and agrarian properties were concentrated in a few individuals (Speckman-Guerra). The Revolutionary wars (1910-1920) involved the Mexican urban middle and lower classes as well as the indigenous communities. However, at the end of the armed conflict, the presence of indigenous languages and cultures were once again considered as an obstacle for national unity. Spanish was to be spoken for the members of the Mestizo nation and, “like the friars during the Spanish colonization”, teachers became the “missionaries of education” (De la Cruz 177).

Translating to describe, educate and convert [to Protestantism]

Trusting in the cohesive force of a single language, a national education program was created to teach Spanish language and literature. To implement the plan, institutions such as the Ministry of Public Education (1920), the Department of Indigenous Culture and Education (1923), Rural Teachers’ Schools, and Cultural Missions were founded. Under the direction of José Vasconcelos, the Ministry of Public Education also organized the first massive editorial production of literary and educational materials, which included several translations of European literary classics to Spanish. This was the SEP’s first massive production of free state books, publishing between 6,300 and 38,940 copies of each volume. The translation of the texts, which included *The Odyssey* and *Divine Comedy*, were done by Mexican and Spanish scholars (Hernández-Hernández 85-86). However, as the use of indigenous languages was prohibited in the schools (A. Guerrero Galván and L. R. Guerrero Galván 294), all the books were written and printed in Spanish, “the contents were reduced to basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills and especially to the learning of Spanish, without translating it into the students’ native languages” (Jiménez Naranjo).

During this period, a few magazines such as the *Journal of American Folklore* (1888), *Ethnos* (1920-1924) and the bilingual bimonthly *Mexican Folkways* (1925-1937), published a few traditional stories that, until then, had only been transmitted orally amongst the indigenous communities. For example, “Cuentos en mexicano de Milpa Alta D.F.” (1920), were collected by Franz Boas and translated to Spanish by the Mexican Philologist José María Arreola; and “Ten Folktales in Modern Nahuatl” (1924) by once again by Boas was written and translated to Spanish on the spot with the assistance of the Nahuatl informants. Both compilations were published in Nahuatl and English in *The American Folklore*. In addition, “Fábulas mexicanas” (1925) was translated from Nahuatl to Spanish and published in *Mexican Folkways*; and “Un

cuento griego en el folklore azteca” (1925) was published in Nahuatl with a summary in Spanish in the Mexican journal *Ethnos*. Most of these publications imply firstly, that indigenous literature is orally produced by individuals who are not “authors” but transmitters of a collective tradition; and secondly, that translation is a collective activity which involves the participation of both the informant and the surveyor. Another element that is also visible in what has been considered as the early stages of the Mexican indigenous written literary canon is that most stories have Nahuatl as the source language and Spanish as the target language.

In the coming years, the works of friar and philologist, Ángel María Garibay and the historian Miguel León Portilla, which recovered and translated ancient texts written in Nahuatl by indigenous descendants such as Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, Chimalpain and Ixtlixochitl, consolidated Nahuatl’s prestige as the literary language, and as a result, displaced the other indigenous languages. The translation of *Popol Vuh* (1950) by the Guatemalan historian, Adrián Recinos and the launch of the semestral journal *Estudios de Cultura Maya* (1961) played a similar role for Mayan. In any case, these texts and others that were produced in a similar fashion were still valued as objects of anthropological research rather than as literary expressions. In the following years, there was a slight variation in this perception as the linguistic interest in these languages grew stronger.

In the 1930s, a bilingual approach was gradually adopted to teach Spanish as well as other subjects to the indigenous communities (Jiménez Naranjo). This method required the linguistic description and study of the languages as well as the elaboration of vocabularies and textbooks to support the learning process. To contribute to the development of these materials, the Mexican government enlisted the services of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL).⁹ The Mexican government also expected that the contact with the Protestant missionary group would undermine the presence of the Catholic church within the indigenous communities, whose influence was perceived as backwards and opposed to social progress. However, SIL’s missionary linguists were more interested in learning the native languages in order to translate the Bible and other religious texts into these languages, and then to convert the locals to Protestantism (Pozas 434). To some extent, the first publications of SIL comply with the expectations of the Mexican government as they consist of linguistic descriptions or of materials to learn the Mexican indigenous languages, e.g., *Materials on Mayan languages of Mexico. Texts and dictionaries in Chol, Tojolabal and Tzotzil* (1939); *Mixteco de San Miguel el Grande* (1944); *Latin American Courtesy: A Guide in Manners for Americans South of the Rio Grande* (1944), co-edited with UNAM; and *Aztec (Golfo I)* (1945). The same applies to P’urhépecha, as the texts *Cartilla de bolsa* (1948) and *Máru uandánskuecha* (1948), a monolingual text co-edited with the SEP, also have similar contents.

A few years later, other Mexican institutions such as the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) (1939), the Escuela Nacional de Antropología (ENAH) (1942), Dirección General de Asuntos Indígenas (1946-1968), and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI)¹⁰ (1948) were founded to contribute to understand and find solutions to “the indigenous problem”,¹¹ thus nationalizing

⁹ On 22 March 1983, accused of spreading “foreign ideologies contrary to the national cultural identity” and “promoting division and clashes between the indigenous communities” (“Expulsado”), the Mexican president, Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), expelled the SIL from Mexico.

¹⁰ The INI followed the policy of “indigenismo” which was based on the belief the anthropological research and findings will facilitate the “acculturation” of the indigenous population. In this context, acculturation implied the voluntary adoption of Mexico’s Mestizo culture (Skrobot 50).

¹¹ After the independence from Spain, the new regime declared equality amongst all the citizens of the Mexican nation. This turned against the indigenous population as well as against other non-Mestizo or non-Creole groups

and institutionalizing “the indigenous sphere within the political and academic apparatus” (Jiménez Naranjo). These institutions released books and journals specialized in documenting oral sources and texts in the Mexican indigenous languages, such as *Cuentos indígenas* (González Casanova), *Tlalocan* (1943), and the book series “Investigaciones Lingüísticas” translated by linguists with the assistance of speakers of indigenous languages. The resulting texts were printed in the indigenous original language with a translation in Spanish, and sometimes in English. Including a Spanish translation, *Tlalocan* published “The Phantom Lover” (1945) in P’urhépecha and Nahuatl, which “were recorded by natives trained to write their own languages by the SEP in two distinct projects of native language education [...] Both compositions show the literary talents present in the native soul, which await only the means of expression” (Barlow 29). “The Phantom Lover”, translated to Spanish by the same P’urhépecha informant, José Ramos B., as “Cuento de Pascual Campos” is the first literary expression transcribed to P’urhépecha and translated into Spanish, and perhaps one of the first exercises of self-translation recorded for this language. However, there is no information available about the translator or the translation process. I can postulate that, in prior examples, the informant considers himself more as a transmitter than as an author.

In the 1950s, the Institute of Historic Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico hosted the first Seminar of Nahuatl Studies which conducted research and translation of Nahuatl rhetoric and poetics. However, the results of the seminar “are confined to the academic sphere and have not had the objective, at least not explicitly, of promoting indigenous literature or participating in its reception through literary translation” (Lepe Lira). Also founded by the Mexican historian and Nahuatl specialist, Miguel León Portilla, the journal of the seminar, *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* (1959) opened a space for the publication of new literary texts, referred to as “yancuic tlahtolli” (new word) that were translated by the author or by León Portilla himself.

Excepting the religious motivation of SIL’s work, most of the projects developed by the Mexican institutions predominantly had a linguistic, pedagogical, historical, or anthropological approach which, without a doubt, was visible in the documents and texts they produced. In any case, these institutions published a myriad of texts that were studied and/or translated to and from the national indigenous languages. For the first time, these languages were the source of translation. The launch of individual and collective literary projects coming mainly from the artistic and the academic fields further consolidated this position in the following decades.

Translating to write

The literary awakening in these languages could be considered as one of the most significant cultural events of the 1980s and 1990s. For the first time, bilingual texts and monolingual translated texts appeared in the pages of national newspapers and supplements such as the “Ojarasca”, “México indígena” (*La Jornada*), “Etnias”, “Cultura Norte”, “Cultura Sur”, “Tequio” (*El Universal*), and “Nuestra Palabra” (*El Nacional*), a supplement subsidized by the Mexican government to recognize and promote Mexico’s ethnic diversity. The supplement published mostly poetry which were self-translated by the authors.

The translation of literature became more frequent as writers and speakers in indigenous languages acquired training as translators in a more consistent specialized manner (Lepe Lira). Some of them participated in the book series “Cuadernos literarios” (1986-1988), translating key authors of the Mexican literature written in Spanish to indigenous languages. Published by INI, authors like Rosario Castellanos, Fernando Benítez, and Ricardo Pozas were translated

as equality was considered as synonymous of homogeneity: “all the Mexicans should have the same Western culture, speak the same language and practice the same catholic religion” (Skrobot 57).

and published in this collection. Six of Juan Rulfo's short stories compiled in *El Llano en llamas* (1967) were translated to and published only in P'urhépecha: "Nos han Intsingasikachi echeri [They have given us the land]" (1986), "Norti nirani [Paso del Norte]" (1986), "Jimbokachi kani komu jamasinga [We are so poor]" (1987), "¡Arhia eskajtsini no uandikuaka! [Please tell them not to kill me!]" (1987), "Nori kurhaauasini uichuechani ua ua arhini? [Can't you hear the dogs barkin?]" (1987), and "Anacletu Morones" (1987). Although some of the translators such as Romualdo E. Campos, Rosendo Estrada Rodríguez and Esdivel Lorenzo Molina translated most of the texts, little information has been found about them.

The defence of multiculturalism and intercultural education gained momentum in the early 1990s. In 1992, the Fourth Article of the Mexican Constitution was amended to give constitutional status to the "pluricultural composition of the Mexican nation", thus compromising the Mexican Law "to protect and promote the development of its languages, cultures, uses, customs, resources and specific forms of social organization" (Diario Oficial de la Nación). Introduced without considering the indigenous communities, this addendum did not meet their expectations (A. Guerrero Galván and L. R. Guerrero Galván 294-295). On 1 January 1994, the uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN, Spanish acronym) voiced the dissatisfaction of years of poverty, genocide, abuse, and neglect.¹² It followed a period of a tug of war between the political regime and the Zapatista insurgents. Despite having the support of the national and international opinion, their demands were not recognized until 2001, when the Second Article of the Constitution was modified to recognize the indigenous population rights; thus, the indigenous communities were given the right to self-determination. The monocultural national paradigm was progressively replaced by a multicultural one.

Political opening to multiculturalism was particularly favourable for the development of indigenous literature. In 1993, the government created the Programa de Lenguas y Literaturas Indígenas, which led to the publication of two bilingual series: "Letras Indígenas" and "Lenguas de México". Carlos Montemayor, Mexican writer, translator of indigenous languages and social activist, played a crucial role in the visibilization and the diversification of the indigenous languages and the authors that were translated and published in Spanish. In 1992, Montemayor published *Los escritores indígenas actuales I, II and III*. These bilingual volumes compiled narratives, poetry and theatre in thirteen languages: Nahuatl, Mayan, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Chontal from Tabasco, Isthmus Zapotec, Zapotec de la Sierra, Ñahñu, Totonaco, Huichol and P'urhépecha.¹³ Also in 1992, Diana, a non-governmental publishing house, co-edited twelve bilingual volumes in the series "Letras Indígenas Contemporáneas". The authors often present themselves as authors, bilingual writers and self-translators, while some of them "have stated the double effort involved in translating their texts or writing twice, since instead of one hundred pages they had to produce at least two hundred" (Lepe Lira). These texts are the first cases in which the indigenous people have ceased to be informants or transmitters of a text, in which its literary value is overshadowed by its consideration as a linguistic or anthropological object. These individuals now have the linguistic and literary resources to produce literary texts. In 1993, they created the Asociación Civil de Escritores en Lenguas Indígena (ELIAC) in Mexico City,¹⁴ and, in collaboration with the SEP, they created the Premio Netzahualcóyotl, the first national award recognizing literary

¹² In the international arena, the discussion on the linguistic rights of the indigenous communities of the world resulted in the approval of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights in June 1996.

¹³ These volumes were republished with an English translation in 2004 and 2005.

¹⁴ The Association gathered indigenous writers from all over the country and inhabited spaces to promote the dialogue, translate and publish literary magazines, books and other indigenous languages and Spanish.

authors in indigenous languages.¹⁵ In sum, these mechanisms have contributed to the emergence and positioning of indigenous writers and self-translators, as individual authors whose production is no longer necessarily anchored in a collective traditional experience.

These years were also particularly productive for literary production in P'urhépecha. In 1991, a short story contest that associated writers with institutions involved in the learning, preservation and diffusion of P'urhépecha, such as the Centro de Investigación P'urhépecha, the Instituto Michoacano de Cultura, the Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos, the radio station XEPUR of Cherán, the National Council for Culture and Arts via the General Direction of Popular Cultures, the newspaper *La Voz de Michoacán* (which has a bilingual section “Página P'urhépecha/P'urhépecha Jimbo” devoted to general and cultural information of the P'urhépecha community), received fifty-one texts, twenty-two of which were written in P'urhépecha. A further eleven were received in bilingual format, and eighteen in Spanish. The jury only selected the texts written in P'urhépecha or in bilingual format, as they were considered as “closer to the particularity of traditions, legends and characters” (Rojas 10). The winning short stories were compiled and published in the volume *Cuentos purépechas* (1994) in bilingual format.

Educating to translate: by way of conclusion

In 2003, the General Congress of Mexico passed the General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which recognizes and protects “the linguistic, individual and collective rights of the indigenous peoples and communities” and promoted “the use and development of indigenous languages” (Cámara de Diputados). More importantly, it designated Spanish and indigenous languages as national languages, and gave them equal validity in Mexico.¹⁶ Also in 2003, the General Law of Education was amended; and, in addition to acknowledging the multilinguistic landscape of the country, the addendum guaranteed the speakers of indigenous languages the “access to compulsory education in their own language and in Spanish” (Cámara de Diputados); and the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI) was created to support this new constitutional status by designing, recommending and implementing programmes and workshops to professionalize the legal translators and interpreters of indigenous languages. This institution has compiled a national census of these agents (INALI, “Padrón”) and it has been responsible for the translation of the Mexican Constitution to the national indigenous languages. The Constitution is now available in forty indigenous languages. However, INALI’s contribution to literary translation – along with other recently-created state institutions to support the development of indigenous populations – has been limited. It has only published a few works of children’s literature in bilingual and monolingual format. These include *minu xi kuatsura chichjána kui anima xi bantiya yajura/ Qué cosa dice mi tata. Seres que se transforman* [What is my grandfather saying? Beings that transform themselves] written by Filogonio Casimiro in Mazatec and Spanish (2013), *Laknawti tan Ch'intamakan Xanti, Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz/ Cuentos tepehuas de Pisaflores, Ixhuatlán de Madero Veracruz* [Tepehua shortstories of Pisaflores, Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz] written by Camerino Tesillos García in Tepehuan of the North and Spanish (2015); and *Tu'un ndatu'un ñi cha'ni* written in Mixtec by Hermenegildo F. López Castro (2011).

The changes in the national linguistic policies and the new institutions have continued to promote the development of literature written in indigenous languages. As such, the once highly localized and rather scattered efforts have progressively surpassed the boundaries of the

¹⁵ Mexico is the Latin American country that has created more awards as well as fora to recognize the literature created in these languages.

¹⁶ This however does not imply that these languages have the same political, social, or literary value; indigenous languages are considered to be “spoken by poor and uneducated people” (Skrobot 351).

indigenous, political, and academic communities, and have conquered other positions in the Mexican cultural field.

This panorama has illustrated the roles played by translation on the production of indigenous languages, identifying four main functions which have changed according to the objectives of the political, religious and cultural elites, but also depending on the own linguistic and cultural resources of the indigenous population. As they acquired the linguistic and translatorial competence in Spanish as the official and literary language in Mexico, the indigenous communities also appropriated and developed both the skills and materials to write their own languages, and by doing so, recover or create their literary expressions. This process also implied changes in the roles and positions available to the individuals and their languages: from the position of informants, which restricted their contribution to the oral transmission of collective traditions, they progressively were able to position themselves as writers and translators, with more agency in the source and the target texts.

Education, whether driven by the State or the Church, has been instrumental for all these processes. More recently, SEP's indigenous programs in early- and primary-level education include translation as a learning objective, and frequent practice is promoted for language acquisition. For example, the fourth learning objective for primary-level students is "to translate texts from their language into Spanish and vice versa, respecting the meaning and sense of the original text" (Secretaría de Educación Pública 32).¹⁷ As such, this opens the dialogue with a long-standing discussion in Translation Studies, but, most importantly, it incorporates translation in the personal trajectory of the speakers of indigenous languages, and in that, of potential future writers. To some extent, this imprint is already visible in the literary and non-literary productions studied in this article, thereby, it seems like the access to the Mexican literary canon will still forcibly be mediated by Spanish, as it has been configured as the main translation language of the indigenous literatures. Perhaps, in the next stage, the indigenous languages will be the translation language of other indigenous literatures; and all the Mexican written literature will also be available in the other Mexican languages.

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¹⁷ SEP has also continued its labour as book publisher and enabler, e.g., it has published the books series "Libros del Rincón. Bibliotecas Escolares y de Aula" and "Voces Nuevas de la Raíz Antigua" which contain bilingual fiction and educational texts (Cfr. Lepe Lira; Valckx).

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Translational habitus as a function of target language and culture: a contrastive analysis of the habitus of Hungarian-to-English and English-to-Hungarian literary translators

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Abstract

In this article, I compare some aspects of the habitus of literary translators working from Hungarian into English, and those translating from English into Hungarian. By analysing the identity talk of six established literary translators, I try to reconstruct how the habitus of translators working in different socio-cultural fields, and from a peripheral to the hyper-central language or vice versa, shapes their practice and their career as well as the end products: the target texts and their reception. I focus on four clusters of topics that appear to be salient in this respect: the background and work trajectory of the translators; their self-perception, especially their views on translators' submissiveness and on their own roles as literary translators; their attitudes to bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization; and their views on their own socio-economic situation and future prospects.

Introduction

The question I propose to examine in this article is the difference between the habitus of literary translators working from Hungarian into English, and those translating from English into Hungarian.

I have been working for many years with translators who belong to these two groups, and have noticed certain divergences in their self-perception and their practice.¹ For an article I published recently, I assembled a questionnaire for literary translators from Hungarian into English (Orzóy 96). The responses to this questionnaire showed that the differences were even more marked than I had thought, and that they required further examination.

In order to consider the reasons for these differences, I conducted interviews with translators working in both directions. I was particularly interested in certain issues that had emerged as potentially relevant in my previous research, including translators' attitude to the source text and its author; their attitude to editing and editors; their views on domestication and foreignization; and their perception of their own role. When choosing to focus on these issues in the interviews, my hypothesis was that certain differences were due to socio-cultural factors rather than mere personal differences and were related to whether the translator worked from a peripheral into the hyper-central language, or vice versa.

In the last two decades there has been a shift from Translation Studies to "translator studies", as part of the so called "sociological turn" in this field that highlighted the social context of translation (Chesterman, "Name" and "Questions"; Wolf, "Sociology"). Translation Studies scholars have been giving greater consideration to the networks, institutions and agents of the translation process. Bourdieu's theory of social fields is one of the sociological theories that has been widely applied to Translation (and translator) Studies, with research on translators

¹ I have worked with translators as an editor, and I also used to work as a literary translator from English into Hungarian, as well as a (non-literary) translator from Hungarian into English.

often focusing on the Bourdieusian concept of habitus (e.g., Gouanvic; Simeoni; Vorderobermeier). Although this concept has a number of definitions, by Bourdieu and others, it remains a largely heuristic tool used in fieldwork to conceptualize translators' agency (Gouanvic 30). In this article, I use this concept as an interpretive framework, without delving into its theoretical complexities.

Habitus, as outlined by Bourdieu, is the sum of dispositions, patterns and norms acquired in various social contexts; an informal, practical default operation of the individual.² Primary habitus is acquired in childhood, whereas professional habitus is a function of the individual occupying a certain position in a field. The latter is a concurrence of subject and field in the sense that the field makes use of the ambitions of the individual actor, while allowing the individual to act upon their ambitions (Vorderobermeier, "The (Re-)Construction of *Habitus*" 154). It is both "structured" and "structuring" – i.e., individuals are not only governed by (highly patterned) norms and conventions but they themselves reinforce them (Simeoni 21). Although the concept of habitus has been criticized for its potential determinism – for being "virtue made of necessity" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 54) – it is far from being a straitjacket; it allows agents playing in the field to be innovative, to revise, modify and transgress it, and it is also subject to change (Gouanvic 31; Hanna 65; Abdallah 114). It is not necessarily a prerequisite for entering a field to already have a certain habitus; however, one should possess a certain malleability that allows one to acquire professional habitus. Also, habitus is not necessarily adapted to the real conditions of the field nor is it necessarily coherent (Vorderobermeier, "The (Re-)Construction of *Habitus*" 153).

To account for the perceived tension between the potential determinism of the concept of habitus as defined by Bourdieu and the actual diversity between translators' backgrounds, dispositions and practice, Sela-Sheffy integrated identity research and introduced the concept of identity negotiation into translator habitus studies ("Translators' Identity Work" 43, 49). Coined by William Swann (1038-1051) and used in sociology and psychology, the concept of identity negotiation refers to the "set of processes through which people strike a balance between achieving their interaction goals and satisfying their identity-related goals, such as the needs for agency, communion, and psychological coherence" (Swann and Bosson 449). I found Sela-Sheffy's approach especially fruitful in the case of a profession where the cultural importance and intellectual investment are in stark contrast with the social and financial status of its practitioners.

There are a fair number of studies that aim to reconstruct habitus empirically, ranging from studies on various aspects of translators' habitus to those on various languages and territories (Vorderobermeier, "Introduction"). An important benefit of these studies is that they help "trace the interaction between (translation) text analysis and social analysis" (Wolf, "Habitus"). In the present article, I will try to reconstruct and compare some aspects of the habitus of translators working with Hungarian and English as source language/target language and target language/source language, respectively, by analysing their "identity talk" (Sela-Sheffy, "Translators' Identity Work" 52). It is my hope that such a contrastive analysis will help understand how the habitus of translators working in different socio-cultural fields shapes their practice and their career as well as the end products: the target texts and their reception.

² Bourdieu defines habitus as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively regulated and regular without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 53).

Methodology

In order to reconstruct the habitus of literary translators, and thereby examine the differences between translators working with English and Hungarian as a source language/target language and vice versa, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews (Leavy 277-299) with six established translators, three of them working in one and three in the other direction. I chose individuals who are respected translators – who all have several, in certain cases a great number of, book-length translations to their name; who have been (or, in the case of one interviewee, had been) active translators for a significant length of time; and who are (or used to be) first and foremost translators rather than professionals who do translation as an occasional side-job.³ I also strived for diversity. In terms of gender, three of my interviewees are men, three are women. In terms of age, the youngest translator I interviewed is in his early thirties, the oldest are in their seventies. For reasons of convenience, I mostly interviewed translators who are based in Budapest, except for one translator who lives in London, with whom I conducted the interview online.

I opted for in-depth qualitative interviews rather than a questionnaire with a much larger sample because I wanted to give the translators a chance to steer the conversation in directions they thought were meaningful and to bring up issues of importance to them. I drafted an interview guide⁴ before embarking on the interviews, with questions pertaining to the educational background of the translators; their professional practice including choice/acceptance of translation projects; the translation process; their strategies; their opinions about editing; and their job satisfaction. I started each interview by asking the first set of questions in the interview guide (on the interviewees' first encounters with translation), then continued with questions that seemed relevant on the basis of the interviewees' responses to the first set of questions.

The choice of semi-structured interviews also proved fruitful since literary translators are less visible, less professionalized, and less institutionalized than other players in the field of art and culture, and therefore their motivations, choices and self-perception are less obvious. For these reasons, the integration of identity research inspired by the work of Erving Goffmann in researching translators' habitus, as proposed by Sela-Sheffy ("Translators' Identity Work"; see also Torikai 137), certainly seems called for. The interviews I conducted with literary translators challenge the view of translators as a submissive group (Simeoni) – the translators I talked to are a very diverse group of individuals who display strong agency and employ various strategies of identity negotiation. A caveat must be added here, however: I chose to interview individuals who belong to the élite of their respective groups and therefore they are not necessarily representative of the group as a whole.

In the course of the interviews, certain issues turned out to be more, or less, relevant than I had supposed, i.e., in certain respects, there was greater similarity or greater divergence between the two groups than I had presumed. For example, the interviewees' opinion on collaborative translation or on the translation of slang – issues I presumed would be more divisive – was surprisingly similar. In what follows, I will elaborate on four clusters of topics that proved to be relevant for my research: 1) the background and work trajectory of the translators; 2) their self-perception; 3) their views on bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization; and 4) their views on their future prospects.

³ All the six translators, however, have or had other careers beside translation – writer (1), poet (1), academic (1), editor (2), teacher (1).

⁴ See Appendix.

Background and work trajectory

The discussion of the family and educational background of translators provides a glimpse into their primary habitus, i.e. the habitus acquired prior to the exercise of their trade as translators (Gouanvic 32). The “primacy of social learning over explicit instructions” (Sela-Sheffy, “Translators’ Identity Work” 45) prevails in many professions, and this is all the more applicable in the case of literary translation, where the lack of formalized studies and the precarious social status of its practitioners are in stark contrast with the high degree and diversity of skills required for the profession.

If we compare the interviewees from the point of view of national, linguistic and ethnic belonging, it immediately strikes us that all the three translators working from English into Hungarian (henceforth E/H translators) are Hungarians based in Budapest, whereas two of the translators from Hungarian to English (henceforth H/E translators) were born in Hungary, speak Hungarian as a mother tongue, and had left Hungary with their families as children – i.e. they are bilingual and bicultural, as opposed to the E/H translators. It seems to be the case for the majority of E/H translators who are active today that their mastery of English is not the result of a bicultural background: none of the E/H translators that I know personally were bilingual as a child, and although some of them spent some time in English-speaking countries, many of them did not. As for H/E literary translators, of the twenty to thirty individuals working in this field, many are bicultural and bilingual, typically – though not necessarily – born in Hungary and living in English-speaking countries.

For two of the three E/H translators, their family background was a determining factor in their choice of profession.

I was born into a family of well-known people, and that was really hard for me, the bouquets, the celebrations, I was trying to flee from all that as a child. I wanted to be like my mum, cool, calm and collected. I didn’t want fame, so I eventually figured out that literary translation, which is such a *no name* thing [in English in the interview], was really for me (Kati).⁵

It is clear from this description how Kati’s own personality – shyness and aversion to public life – and the cultural baggage of her family – her grandmother, a poet; her uncle, a painter and professor at an Ivy League university in the United States; and the constant company of artists and academics – added up to her opting for the “obvious” choice: literary translation.

My father is a dramaturg and a literary translator, but interestingly enough, it was not so much written texts that made an impression on me but rather our time together in front of the television, watching dubbed films. My father would always speak up when there was something wrong with the translation. (...) My parents both studied English and Hungarian at the university, and they tried everything to dissuade me, but they didn’t succeed (Mónika).

The discrepancy between the explicit and the implicit “instructions” of the parents is an interesting point here: aware of the precariousness of her choice, the parents try to dissuade their daughter from choosing a profession that they themselves are obviously competent and find pleasure in.

⁵ In the case of E/H translators, the interviews were conducted in Hungarian. The translations are mine and were reviewed by the interviewees. In the case of H/E translators, the language of the interviews was English.

The third E/H translator also comes from a family of professionals with a lot of books in their home. In his case, however, the choice of literary translation was the result of a series of chance occurrences. Of the three translators in this group, he is the only one who has given up translation. Both Kati and Mónika have had a long and fruitful career as a translator – Kati translated more than seventy, Mónika about thirty books. Besides translating, Kati worked as an editor in a prestigious Budapest publishing house for more than thirty years, while Mónika is a poet, with five volumes of poetry and one volume of essays to her name. The third translator, Bence, however, had a serious burnout after “falling in love” with literary translation and translating more than fifty books in fifteen years.

There was the illusion of independence, it had a certain charm, the feeling of freedom, but of course we all know what it comes down to in the end: it comes down to slavery. If I look at my ex-colleagues, there are very few who are still working as literary translators today. There are one or two who are still soldiering on, but as for me, I was totally drained. Sometimes I still say yes, but if somebody asked me now to translate the greatest novel in the world, I would say no without a second thought (Bence).

Bence’s exit strategy turned out to be extremely fortunate as he went on to write his own novels and became a successful writer.

As for H/E translators, two of the translators I interviewed belong to the generation who left Hungary after the repression of the 1956 revolution against the Communist regime in Hungary (in fact, a number of individuals who later became much sought-after literary translators have a similar background). For one of these translators, the discovery of being bilingual was a life-changing one.

I first became aware that I was bilingual at the age of fifteen. In grammar school a teacher used to go on his summer holidays to different countries. In 1964 or 1965, it was the turn of Hungary. He studied the language a bit in preparation, I was asked to be his aide, and this is when I had a kind of epiphany that I know both of these languages equally well. I was fifteen, and I was teaching my teacher, it was a fantastic feeling, so it first occurred to me that I could make some practical use of it (Peter).

He went on to study, then to teach, Hungarian language and culture, and published extensively on linguistics and translation.

The other H/E translator who left the country with her family as a child ended up in the United States. After finishing graduate school, she met a Hungarian film director, married him, and they settled down in Budapest. Three months later, her husband was hospitalized with an aneurysm and eventually died. Yet she stayed in Hungary.

I stayed because he had no one, no family to remember him. He had some people from film who would remember him as long as they would see me walk along Váci utca. The other thing is that Imre was an exceptional human being. [...] And I thought that any country that can produce a person like Imre I will not leave until I find out what that good is. [...] Imre was steeped deep in culture and I discovered Hungarian culture and the people who made Hungarian culture through him, and I fell in love with Hungarian culture and, by the way, not so much by the way, I

found some wonderful friends. So basically, I got compensations for staying, for example I found Hungarian literature, and I fell in love with it (Judy).

She became an editor of a Hungarian publishing house which published Hungarian literature in English translation and has had a long and successful career as a translator of major Hungarian writers.

The third H/E translator belongs to a younger generation of translators. While the older generation typically consists of émigrés, some translators in this group who are in their thirties and forties are individuals with no Hungarian background. Owen is a young Irishman who encountered Hungarian culture when he studied at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London.

UCL had courses in Hungarian. I knew I wanted to travel and learn a language I knew nothing about, and I was interested in Eastern Europe, because I came from Ireland, which is as far west as possible, there is nothing but rocks and nature. I knew Hungarian was not related to other languages, and the teacher at UCL was good. I thought Hungary was sunny and warm, there's life, it's the heart of Europe. Also, the Irish and the Hungarians have a lot in common – they have both been occupied nations, and there is a certain easy-goingness, darker humour, more relaxed attitude in both (Owen).

He moved to Budapest after graduation, first teaching English, then taking on translation projects.

In high school, I thought translation was a very boring, tedious job, sitting at home at your desk, it wasn't sexy enough. At university I realized I was good at it, and how much fun it was to work with literary texts, and getting paid for it, so it became a dream job. I enjoyed the fantasy of it, and the beauty of working in art and being affected emotionally, restructuring the sentences (Owen).

Owen now lives in Budapest and makes his living translating literature and related texts. When he won a Hungarian state grant for a sample translation, he was recommended to an English-language publisher by a senior translator to translate a book by a Hungarian author. Then he himself pitched another book to the publisher, who accepted his choice.

Based on this sample of literary translators, it seems that for E/H translators the primary habitus – i.e., the habitus acquired as a result of their family background – was a determining, or at least an important factor in their choice of profession, whereas for H/E translators, their career as translators started after an intense encounter with Hungarian language and culture.

Self-perception

a. Are translators “submissive”?

The discrepancy between the social and financial status of translators, and the complex cognitive task their work involves and their crucial role in intercultural communication is one of the central topics of translator studies. Although the literary field is “the economic world reversed,” and although it “attract[s] a particularly strong proportion of individuals who possess all the properties of the dominant class *minus one*: money” (Bourdieu, *Field* 164, 165), the status of translators is precarious even within that field. In his seminal article on translators' mindset, Daniel Simeoni argues that “translatorial competence may be characterized by greater conformity than is the competence of other agents active in the field” (7). This, Simeoni claims,

is not only due to the fact that, historically, translators have always occupied subservient positions, but also to the fact that translators have been willing to accept their secondariness. In fact, the less visible the translator is, the more competent they seem (7).

Thus, my first question pertaining to the self-perception of literary translators is whether their attitude can be seen as submissive, and if so, in what sense, and whether there is a difference between the two groups.

It is interesting to quote in what context Kati (E/H) uses the expression “translator’s humility”, a set phrase in Hungarian. She was translating Isaac Bashevis Singer’s books, originally written in Yiddish, from an English translation she considered poor.

Suddenly I started to hear the text with some Yiddish expressions that my grandpa who had died when I was a child had used. So I put some *couleur locale* into the text. I felt that Uncle Isaac deserved better. In such cases, it is the duty of the translator to cheat a bit, for the sake of the original. You must bring out what is in there, I said to myself. This is what I call the translator’s humility. I shouldn’t have done this, but I did it a lot (Kati).

Thus, humility – subservience – for this translator means loyalty to the original text, or even loyalty to the intentions of the writer, even if that loyalty would be considered disloyalty by many. “I shouldn’t have done this, but I did it a lot”, she says – in other words: what I did goes against the norms as I know them, yet I transgressed the norms in order to be loyal to the spirit rather than to the letter of the norms.

Another E/H translator, Mónika, thinks that the word “humility” is misunderstood in the context of translation: the “humility” of translators is “rather like the pride of guild masters” – it means that one must give proper attention to the work, not that one allows oneself to be humiliated.

While Peter (H/E) concedes that “it is possible that the personality of the average translator of literature is such that he is not going to go out and fight on the barricades”, he does not think it means that they allow themselves to be subjugated.

“You don’t exercise any undue liberties, you have to respect, honour and love the original”, says Judy (H/E). However, her description of the process of translation – which she prefers to call “re-imagining” – is entirely that of a creative process.

When I wrestle with a certain phrase, I stand up and start walking up and down, I start saying the sentence in Hungarian, and I start moving to it. My body then comes up with a gesture, and then the gesture will lead me to the words I need. I’m not text-bound, nor audience-bound. I do not envision an audience, and I do not let words influence me. My only true point of reference is the original text – is my sentence adequate to the original? Besides the explicit content, there is an implicit content, which is the author himself/herself. As Wittgenstein said, the thought is the significant proposition. So my ‘audience’ is the original Hungarian text and all that it conveys. There is a stage when there are no words yet in English, you feel the text, there’s a pre-verbal stage: 1. You re-imagine the original, 2. You re-create it: you give this something a habitation, a shape, a form in another language – you give unembodied entities a habitation, as Shakespeare would have said (Judy).

Although none of the translators in either group thinks that the translator is a co-author, most of them agree that the name of the translator should be written on the title page. Besides the necessary prominence required, they mentioned compensation for the lack of financial

reward; accepting responsibility for the translation; and marketing reasons if the name of the translator is a brand in its own right. Only one translator said she preferred her name to appear not on the cover, but rather inside, on the title page.

It's not because I'm shy, but because I feel that when a really fine book ends up in a bookshop, I as the translator would like people to read it as if it were the original. I don't want to come in between the readers and their reading experience. That's the death of the thing (Judy).

b. How do translators view their own roles?

As a scholar, Peter (H/E) was strongly motivated to spread Hungarian language and culture, and felt he could not reach many people by teaching, "so the first thing that occurred to me that had to be done was a dictionary. That was the first thing I did for a broader audience". Later, when he realized that dictionaries had gone online, he took up translating in order to reach a larger number of people. Although he himself limits his activities to translating literary and academic texts, and publishing academic articles and essays on various aspects of Hungarian culture, his motivations include "countering some of the negative publicity surrounding the country in the English-speaking world at the moment". He wants to show "that there is a great deal of culture that is worth transmitting and that, as I often say, Hungary has spent eleven hundred years in the Western orbit and that cannot be just dismissed like that". When asked if he thought some translators viewed their roles as being authorities on more than just the literature of their source language, he answered:

That's a good point. A translator from French or Spanish into English wouldn't deal with, say, politics, unless the French or Spanish they are translating is from a country which is kind of politically of interest or it has an oppressive regime or something special. Then, I think, they become more like people looking at a small country that a lot of people don't know anything about in detail and they do, so they feel entitled to have opinions on aspects of their politics and so on. Not only entitled but to be public intellectuals on the topic. In that respect they would be like somebody translating from a Nicaraguan poet or writer who they feel particularly attached to because he's suffering under an oppressive regime (Peter).

After publishing his first book-length translation, Owen (H/E) started to pitch books to the same publisher. When asked why he had pitched those specific books, he gave aesthetic reasons – "the structure, the rhythm, the language" – as well as political/ideological ones: one of the books he chose "tells a lot about people's roles in disasters, about mass hysteria, conspiracy, lies and fake news, and I thought people outside Hungary could also relate to it".

Thus, both of these H/E translators view their own role as a cultural ambassador (among other things). This is even more marked in the case of Judy, the third H/E interviewee who stayed in Hungary after her husband's death, and "fell in love" with Hungarian literature.

And I loved – oh God – the honesty that I found in many Hungarian writers, and I found as an American – America, listen, learn! – that the best Hungarian artists write or create with their blood. They are not doing it to create something nice, popular or aesthetic. These writers, painters, filmmakers, all have this in common, that they were and sometimes still are writing for their lives. They had something extremely important that they had to say. [...] These are the writers I love to translate (Judy).

She started to translate because she “wanted to share literature with those that I loved”.

I don't think of translation as a profession. I just kept bumping into literature that I found especially fine – so I asked myself, does that fit in the English-language literature stream, if only marginally? If I felt that it did and if I felt that the author could advance the course of world literature by expanding on it, and I loved what I read, then I translated it. I like to say that my nerves are too weak to let exciting literature pass me by (Judy).

Especially at the beginning of her career, Judy engaged in a literary agent's work as well, looking around for publishers. Without being paid to do so, she did all the work agents do: making lists of publishers with the right profile; writing personalized letters; and visiting publishing houses. Although she could easily have found a Hungarian publisher for the books she translated, she insisted on finding major UK and US publishers.

I think of myself as a mover. It is one thing that I translate an author, but then as a lover of Hungarian literature, as a serious translator, translation is only a small part of my job. It is also to make sure that other Hungarian writers will find good translators for their work. [...] [Translators] also have to be familiar with editing. And they must learn to think with the head of the publisher. My life as a translator also includes teaching translators how to be professionals (Judy).

As for E/H translators, their role does not seem to include that of a cultural ambassador or an authority on the culture of the language they translate from. Besides the obvious reason that their source language is the hyper-central language whose culture imbues Hungarian society, translators list exhaustion, stage fright, lack of remuneration, and lack of competence as their reasons. Also a lack of demand: Bence reports that as a highly sought-after translator for more than a decade, he was invited to participate in talks only twice, while after his own first novel was published, he was invited to about thirty talks within six months. “There may be sexy translators”, he says, “but the typical image of a translator is still someone sitting around in a room full of cobwebs. Non-professionals tend to think of writing as more exciting and more intimate”.

Let us now try to answer the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter: can the attitude of the translators interviewed be seen as submissive, and if so, in what sense? Even though many translators seem to be endowed with certain character traits – e.g., a tendency to avoid competitive situations and/or public appearances – subservience or submissiveness is not among these traits, at least not in the case of the translators I interviewed. The translators in both groups have strong opinions about their craft and their roles. They all take pleasure in their work, which they describe as creative intellectual work. Rather than being subservient towards the publisher or the reader, they are loyal to the translating profession (Chesterman, *Memes* 169-170).

There seems to be a difference between the two groups, however, in the way they view their own roles. In her article on translators' identity work, Sela-Sheffy identifies three main role images among top Israeli literary translators: the cultural gatekeeper, the cultural mediator, and the artist (“Translators' Identity Work” 50). The interviews with the translators indicated that H/E translators view themselves more as cultural mediators, whereas E/H translators are more focused on literature and translation, acting as cultural gatekeepers – i.e., “culture makers who set the norms” (Sela-Sheffy, “How” 7). To use Erich Prunč's metaphors, they may seem

“pariahs” from the outside, working “for ever lower prices and rates,” yet they are also “princes” in a way, “as guardians of the word and as the gatekeepers and constructors of culture” (48-49).

As cultural mediators, some H/E translators are focused on “taking on the task of opening up the local culture and enriching its language and forms of expression, so as to rescue it from provincialism and petrification” (Sela-Sheffy, “How” 8), others go further and act as authorities on socio-political issues in Hungary, confirming the status of translation as “cultural political practice, constructing or critiquing ideology-stamped identities for foreign cultures, affirming or transgressing discursive values and institutional limits in the target-language culture” (Venuti 15).

Accuracy or fluency? Bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization

a. Attitude to bilingual editing

Responses to the questionnaire of my previous article indicated that bilingual editing was virtually absent from the experience of H/E literary translators. At first sight, the issue of line-by-line language editing by a bilingual editor or lack thereof seems to be merely a financial issue. As the publication of translated books in English is a financially insecure venture unless the name of the author guarantees that the book will be a bestseller, publishers try to economize wherever possible, therefore they dispense with language editing. Yet the fact that the difference between the experience of H/E and E/H translators is so conspicuous in this respect indicates that there may be more at play here than mere financial concerns.

The process of editing literary translations – including the participants involved, as well as the dynamics between and the relative power position of the participants – varies according to country and language, and even according to the size and prestige of the publishing house (Zlatnar Moe et al.). The question of editing also raises ethical dilemmas concerning the boundaries of revising someone else’s text (Robin). Here, I will only focus on the attitude of my interviewees to line-by-line language editing by a bilingual editor.

All the E/H translators I interviewed were of the opinion that bilingual editing was absolutely necessary, in accordance with the practice of many Hungarian publishers of translated literary fiction. A bilingual editor makes the translator “feel safe”, says Bence, who is of the opinion that “translation is not a one-man show”. Even if “the translator reads the text four or five times, they certainly omit a few things, and some other things fall on their blind spot”, says Mónika, who feels that there is an ethical dimension to the issue of editing as:

the translator and the editor are working on the same text, and they are not enemies, although of course both of them are full of vanity as the translator has just put her very own newborn infant on the table, and then the editor comes with a hunter’s instinct, and the interaction has to end with both of them being grateful for the contribution of the other (Mónika).

“One can see that English-language books in translation have not been edited by a bilingual editor”, says Kati, who is also of the opinion that editing makes the translator feel safe. Bence thinks that the reason why English-language publishers do not use a bilingual editor for their books is that “it is a very closed market, and maybe translated books would not be well received if they were not domesticated to a great extent”. This is an interesting point not only because of what the sentence explicitly states but also because of what it implies: that a bilingual editor’s corrections tend to shift the target text towards greater accuracy, i.e., towards faithfulness to the source text.

In the H/E group, Peter is of the same opinion as the E/H translators, and is frustrated by the practice of English-language publishers and by what he regards as the misconception of translators into English of their job, regarding the latter as complicit in this issue:

In Hungarian, the language editor is the umbilical cord. From Hungarian to English, [language editing] almost never happens. Yes, it is impossible: the general trend is against it, the cost is prohibitive, and they often cannot find the right people. But I think some translators are getting above themselves. They are simply not entitled to the same respect as the author of the original. They should write their own work, and get that published, not hide it in the skin of some other writer (Peter).

Owen is also of the opinion that a bilingual editor is “absolutely necessary, especially for an emerging translator. [...] A bilingual editor is not going to make or break a novel, but they correct mistakes, oversights, logistical things”. As the publisher of his translations does not use a bilingual editor, Owen shows his texts to his ex-teacher, a prestigious translator, who reads Owen’s translations line by line, and discusses them with Owen. The editor is not paid for his work, nor is he credited in the book. Although Owen thinks that bilingual editing is necessary, he also sees why many translators are against it: “the text is being taken away from you, after you spent a lot of time and effort, had an emotional ordeal about it. It is as if it was not recognized by the publisher”.

While Judy feels that a “good, perceptive editor” provides “a safety net” for the translator, she does not think that the editor must be bilingual:

The reason that we in Hungary do *kontrollszerkesztés* [‘control editing’ – Hungarian expression for line-by-line editing] is because here it is not that difficult to find a good editor. Publishers in the States might be able to find someone bilingual, but I would be worried if my translation were given to someone who doesn’t understand writing, translating, and revising texts. In the US and in the UK 1. It’s not customary, 2. I’m glad they don’t do it because I need someone who is at least as good as I am, 3. All my translations with English-language publishers have in my contract one clause that says that I am responsible for the control editing, which means that I have to check the translation against the original as many times as I need to, and I have to send a translation that does not misrepresent the original. Which is, after all, the translator’s responsibility to begin with (Judy).

To illustrate the complications of using bilingual editors, Judy gave the example of a bilingual editor ending up practically retranslating a Hungarian novel, and being commissioned by the publisher to translate the book instead of the translator who had been commissioned originally. Not being familiar with the Hungarian text, the publisher brought out a translation that Judy considers lacking in certain respects compared to the Hungarian as well as the original translation. She thinks that “a [non-bilingual] editor should be good enough to be able to tell if the translation is not doing justice to the original”. Yet a story she told me about the editing process of *Celestial Harmonies* by Péter Esterházy illustrates how an editor who does not have command of the source language and is not familiar with the source language culture can fail to detect essential elements of a text – in this case, irony:

Celestial Harmonies ended up in the hands of an editor whose parents were Polish so she had some inkling of a Central European background, but she didn’t know

much about Hungary. We had eighty pages of correspondence. We had a profuse correspondence because 1. She wasn't familiar with Esterházy, 2. She wasn't familiar with the Hungarian reaction to a certain kind of frustration under Communism. For example, she didn't understand the sentence 'My father was already happy when nothing happened', and corrected it to 'when only a little happened'. In order to have my safety net, I had to train my American editor to read and understand Esterházy, and to get a feel for his humour and irony (Judy).

b. Views on domestication vs foreignization

As mentioned above, one of the E/H translators opined that the reason for the lack of a bilingual editor could be that the English-language book market being very closed, it is hard to sell translations that are viewed *ab ovo* as "exotic" and "untrustworthy".⁶ Therefore, English-language publishers feel less need to be faithful to the source-language text which could be enhanced by having another bilingual person working on the text, and more need to be readable, which is better served by an editor who is unfamiliar with the source language and culture. Such an editor is more likely to edit out unconventional elements, on the lexical, grammatical, narrative, semantic etc. level, irrespective of whether those elements are the results of conscious choices by the author (and the translator) and/or of different writing conventions, or the results of incompetent/clumsy solutions by the translator.

This leads us to the complex issue of the political and ethical dimensions of domestication vs foreignization that we can discuss only briefly in this article. These terms were introduced by Venuti in 1995, and have been discussed by many translation scholars (e.g., Berman; Apter; Spivak). Venuti argues that the tendency in British and American translation has been to "domesticate" foreign texts, i.e., to minimize their strangeness and to produce a fluent, transparent text. By contrast, he advocates "foreignizing translation", i.e., a practice which retains the foreignness of the ST, and thereby "resists dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text" (18).⁷

One of the E/H translators I interviewed mentioned the issue that there is a hierarchy of languages in which one translates "up" to English, and "down" to other languages. In this hierarchy, the commitment to diversity has its limits.

English editors are saying: our readers are not going to understand it, this is not how a novel works in English. Even cultural realia are being translated, the more the smaller the language. And this can spill over into style. Also, English culture is self-obsessed, there is a feeling of superiority. This way of relating to the world transpires into how you relate to literature as well. Readers will 'not be able to deal with' [Owen was doing air quotes here] alien things. Diversity is superficial, a label rather, diversity of actual content and form are not allowed. This means you sometimes miss an important characteristic of the text (Owen).

⁶ Cf. "Sure, there's still a bit of a bias if people saying if it's a translation, it's a bit esoteric or elitist – and we have to overcome that" (Nawotka); "The underlying assumption on the part of many publishers seems to be that readers don't trust translators and won't buy a book if they realize it's a translation" (Croft, par.6).

⁷ In an article which examines cultural asymmetry between translation from a major into a minor language and vice versa, Klaudy concludes that although it may be assumed that the while former involves foreignization, and the latter involves domestication (32), the analysis of 400 translated texts has proved that on a cultural level translators seem to prefer domestication (35). Here, however, we are interested in the views of translators on domestication vs foreignization rather than analysing their actual practice which may yield different results.

Over-domestication, motivated by the fear of rejection by readers of unconventional writing can also be a choice by the translator: when asked what kind of translatorial practices he does not agree with, Owen mentioned the “timidity where translators don’t accept that the sentence can be translated the way it was written, and then it loses its character, its essence”.

The choice between domestication and foreignization is, of course, not an absolute one: it is a “constant walk on a tightrope, there is no permanent answer that is applicable to every circumstance. A certain amount of domestication is probably inevitable”, Peter said. He mentioned the example of someone whom he considers an extremely good translator:

he polishes and polishes until it feels like a yet undiscovered work of English literature. He makes the maximum amount to make it palatable. This is not a bad thing at all, this is what enables [the writer this person translated into English] to be accepted into the European canon. People read it and thought, gosh, here is someone writing European literature in Hungary. This is a fine achievement. On the other hand, I wonder if sometimes he hasn’t rubbed off too many edges, he hasn’t smoothed it down so much that it may be too much for me personally. It is a constant battle because of course you want Hungarian literature to be accepted as European literature, and so you cannot blame anyone who does this successfully, makes it a commercial success (Peter).

For E/H translators, translating from the hyper-central to a peripheral language, the issue of domestication vs foreignization seems to be of a different nature. Bence seems to tend more towards domestication, Mónika more towards foreignization; however, their choices are motivated not by issues of power and reception, but rather by linguistic and literary considerations.

If you don’t try to bridge the distance between the two languages, something very strange happens. To copy the English text without a conceptual framework may work in other languages, but from English to Hungarian, that’s a crime against the text. You must convert the text into Hungarian, on the level of the sentence and the word order as well (Bence).

[My professor] had a saying: we translate the tree not the forest. If there is a dialogue, you have to translate it to sound like the way people talk, but in narrative parts I attach significance to everything that is there in the text, often even things that are perhaps not important. [Smiles] [...] I prefer the structure of the sentence to resemble the original as much as possible, following its logic. And if it says ‘he said’ in the English text, I leave it like that [even though in Hungarian it sounds monotonous⁸] (Mónika).

It is clear from the above that the issue of invisibility and that of domestication are interrelated in a complex way – no wonder that domesticating translation practices are one of the main subjects of Lawrence Venuti’s seminal book, *The Translator’s Invisibility*. It is not only the translator but the source-language text and the source-language culture as well that are invisible in an over-domesticated translation, a fact that has different consequences depending on whether the source-language culture is a dominant or a dominated one.

⁸ While English authors prefer to use the central reporting verb (‘say’), Hungarian authors use a large variety of reporting verbs (Klaudy 25).

To conclude this chapter: the divergences in views and experiences of E/H and H/E literary translators concerning bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization seem to be related to the status of the two languages, to the status of translated texts in Hungary vs in English-language cultures, and to the self-perception of the translator in the different cultures. As for the latter, E/H translators seem to be more concerned by faithfulness to the source text, and consider themselves less an authority on the culture, and are therefore more open to editing, while the attitude of H/E translators is more individualistic. While E/H translators stress the importance of collaboration, H/E translators tend to stress the responsibility of the translator which includes making the source text accessible to English-language audiences. The fact that the collaborative aspect of translation is more present in the views of E/H translators is probably also related to the fact that they have more feedback from and are therefore more likely to be criticized by people who have command of both languages than H/E translators who mainly have to face criticism from non-bilingual target-language readers. Therefore, criticism of the former most often means criticism for lack of understanding of the source text, while for the latter it mainly means criticism for lack of readability, thus it is not surprising that the former group tends to be more concerned by accuracy and the latter by fluency and accessibility, even at the cost of over-domesticating the source text.

It must be stressed that these differences are relative: the responsibility of the translator is also very important for the E/H translators I interviewed, just as faithfulness to the source text is important for H/E translators, etc. However, the overall experience of the translators I interviewed corroborates these general observations.

Future prospects

Having discussed some aspects of the past of the translators – the formation of their primary habitus – and their present – their self-perception and their attitude to bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization – in what follows, I will turn to their vision of the future of their profession.

In his article quoted above, Simeoni observes that the subservient attitude he attributes to translators seems less and less viable as translators are asked to perform increasingly demanding and variegated tasks, while their financial and social status remains unchanged, or if it changes, it usually changes for the worse (13-14). Indeed, one of the reasons translatorial habitus has been the focus of a number of studies recently may be that due to recent technological and socio-political changes to which literary translators are constantly exposed, the dissonance between translatorial norms, ethos and self-perception on the one hand and, on the other, the circumstances under which translators are obliged to work has become more and more marked.⁹

Of the three E/H translators, Mónika is the only one who currently works as a full-time translator. It is worth quoting her assessment of the situation of literary translators in Hungary in its entirety:

The profession of a literary translator used to be much more valued than it is today. When asked, [the Nobel-prize winning Hungarian writer] Imre Kertész used to say about himself [before winning the Nobel] that he was a literary translator rather than a writer, because being a writer was not something serious. Our life is much easier now technologically speaking, but parallel to the technological changes it turned out after the regime change [in Hungary in 1989] that publishers don't really

⁹ According to an article recently published in Hungarian, to make an average living in 1970, a literary translator in Hungary had to translate 100,000 characters per month, while today they have to translate 400,000 characters (Sohár 431-441).

feel like spending money on translators. The situation of intellectuals worsened after the regime change, fewer books were bought, so publishers found themselves in a difficult situation, they economized wherever they could, and so they did not raise translators' fees. So translators had to work more. But we still enjoy so much freedom that we do not want to give that up. Our generation has still known that freedom and we do not want to relinquish that, but we cannot secure the financial means needed for that freedom, and the future is completely insecure. You know the saying, "if only we could afford to live the way we live" (Mónika).

The last sentence, quoted by Mónika as a common saying among Hungarian intellectuals, is key to understanding the way many literary translators in Hungary negotiate their identity, and it also sums up ironically and succinctly what Bourdieu calls "hysteresis of habitus" (*Logic* 59; Vorderobermeier, "The (Re-)Construction of *Habitus*" 153). Bourdieu's phrase refers to the "structural lag between opportunities and the dispositions to grasp them" (*Outline* 83), i.e., to the situation when, for one reason or another, habitus does not adjust to changes in the field. In this case, the freedom and prestige – among other benefits – associated with literary translation continue to be felt by the translator as overwhelmingly supporting her choice of profession, even though these are in fact threatened by worsening socio-economic conditions and other factors.¹⁰

Mónika's assessment of her own situation is fairly complex. A number of other E/H translators I have talked to (besides those I interviewed), however, tend to criticize publishers for paying low fees, and translators' organizations for not representing the interests of literary translators competently. This is especially typical of translators whose career started in the Communist era, when Hungarian publishers were state-owned and their operation was determined by political rather than economic considerations, and thus the working conditions and remuneration of translators were not determined by market factors.

In the case of Bence, the worsening situation of literary translators led to his exit from the field.

One has certain standards, and I started to adjust them to the circumstances, and that was when I thought that it was possible to work on the basis of a routine, but one mustn't imagine that the result can be the same. [...] There are some people who are capable of saving energy and negotiating around deadlines, but for me, it became drudgery, I did not feel the joy of creativity anymore (Bence).

When asked whether he had any suggestions for the improvement of the situation of translators, Bence was sceptical. He said that this issue was regarded as marginal by the population as a whole, and could only be resolved by cultural political means, but he did not think there was the will to do that.

The situation does not seem to be so dire in the H/E group. However, it must be stressed that two of the interviewees did not depend on translation financially during most of their career. When asked about the financial side of literary translation, Peter said "The better you are known, the more you can get. There are some big names in each language, and they can make a full time living in Britain and America out of translation". He added, however, that he

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that when I quote this sentence to people who do not live in Hungary, my difficulty in explaining it is similar to the one Judy experienced when trying to explain Esterházy's sentence ("My father was already happy when nothing happened") to her editor. The irony involved in these two sentences, referring to a precarious situation in which the individual feels that they are at the mercy of ever-changing and threatening socio-political conditions, seems to require cultural translation.

knew only one person in Britain who made a living by literary translation from any Central or Eastern European language, and “she works day and night, doesn’t make a good living, but it’s a living”.

The third H/E translator interviewed, Owen, does make a living translating Hungarian literature. His case illustrates the financial consequences of working from a peripheral to the hyper-central language rather than the other way round: standard fees for H/E literary translators are 3-4 times the standard fees for E/H translators, even if the client is based in Hungary. Though these fees may still not be very high if the translator is based in the United Kingdom where living costs are considerably higher, in Hungary they afford a relatively comfortable standard of living.

Another difference between the two groups is that there is an emerging “star system” among literary translators in the English-speaking world (Sela-Sheffy, “How” 12), with certain H/E translators receiving not only higher fees but also prestigious prizes and gaining exposure in the media, whereas no similar schemes exist for those translating into Hungarian. At the moment the only grant that exists in Hungary for literary translators is for those below the age of forty, even though – as opposed to the career path of many intellectual professions – the fees of translators do not tend to increase with age. And while Hungarian translators with other source languages (e.g., German or Dutch) can take advantage of a number of grants and residencies, there are none for E/H translators.

Conclusion

The aim of my contrastive analysis was to examine through the example of H/E and E/H translators how source-language and target-language culture influences translators’ habitus, their career choice and self-perception, as well as the process and the outcome of translation. The data provided by the “identity talk” of the translators interviewed showed that although there are many traits in common in the habitus of the individuals in the two groups that led to their choice of profession – e.g., love of the challenge of translating another language and culture; ability and willingness to be immersed in challenging work; preferring to work in flexible hours; not being highly competitive, etc. – there are nevertheless a number of differences as well that are conditioned by their respective source-language and target-language cultures. While cultural mediation seems to be an important element of the self-perception as well as of the actual job of H/E translators, E/H translators are more focused on the craft of translation itself, acting more as cultural gatekeepers in their target-language culture. Some of the norms of the H/E and E/H translation process also seem to be conditioned by target-language culture: while H/E translators, working in the highly self-sufficient market of the hyper-central language, have to be more concerned by the accessibility and acceptability of the target-language text, and are therefore more prone to domesticating practices, E/H translators, who work from a source language that is saturated by the culture of the target language, and is read by many readers in the target audience, are more concerned with accuracy. The difference between the status of the two languages also makes the H/E translator more of a “lone wolf”, having to – and often wishing to – work without the safety net of bilingual editing, transposing the particularities of the language, literature and culture of an “exotic” source language into English without the help of a multitude of cultural products and commercial goods originating from the source-language culture that E/H translators have at their disposal, who, in their turn, have to take into account inadequate but widespread translations of English expressions, memes, titles, etc. into Hungarian. The increased visibility of translating from the hyper-central language often makes E/H translators more willing to be a team worker and share responsibility for the work with an editor.

Besides the topics discussed in this article, the interviews I conducted with the translators pointed to a number of other issues that could be the subject of further study – e.g., the existence and nature of translators’ communities in the two cultures; or the physical and emotional side of the translator’s work that most translators were very happy to talk about. It would also be interesting to study the issues discussed on larger samples and to take into consideration the public utterances – interviews, essays and work diaries – of translators.

Appendix: Questions for translators

PAST – BACKGROUND, PRIMARY HABITUS

Did your family background and/or your education play a role in your choice of profession?
When did you realize for the first time that texts not written in your first language were ‘translated’?
When did it first occur to you that you would like to translate something?
What did you know about literary translation as a profession before you decided to do it yourself?

PRESENT – PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL HABITUS

Pre-translation:

How do you receive commissions?
What kind of translation jobs are you happy to accept?
What do you think about collaborative translation?
What do you think about translating from a mediating language?

Translation process – physical/emotional side:

Do you have translating rituals?
Do you use your voice and/or your body when translating?
How do you feel while translating?
What causes you pleasure when you translate?
Who do you have in mind as your audience while translating?
Why do you translate?
What do you do when you cannot keep a deadline?

Translation process – strategies and norms:

Is the translator an artist, an actor, a craftsman or a philologist?
What do you do when you encounter culture-specific terms?
Do you use footnotes?
How do you translate slang?
How do you feel about the tendency to domesticate / to foreignize a source text?
Should the voice of the translator be heard in the translation?
In your opinion, what constitutes a bad translation?
What are the most important qualities of a literary translator?

Post-translation:

How do you feel about editing and editors?
Do you think bilingual editing is necessary?

What do you think about the view that the translator's work is an autonomous work of art and should not be tampered with?

How do you feel about translation criticism?

Do you write articles or give interviews on your translations?

Do you write articles or give interviews on the literature and culture of your source language?

Do you think the translator's name should figure on the cover of the translated book?

Opinions about the profession:

Do you feel that there is a hierarchy between translators on the basis of their source language / target language?

Are there translators you consider as your models? Why?

What is the role of a literary translator?

How much has the profession changed since you have been working as a literary translator?

Are you in contact with other translators and/or translators' networks/associations?

Opinions about self as translator:

What is your most important translation ever?

How satisfied are you as a literary translator – financially, professionally, in terms of social status?

What do you like the most and the least in this profession?

Do you feel that you have become a better translator through the years?

FUTURE

Do you intend to continue working as a literary translator?

In your opinion, how could the situation of literary translators be improved?

Should the profession be more institutionalized?

To what extent is it possible to teach literary translation?

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Degrees of marginality: the representation of women poets in 20th century Modern Greek and Yiddish poetry anthologies in English translation

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Abstract

Discussions of under-represented languages in translation necessarily confront issues of (in)visibility, minoritization and marginality. The paper uses three types of marginality – ‘extraliterary’, linguistic and ‘intraliterary’ marginality (Kronfeld 228) – as its theoretical springboard in investigating twentieth century poetry anthologies of Modern Greek and Yiddish in English translation, with a focus on the representation of women poets. Modern Greek and Yiddish share a century-long poetic tradition which is unevenly represented in these mostly male-dominated English-language anthologies. Specifically, the anthologies selected demonstrate the degree and variety of representation of women poets in anthologies of Yiddish poetry translated into English from the 1920s to the 1980s and in anthologies of Modern Greek poetry translated into English from the 1940s to the 1990s. The gatekeeping role of anthologists is discussed in relation to their power to select texts/authors or participate in the silencing of these. Questions of how the poets are selected, by whom, and according to what criteria, are examined through paratextual material relevant to the anthologies. Thus, the study of these poetry anthologies and the focus on the women poets included (or excluded) problematize issues of language, gender, and genre representation within the English literary polysystem, while unveiling the challenges involved in reaching an Anglophone readership and questioning established notions of canon-formation.

Introduction

In the introduction to their anthology of women poets from circa 2300 BCE to 1980, Barnstone and Barnstone (xix) highlight an intriguing paradox: women have excelled at composing poetry for millennia – with the first ever known poet, the Sumerian poetess Enheduanna writing around 3000 BCE – without achieving much recognition for their work until the late Renaissance in the Western world. It was not until much later, in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries, when the successes of feminist movements resulted in efforts within literary and translation studies to restore and unveil silenced and overlooked women writers. This reconfiguration of literary and translation history was part of the aftermath of a wider agenda which aims at re-evaluating the literary canon with the inclusion of more diverse voices (Von Flotow and Farahzad; Dow; Castro), since when women are marginalized as minoritized writers, a dangerous silencing ensues. This has often led to their excision from historical accounts that ignore their literary and intellectual contributions or, worse still, attribute them to their male counterparts.¹ As Von Flotow noted, “the patriarchal canon has

¹ For instance, Scott Fitzgerald plagiarizing from his wife Zelda’s diaries (Elias) or the partnership of Leo and Sofia Tolstoy, who revised and edited his *War and Peace* several times (Tanalski).

traditionally defined aesthetics and literary value in terms that privileged work by male writers to the detriment of women writers; as a result, much writing by women has been ‘lost’” (30). As it will be shown in our discussion, for peripheral literatures, such as Modern Greek and Yiddish, which are already at a disadvantage due to the “unequal structure [...] of literary space, the uneven distribution of resources among national literary spaces” (Casanova 83), this suppressing of women writers’ voices based on their gender reproduces and embeds marginalizations within an already marginalized literary culture.

Current studies regarding “corrective” moves (Von Flotow) in translation history expose the male-dominated literary marketplace (Milan), among a host of other topics which include unearthing and celebrating the work of women writers and translators throughout the ages (Bacardí and Godayol; Krontiris) as well as (re)examining and (re)negotiating the role of gender within the context of literary exchanges (Federici; Santaemillia). These debates within feminist translation studies problematize what Hawkesworth called “the natural attitude” by contesting “axioms about gender” (649).

Literary anthologies perform a crucial part in the foregrounding of the (in)visibility of certain authors and genres. Anthologies of translation, acting as mediators between literatures originating in different languages, use the currency of trust in their promotion or silencing of specific works and authors, frequently based on the literary judgements and predilections of the anthologist. This trust is manifested when readers of the translated text place their confidence on the anthologist to select and present to them what is best or more representative of the source literature. It is building on this trust that elevates anthologies to the status of institutions (Re) and assigns them the status of ambassadors in the literary translation market, which, in turn, informs the formation of literary canonicity. At the same time, the figure of the anthologist comes to the foreground as their central role in selecting material marks them as significant gatekeepers in control of the flow between literatures.

The purpose of this paper is to participate in current debates in literary and translation historiography that aim to redress silenced or overlooked issues of decentred or otherwise neglected agents, texts, practices, and policies, with an emphasis on the poetry of Modern Greek and Yiddish women poets throughout the 20th century, while examining the relationship between canon formation and translated anthologies.

Modern Greek and Yiddish, which may at first seem an unlikely choice of literatures to compare, share a centuries-long poetic tradition. This tradition is unevenly represented in English-language anthologies, particularly in relation to the gender of the writers included. As such, their comparative study yields intriguing insights into the state and evolution of peripheral languages and their literatures as they struggle to make themselves heard in the global linguistic and literary hierarchy.

The paper begins with some definitions of the key concept of marginality. The types of marginalities discussed fall under the categories of extraliterary, linguistic and intraliterary that Kronfeld (228) explores. The overarching marginality is that of gender as an analytical category and major determining factor, both in terms of the inclusion/exclusion of poets and their material in anthologies. A foray into the role of poetry anthologies in canon formation follows. The material used and the method for its selection are presented next, followed by the discussion of the material and the anthologist as editor through the perspective of marginality, and then offer some concluding thoughts.

Definitions of marginality

Lionnet and Shih point out how scholars have prioritized the study of the relation between the centre and the margin, but seldomly examine the relationships between different margins. Heilbron, for instance, examines what he terms the “core-periphery structure” which accounts

for the “uneven flows of translations between language groups” (429). This centre/margin relation may explain in part the marginal presence of poetry translated from Modern Greek and Yiddish into English, but it is not sufficiently nuanced to account for the disparities within a translated body of work which (re)produces marginalities and inequalities of representation. As Sapiro notes, “while the core-periphery model accounts for the global flows of translation, it does not explain the variations within languages according to categories and genres” (419).

To illustrate the less represented in major canonical works, Kronfeld employs a chart in which the different marginalities are represented as: “linguistic” marginality, when writing in languages such as Modern Greek and Yiddish; “extraliterary” marginality, as is the case for women’s representation; and “intraliterary” marginality, where we can find the category of avant-garde poetry (228). This representation of the minorities, in turn, affects what gets translated in the literary market and what gets included (or excluded) from canon formation. Kronfeld terms this representation as “selective modelling” in a hegemonic literary system or the “single-lens construction of literary affiliation” (3, 12). Instead, Kronfeld counterposes an “alternative tradition” taken from Raymond Williams's concept of a new tradition that might come “from the neglected works left in the wide margins of the century” (3). This new tradition would not only include “writers outside the cartographic and linguistic mainstream” (3-4), but marginalized genres as well.

Poetry anthologies and canon formation

The significance of anthologies in the formation of national and international literatures – in shaping readerly expectations and their reading strategies, influencing the literary taste of critics and reviewers as well as determining, among other factors, the literary value and afterlife of a work - cannot be overstated. Lecker views anthologies as the “symbolic constructions [...] maps, namings, narratives that try to impose order on the wilderness” of the literary scene (4). At the same time, anthologies can and do act as aesthetic barometers, gauging, and often setting, literary trends. This is particularly true of anthologies of translated works, which offer “a symbolic means of experiencing [another] country through the always conflicted pages of the text” (Lecker 22) to their readers. Translated anthologies are, therefore, considered “indispensable for the study of translation and literary culture” (Franklin 13). Seruya also states that the “main, generic purpose of (translation) anthologies is to make (canonical, unknown, forgotten, marginalized) texts available and usable”, while they may also be used as “tools of intervention” for the purposes of pleasure and education, innovation, and preservation or in order to make a profit (2-3).

As the etymology of the term implies, anthology literally means “flower-gathering” from *anthos* “flower” + *logia* “collection, collecting” from *legein* “gather,” (also “speak”). The element of gathering, collecting, editing is a fundamental component of the literary anthology with its consequent implications of foregrounding some works/authors over others, silencing, misrepresenting, or completely erasing for reasons often only known to the anthologist and/or their publishing team. As such, the examination of Modern Greek and Yiddish poetic voices in translation and the presence or exclusion of women poets within anthologies through the conceptual lens of marginality is particularly apt.

Furthermore, as Stern remarks, “there is no anthological organization devoid of an ideological orientation. In the anthology, literary form, organization, even sequence, are all ideological subjects” (5). Consequently, in cultures with patriarchal constructions, canon formation has been male-oriented, with men generally editing the anthologies and women’s writing generally being excluded from their contents, with all the implications that this has for the position for women in the literary lineage. Harold Bloom's *Canons* and his essay on “The Anxiety of Influence” are a clear example. In relation to Bloom, Gluzman suggests that “the

only female figure in the (male) poet's world is the personified muse; in Bloom's own words: 'what is the Primal Scene, for a poet as a poet? It is his Poetic Father's coitus with the Muse' [...] Bloom's politics of exclusion is too overtly masculinist to be taken as innocent" (264).

Shifts in the representation of women writers in anthologies coincided with the rise of what is known as second-wave feminism in the 1970s. This triggered feminist literary studies (Gilbert and Gubar; Kristeva; Irigaray) and in 1977 Elaine Showalter published her groundbreaking work of feminist criticism *A Literature of Their Own*. This book uncovered the long but neglected tradition of women writers in England. Showalter comments how, "having lost sight of the minor, who was the link in the chain that bound one generation to the next, we have not had a very clear understanding of the continuities in women's writing" (7). The politics of exclusion² and inclusion of women writers in anthologies has generated a feminist re-examination of the literary canon. As Horowitz remarks regarding women in translated English anthologies, "decisions about what to translate into which language fundamentally affect the transmission and preservation of culture [...] Examining the inclusion and exclusion of writers in anthologies from synchronic and diachronic perspectives provide one way to gauge the transmission of literature" (11). The efforts of feminist literary studies and feminist criticism helped to reconstruct and to claim an "authentic past" where women were included, as Klepfisz remarks (56). In the last decades, new translations have foregrounded the "lost" works of many women writers and brought gender-awareness into anthologies and canon formation.

The following section sets the literary scene from which the anthologists of Modern Greek and Yiddish poetry would have drawn their material. The selection and presentation of women's poetry by the editors responsible often reflect the literary market's standards of understanding and appreciation of what is deemed literary within either or both the source and receptor culture. As a result, their anthologizing was often lagging behind the literary achievements and trends of the source literature, as they tended to select more conservative and established poets and less experimental works.

Method and criteria for material selection

The material discussed in this paper was found in poetry anthologies of Modern Greek and Yiddish poets published in the twentieth century. The anthologies were located through bibliographic searches in library catalogues and internet search engines using keywords such as "Modern Greek", "Yiddish", "poetry anthology", "women poets". The selection criteria for the inclusion of poetry anthologies were:

- chronological (the anthology had to be published in the twentieth century, i.e., 1900-1999),
- linguistic (the anthology had to appear in English but not necessarily in an Anglophone country),
- and gender-based (the anthology had to include at least one woman poet).

The material is presented in two tables, classified by source language. The full title of the anthology, the date and place of publication, and the publisher are included. The last three columns report the number of women poets among the overall poets in the collection, the number of poems by women poets in relation to the overall number of poems included in the anthology and the name of the editor/translator.

A traditional approach in translation history for the exploration of extraliterary elements is the study of paratexts, which are texts extending and complementing the main text (Genette). They may appear in the same volume as the main text, in the form of introductions, forewords, translator's notes or acknowledgements, in which case they are called peritexts. They may also

² The term was first used by Gayatri Spivak and was further developed by Celeste Schenck (244).

be derived from external sources, as in the case of reviews, author/translator obituaries, scholarly criticism, or interviews with authors/translators. Such materials are called epitexts. Paratexts offer a glimpse of the text's past and its genesis, marking the various phases of its evolution from the conceptual to the physical copy a reader holds in their hands. Specific peritexts, such as the title, blurbs and book covers, are an important component of the text as they contribute to its presentation, attract a specific audience and influence its reception in the market for which they have been designed. Paratexts unfold along the main text forming parallel and often complementary narratives. Like any narrative, however, they express the point of view of the writer and their publishing team, advocate specific agendas and are often influenced by the cultural norms they deem to expose.

The study of paratexts has offered significant insights into the work of marginalized translation agents and their contribution to the spread of literary and scientific ideas (Delisle and Wordsworth). As such, the study of paratexts has become one of the key methods for conducting research in translation history (see, for instance, Tahir-Gürçaglar; Batchelor). For this study, we consulted reviews, introductions, acknowledgements, title and contents' pages, poet and translator biographical notes.

Presentation of the material

Rae Dalven's anthology, *Modern Greek Poetry*³ in its 1949 edition presents four women poets (Myrtiotissa, Galatea Kazantzaki, Sophia Mavroidi Papadaky, and Rita Boumy Pappas), represented by a total of eleven poems between them. This is the highest number of women poets to be included in any anthology of modern Greek poetry translated into English in the twentieth century until Crist's anthology, published in 1997. The 1972 edition includes two additional women poets, Zoe Karelli and Melissanthi, represented by two poems each.

Published in 1951, Trypanis' anthology includes 218 poems starting from Byzantine times and ending with contemporary poets. The anthology introduces the poets Maria Polydouri and Emily S. Daphne and Myrtiotissa again with one poem each, thus effectively silencing the other three women poets anthologized by Dalven. An immediate narrowing of both scope and quantitative representation may be observed here, as the theme of Polydouri's and Myrtiotissa's poems is romantic love, while Daphne's poem evokes images of Attica.

The 1964 version of the same anthology edited by Trypanis adds no women poets, although by that time significant women's poetry had emerged in Greece, by such poets as Kiki Dimoula, Heleni Vakalo and Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke to name a few. Trypanis also edited the *Penguin Book of Greek Verse*, published in 1971, twenty years after his *Medieval and Modern Greek Poetry* anthology. Disappointingly, just the same three women poets are represented with the same poems.

Friar's 1982 anthology offers the familiar names of Zoe Karelli, Rita Boumy Pappas and Melissanthi with fourteen poems between them but adds no further women poets.

Thus, in terms of women's representation in anthologies, after the promising start with Dalven's collection, the number has steadily remained at three from 1951 to 1982. This underrepresentation finally changes in 1997 with Crist's anthology which includes an equal

³ The first English language anthology of Modern Greek poetry was the 1926 *Modern Greek Poetry* edited by T. Stephanides and G. Katsimbali, a serviceable copy of which has been very difficult to locate. The online bibliographic record of the Greek National Book Centre (ekebi.gr) shows the names of poets and titles of the poems included but no other information is available regarding the paratextual material accompanying the translated text. The only two women poets included in this anthology (with one poem each) are also represented in Dalven's anthology, which is the first this paper discusses.

number of men and women poets. Anthologized⁴ for the first time are Dimoula, Anghelaki-Rooke, Maria Laina, Jenny Mastoraki, Pauline Pampoudi, Ioulita Iliopoulou and Liana Sekelliou-Schultz. Some of these poets, such as Dimoula and Anghelaki-Rooke have been publishing since the 1950s and are currently considered among the best Greek poets of the last century. The range of topics and different styles of the poets are clearly displayed, with some metapoetic works, centring on poetry, its purpose and the writing process. Thus, the poetics of women poets is also represented, voicing the poets' principles on the making of poetry.

The following table summarizes the most pertinent information about each anthology:

Title	Publication Date	Publisher	Women poets/ poems	Women's poems/ poems	Editor/ translator
<i>Modern Greek Poetry</i>	1949	New York: Gaer Associates, Inc	6/57	8/150	Rae Dalven
<i>Medieval and Modern Greek Poetry: An anthology</i>	1951/ 1964	Oxford: Clarendon Press	3/38	3/218	Constantine Trypanis
<i>The Penguin book of Greek verse</i>	1971/ 1978/ 1981	Harmondsworth: Penguin Books	3/30	3/70	Constantine Trypanis
<i>Modern Greek Poetry</i>	1982	Athens: Efstathiadis Group	3/32	14/200	Kimon Friar
<i>Grind the big tooth: a collection of Modern Greek poetry</i>	1997	New York: Sterling House Publications	7/14	24/56	Robert Crist

Table 1. Twentieth century Modern Greek poetry anthologies in English translation.

Most of the Yiddish poetry anthologies in English translation were published after Korman's anthology *Yidishe dikhterins: antologye* (Yiddish Women Poets: Anthology) was published in 1928 in Yiddish. This anthology was made in response to the male dominated Bassin's *Antologye: finf hundert yor yidishe poezye* (Anthology: Five Hundred Years of Yiddish Poetry). Korman's anthology marked a turning point in establishing a place of women poets in Yiddish literary history, so it is most likely that the editors' choice of the women poets in the English anthologies came from Korman's anthology.

Imber's anthology, *Modern Yiddish Poetry: An Anthology*, (1927), which was the first major collection of Yiddish poetry in English translation,⁵ had a selection of 166 poems by fifty-three poets that showcased the modernist aspirations of Yiddish writers. This selection

⁴ This is the first time these women poets appear in an anthology of Modern Greek writing alongside their male counterparts. It is not, however, the first time they appear in English translation, as their work has been introduced in literary journals, or in a single-poet volumes.

⁵ There was a previous collection called *Great Yiddish Poetry* of only fifty-five pages with a small modest selection of poets by its editor Isaac Goldberg printed in 1923.

included only four women out of the seventy-seven poets anthologized. The women poets represented are Celia Dropkin, Rachel Korn, Anna Margolin, and Miriam Ulinover. Imber's edition preceded Korman's anthology, previously mentioned, so it is most likely that the inclusion of these four women poets came from their recognition in literary journals being published in Europe and New York in the 1920s.

Following Imber's anthology, Leftwich edited and translated *The Golden Peacock* in 1939, with a second edition in 1944. Leftwich arranges the poets primarily by country ("America", "South America", "Poland", "England", etc.) "in rather an arbitrary fashion" (xlv), except for the women poets who appear in a separate section, labelled "Women Poets". Leftwich justifies this exclusion to a different section as not being entirely sure in doing right by "taking Rachel Levin out of the Soviet group or Rachel Korn out of the Galician group", though he believes these women poets to be "sufficiently distinctively feminine to justify grouping them all together in a separate section" (xl). Out of 239 poets twenty-four are women, making their presence in this anthology the most representative of women poets in an English anthology of Yiddish poetry. Still, it falls short compared to the seventy women poets compiled by Korman in his 1928 Yiddish anthology.

The Anthology of Modern Yiddish Poetry, edited by Whitman in 1966, was not the first anthology edited and translated by a woman but does show a lack of representation of women poets as stated by Whitman in the introduction of her revised third edition in 1995 where more poems by women were included. Although Whitman's anthology presents only four women poets out of fourteen poets (Dropkin, Korn, Margolin, and Molodowsky) it does gather a vast number of poems by these women poets, twenty-three poems out of seventy-two.

Three years after Whitman's anthology, Howe and Greenberg edited *A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry* in 1969 (second edition in 1976, third edition in 1985). Fifty-eight poets are grouped in different sections, such as "Pioneers", "Modern Yiddish Poetry in Europe", "Modern Yiddish Poetry in America". Out of fifty-eight poets, nine are women and they are Veprinski, Margolin, Dropkin, Zychlinski, Vogel, Molodowsky, Korn, Gutman-Jasny, and Potash. In contrast to Leftwich's anthology, where women are relegated to a section titled "Women poets", in Howe and Greenberg's anthology women are incorporated in sections alongside male poets. In addition, this anthology includes two women poets who had not been previously published in any English anthology, Rachelle Veprinski and Rikudah Potash, the latter crowned as "the Poetess of Jerusalem" by Sholem Asch (Forman).

Eighteen years later, Howe edited another Yiddish poetry anthology in English, titled *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (1987) co-edited by Wisse and Shmeruk. A second edition would be published a year later, in 1988. Several translations were taken from the previously mentioned anthology *A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry*. In this anthology, the editors opted for a chronological order to present the thirty-nine poets, five of which are women. The women poets include Margolin, Dropkin, Molodowsky, Korn and Heifetz-Tussman.

The following table summarizes the most pertinent information about each anthology:

Title	Publication Date	Publisher	Women poets/ poets	Women's poems/ poems	Editor/ Translator
<i>Modern Yiddish Poetry: An Anthology</i>	1927	New York: The East and West Publishing Co.	4/77	8/166	Samuel J. Imber
<i>The Golden Peacock</i>	1939/ 1944/ 1961	London: Robert Anscombe & Co., LTD.	24/239	50/823	Joseph Leftwich

<i>The Anthology of Modern Yiddish Poetry</i>	1966/ 1979/ 1995	New York: October House	4/14	23/72	Ruth Whitman
<i>A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry</i>	1969/ 1976/ 1985	New York: Schocken books	9/58	30/234	Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg/ Various translators
<i>The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse</i>	1987/ 1988	New York: Penguin Books	5/39	24/224	Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk/ Various translators

Table 2. Twentieth century Yiddish poetry anthologies in English translation.

As it is clear from these figures that significantly fewer women poets and their poems appear in translated anthologies, the article will discuss the significance of this marginal representation of women's writing within anthologies and the repercussions for canon formation in the context of world literature.

Discussion

One of the subtle ways in which anthologies participate in literary canon formation is through the promotion, and thus legitimization, of specific texts, authors, and genres, often to the detriment of others. As a result, anthologies can never be “a disinterested or non-ideological instrument for the dissemination of ideological discourse [...] [as it is] one of the textual places where the ideological appropriation of literature becomes most readily visible” (Re 585). In cases of unequal representation, be it based on gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and so on, the people with the symbolic capital to promote and legitimize these texts and authors wield significant power with long-lasting consequences, particularly for the future of literatures of peripheral cultures. Without wishing to diminish the social embeddedness of the production and circulation of translated poetry (Boll; Milan), the discussion that follows will focus on the role of the editor/anthologist in relation to women poets' representation in the anthologies presented in the previous section.

Editors as gatekeepers is a concept discussed by several scholars regarding poetry translation and in particular poetry anthologizing (Boll; Milan; Munday; Jones). As Munday notes, anthologizing, “through the selection, presentation or omission of texts makes an evaluative judgment on the relative importance of different writers with competing claims” (84). This evaluative judgement is inherent to any anthology as, by definition, it cannot include the entire oeuvre of an author, since that would run counter to its purpose of introducing or presenting a sample of writers and writing, with an emphasis on variety. The question then that arises is what criteria were adopted by the editors of the ten anthologies presented in the previous section in their sampling of the material included?⁶

Dalven herself was part of the “Greek-speaking Ioanniote Jewish enclave in New York” (Yitzchak 154) and a poet, playwright, translator, and historian of Romaniote Jews. Dalven received a doctorate in English by the New York University and taught English literature and Modern Greek literature. Her selections for the 1949 anthology that she edited and translated

⁶ Only the first five anthologies and not the one edited by Robert Crist will be discussed here as, with its equal number of women and men poets, it satisfies the criterion for equal representativeness which the other anthologies do not.

do not seem intended for students, as was clearly the case with Trypanis' anthologies. Dalven's *Modern Greek Poetry* is innovative in more ways than one: the title implies a break from traditional anthologies of Classical and Medieval works of literature and a clear focus on recent and contemporary writing. The second innovation comes in the types of poets included: the left-leaning poet Yannis Ritsos, the Greek-Jewish poet Joseph Eliyia, and the future Nobel Laureates Yorgos Seferis and Odysseas Elytis, who were only beginning to make their mark in the late 1940s. Dalven's anthology thus sets a very distinctive tone and directly challenges extraliterary marginalities, such as diverse ethnicity and politics (Kronfeld 228).

The anthology also challenges intraliterary marginalities (Kronfeld 228), by including a wider range of topics from women's poetry. These are the heroic poem "Women of Souli", commemorating the sacrifice of women during the War of Independence (1821-1829) by Myrriotissa, a provocative first-person narrative poem of a prostitute by Galatea Kazantzakis, a lyrical poem dedicated to motherhood by Sophia Mavroidi Papadaky, and a poem about Athens by Rita Boumy Pappas. The selection may be attributed in part to Dalven's gender and own mixed ethnic background. Dalven's 1994 anthology devoted solely to women poets seems to attest to her feminist tendencies, which became more pronounced by the end of her life.

Constantine A. Trypanis was a scholar of Medieval and Modern Greek literature at Oxford, who taught in Chicago before taking up the post of Minister of Culture in 1974 in the post-dictatorship government. Trypanis' selection of material in his *Medieval and Modern Greek Poetry: An Anthology* (1951) suggests that the purpose of the anthologist was to demonstrate the uninterrupted poetic tradition that connected Ancient Greek to Modern Greek letters, while showcasing the links of some contemporary Greek poets to the current debates in European poetics (xxv). According to one of the anthology's reviewers, Trypanis was "well qualified to select what is of value and will prove of value to English students", while the selection of the material was done "with real taste and discrimination" (Jenkins 188). The reviewer's trust in Trypanis' literary judgement, based on the latter's scholarly qualifications and "European background", reifies Trypanis' position as literary gatekeeper with the prerequisite symbolic capital to introduce and demarcate what constitutes Modern Greek poetry, as presented in his anthology. Trypanis' anthology is more conservative in terms of the politics of the poets included, disregarding, for instance, the left-leaning poets appearing in Dalven's anthology. In 1951 the inclusion of three women poets with one poem each was not an issue to be commented on.

Criticism is different for the 1971 edition of Trypanis' Penguin *Book of Greek Verse*, however, about which Colakis noted that "a more generous representation of living poets (particularly women) would have been welcome" (370). The reviewer highlights this lack of representation in the 1981 rendition of the anthology, which had not been amended to include any of the numerous women poets actively publishing in Greece at the time.

The marginalization of the work of women poets reached its unfortunate extreme in Trypanis' Penguin publication with great ramifications because Penguin is an established publisher whose books reach libraries, bookshops, and readers across the Anglosphere and beyond. The timing of the first publication is significant: in 1971 the second wave of feminism was well underway internationally, resulting in the challenging of established canonical readings of texts and demands for the inclusion of marginalized and otherwise silenced voices.⁷ On a local level, the Colonels' dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974) was in full swing, while attempts to overthrow it gained support among pacifists, socialists, and antimilitarists. This support, often backed by European intellectuals and literati, translated into a renewed interest

⁷ This argument is further expounded if we consider that two anthologies of women's poetry were published around that same time: *Contemporary Greek women poets* (1978) and *Ten women poets of Greece* (1982). Also, a collection of selected poems by Melissanthi, *Hailing the ascending morn: selected poems* (1987).

in the literature of Modern Greece as a small nation. Considering the social and political climate of the times, the frequent reissue of the Penguin anthology without any substantial changes to the material included could be viewed as a manifestation of extraliterary marginality, centred around politics, which adversely affected women poets. As Van Dyck has shown, however, it was particularly during this time that women poets, such as Maria Laina, Jenny Mastoraki and Rhea Galanaki offered “an alternative response to censorship [...] [by introducing] the confusion and misunderstandings of the times into the language of their poetry” (57).

Kimon Friar was a poet, editor, and literary critic, who identified foremost as a poetry translator. His anthology *Modern Greek Poetry* (1982) is of particular interest as it uncovers hidden dynamics in the publication of translated anthologies which are not visible through paratexts. Friar in his introduction to the anthology contends that he tried “to select the best or most representative work” (25) with the poets’ help, which were consulted at several stages of the translation process. This sense of representation does not seem to include a wider selection of women poets, with only three women out of thirty-two poets in the anthology. The poets included are Karelli, Boumi-Pappas and Melissanthi, represented with fourteen poems between them. The anthologist’s agenda and selection criteria come into question here as Friar seems to ensconce women poets within the same unfavourable marginality as Trypanis. However, research undertaken at Princeton archives (Georgiou) revealed that Friar wished to include more women poets, who were cut out of the anthology by the editor and the publisher on the grounds of the book’s size and price. Friar had in fact translated entire poetry collections of the poets Vakalo and Maria Laina, and was constantly looking for a publisher for them to no avail.

At the same time, Friar’s selection of poems proves more varied than any previous anthologizing of their work, as he includes poems about youth and its problems by Karelli as well as the controversial for the time of its publication in 1952 “Man, Feminine Gender”, also by Karelli. The collection also includes Boumi-Pappas’s lament about long lost friends and Melissanthi’s evocation of “Ancient Shipwrecked Cities” alongside an ode to autumn. Apart from selecting a wider range of themes, likely more representative of these women’s poetic scope and breadth, Friar also notes the date of the poems’ initial publication in his anthology. Thus, the reader is informed that Boumi-Pappas has been publishing since 1942, Karelli since 1948, and Melissanthi since 1930.

A potential reason for the relative lack of women poets in twentieth-century anthologies could be that only “slight and superficial” critical attention (Robinson 23) has been paid to post-Second World War Greek women poets. Despite the work of scholars who have striven to demonstrate that “there was a consistent presence of powerful and uninhibited female voices in Greek literature throughout the second part of the twentieth century” (Kapparis 188), Barbeito and Calotychos suggest that “women’s voices and texts have long been silent in and absent from the modern Greek literary tradition” (44). Trypanis and his publisher Penguin were not alone in their blindness towards the existence of women poets. Fourtouni, the translator and editor of an anthology of Greek women writers published in 1978, notes that when she asked an “avant-garde publisher who had given me a treasure-trove of works by men poets” as well as students, friends, academicians the question “Where are the women poets?”, the answer she received was: “There are none”. Fourtouni gathered the work of seven women poets for her 1978 anthology and in 1994 Dalven’s anthology included no fewer than twenty-five women poets, many actively publishing since the 1930s or 1940s in Greece. Dalven acknowledges the help supplied by Greek poets when she was gathering the material for her 1949 anthology, explaining: “in a very real sense, this anthology is a collective job. I am indebted to a great number of poets and scholars in Athens, Paris and New York” (15). Dalven also recounts how she gathered the material published in her collection of *Contemporary Greek Women poets*, “Melissanthi introduced me to the Cypriot poet Pitsa Ghalazi [...] [and] to Ioanna Tsatsou [...]

Rita Boumi Pappa introduced me to Yolanda Pengli [...] Katerina Anghelaki-Rouke introduced me to Maria Servaki and Heleni Vakalo [...]” (15-16).

Similarly, the number of publications of Yiddish women poets in literary journals published in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century attests to their literary presence. Celia Dropkin, for example, was published in the first issue of the *Inzikh* journal (1920-1940), opening with her poem “*Mayne hent*” (“My hands”). Dropkin, Korn and Margolin were frequently published in the press and the latter was regarded by literary critics as one of the finest early twentieth-century Yiddish poets in America. These poets also published their work in Yiddish in book format, Korn as early as 1928 and Margolin in 1929.

As women poets were indisputably part of the literary scene at start of the twentieth century, what cause could there be for their absence from the earliest recorded translated anthologies? Could it be that the editors/translators were not thorough enough in their exploration of what the Greek and Yiddish poetic scenes had to offer? Would it be fair to highlight what seem like distinct gaps in their knowledge of the contemporary Greek and Yiddish literature of their time? In the case of the Greek poems included, these gaps were paired with a seemingly inherent conservatism, which manifested in hackneyed poetic choices of romantic or mythological themes that did no credit to the variety and breadth of Greek women poets’ work. By contrast with the women poets represented in Modern Greek anthologies, Yiddish women poets were often accused of not being feminine enough, or of being too sexual and too daring with their poetic styles and themes. As a result, there is a lesser representation of poems from women poets on the more predictable themes of love or motherhood because, as Novershtern argues, these women poets were more concerned with modernism and politics.

As Seruya notes, translated anthologies may “reflect and project an image of the best text, author or genre from a given culture, [and] thus manipulate its reception” (2). The issue of the potential readership of these anthologies should be noted, particularly in relation to the Yiddish women’s presence and Yiddish-language anthologies discussed here. Niger in his article “*Di yidishe literatur un di lezerin*” (“Yiddish Literature and the Female Reader”) (1913), remarks “that the connections between Yiddish and women must [also] be sought in the question of audience” (Niger 100; Seidman 15). Since women’s writing was considered a means of reaching a wider readership, journals published their poems more frequently. Glatstein made his poetic debut in New York by using the female pseudonym Clara Bloom before launching his career as a co-founder of the *Inzikh* poetic movement. The idea was that “a woman’s American-sounding name would make his poems more marketable” (Novershtern 131). The fact that Anna Margolin was first thought to be a man among intellectuals in the literary cafes is a telling sign of the inherent biases against women poets in the male-dominated poetry cycles of the early twentieth century in the United States. As Schachter observes, “all of these women struggled with the realization that even as new professions, new rights, and new social roles became legally open to women, de facto social realities prevented women from gaining equal access to these new possibilities” (9).

Similar to the Greek case, most editors of the Yiddish anthologies were men and poets themselves, and chose for their anthologies the works of poets whom they liked. Imber, a poet himself, strove to present to the non-Yiddish reader modernist poetry written in Yiddish at a time (the 1920s) when Yiddish poets were most strongly pursuing avant-garde aesthetics. Leftwich, also a poet, translated most of the poems in his anthology. Leftwich explains how “the translator, by making accessible the work of other people and ages, by diffusing thought and suggesting new ways of thinking, influences the whole course of civilisation” (xxiv). This bold statement suggests just how radically the underrepresentation of women writers in anthologies might alter readers’ understanding of literary history. Additionally, Leftwich’s

organization of the anthology positioning women in a separate section titled “Women Poets” clearly separates them from their male counterparts, thus establishing them as the “other”. According to Klepfisz, women are presented as “a country unlike any other: without borders and without connections to Jewish History and communal life,” and further adds how Leftwich's choice of arrangement also showcases us with the contradiction that while “the existence of women writers is acknowledged, (...) their place *within* Jewish literary history is denied” (43).

Considering the date of publication (1939) of Leftwich’s anthology, Yiddish is not situated regarding its tragic end and the editor does not remark on the demise of its readers in the introduction (as later anthologies do). Instead, he notes how “Yiddish has become more alive than it ever was before and has never had so many writers and readers as today [...] it is because of such a realistic approach [to Yiddish literature] by the present-day Yiddish writers that Yiddish literature continues” (xli). This optimistic statement of the anthology’s publication contrasts dramatically with his later revised edition in 1961 and other later English anthologies of Yiddish poetry published in the United States after the Holocaust. Still, Leftwich questions the reception of these poems for the English reader in terms of marginality in a time when the aversion of the “other” and “separateness” were on the rise. Some poems, Leftwich believes, will not be understood as they have little or nothing to do with the English culture. Some, however, “may kindle the imagination of an English poet” (liii).

Although *The Anthology of Modern Yiddish Poetry*, edited by Whitman in 1966, was not the first anthology edited and translated by a woman, the first one being by Zweig Betsky in 1958, it like its forerunner has a low representation of women poets. Zweig Betsky's anthology presents four poems by one woman poet, Molodowsky, out of the forty-six poems that the anthology includes, while Whitman's anthology presents four women poets out of fourteen poets (Dropkin, Korn, Margolin, and Molodowsky). Whitman stated that the inclusion of more women poets was made in the third edition printed in 1995, bringing the anthology “up to date by certain additions [...] To further flesh out the role played by women in the original *Anthology*” (11). This points to a change in attitudes by the 1990s towards the contribution of women poets. In this third edition, Whitman even states her desire “to devote an anthology to the large group of excellent women poets who have written in Yiddish” (11). That anthology was never published; Whitman died four years after making this statement. An anthology exclusively of Yiddish poetry by women is yet to be published in English.

Whitman omitted certain poets from her anthology, she explained, due to the difficulty of translating their work or because, they did not fit “my hand and my taste as a poet” (18). The avant-garde Yiddish poet A.G. Leyeles was one such poet she left out for this reason. Such comments reinforce the image of the editor/anthologist as a gatekeeper whose tastes determine which poet and poems will gain an afterlife in English translation.

In contrast, Benjamin and Barbara Harshav’s anthology *American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology* (1986)⁸ offers a personal vision centred on the avant-garde Yiddish poets of the Inzikh movement. Harshav had already been the chief promoter of the Inzikh poets in his essays and criticism. Their anthology contains numerous works by seven major poets writing Yiddish poetry in America, with just one of these being a women poet. The poets Leyeles, Glatstein, Halpern, Teller, Tussman, Weinstein, and Leivick, translated by the editors themselves, are each represented by an extensive selection of their work, this constituting what Novershtern calls “the American Yiddish Hall of Fame” (360).

In Howe and Greenberg’s anthology (1969), a team of translators and English-language poets worked alongside the editors. Not all translators were familiar with Yiddish, as the editors

⁸ This anthology has not been mentioned in Table 2 as it centers mainly on one concrete poetic movement rather than presenting a diverse number of poets from different time periods.

point out in their introduction, and of those who “lacked Yiddish wholly or in part, the editors supplied scrupulously literal English versions of the poems” (66). This last remark reflects the gradual decline in numbers of Yiddish speakers. This is the first instance where the problem of finding translators for Yiddish, as a minority language, is foregrounded. Norich observes how “within the huge variety and sheer volume of writing in Yiddish in the twentieth century, a miniscule fraction - no more than two or three percent - has been translated into English” (20). Renowned translators such as Cynthia Ozyck, John Hollander and Adrienne Rich translated without having much expertise in the Yiddish language. The latter, an American poet, essayist, and feminist,⁹ translated most of the poems written by women in the anthology, such as Anna Margolin, Celia Dropkin, Debora Vogel, and Kadia Molodowsky. Translating the work of Yiddish women poets provided Rich with many insights in her project of feminist re-vision.

While Howe included nine women poets in his 1969 anthology, in his later anthology *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (1987), co-edited by Wisse and Shmeruk, the number drops to just five. Heifetz-Tussman is the only new woman poet in this anthology, added probably because she was awarded the Itzik Manger Prize for Yiddish poetry in Tel Aviv in 1981.

Although many women writers made their entry into Yiddish literature through poetry, which was considered a more daring genre than prose, their lack of representation in the anthologies points to their marginalization and the effective silencing of their voices. Recent studies and new translations of Yiddish women's writing (for example Norich and Schachter among others) focus on other genres where women's contributions had not previously been recognized – their short stories and novels, underlining the point that literary modernism was a dialogue between men and women writers.

Conclusions

From the anthologies discussed in this paper, fascinating insights can be gained into the way women poets have been represented, as well as insights into the process of selection and the editorial priorities of the anthologists. At the same time, the material poses challenging questions about issues of minoritization, marginality and even of progression towards fairer representation. As we observed, the representation of women poets in the anthologies appeared relatively stagnant for several decades in the late twentieth century in the case of Modern Greek poetry, whereas with Yiddish poetry representation dropped as the century progressed. It is curious to observe this “persistent marginality of women's poetry” (Kronfeld 232) in a literature that has many women writers.

Although Kronfeld here refers to Yiddish literature, the same could be argued of Modern Greek poetry and its representation in English. Figures such as Galatea Kazantzaki (1884-1962), “one of the most prolific female authorial voices in Greek Modernism” (271), are a case in point. Kazantzaki was only anthologized by Dalven in 1949, an omission which foregrounds what is at stake when works and authors from peripheral literatures like Modern Greek and Yiddish are anthologized into core languages: the predilections and various agendas of the editor/anthologist determine the afterlives in translation of the selected texts, while simultaneously sentencing the silenced texts to further obscurity. As a result, editors' and anthologists' selections have the power to support or subvert hegemonic narratives of canon formation by choosing to promote or resist normative texts. This redressing of literary representation within the poetic canon would take the form of “literary historiography [performing] a critical reading of its own practices into the discourse of the profession, to

⁹ Adrienne Rich was also a founding editor of *Bridges, A Journal for Jewish Feminists and Our Friends* (1990).

expose and resist the drive to erase some forms of marginality while privileging others” (Kronfeld 233).

It would be unreasonable to identify anthologists as solely responsible for selecting the work included in an anthology, since research has shown that anthologizing can be “largely driven by extraliterary factors such as socio-political conditions, the readership, the publishing market” (Kruczkowska 105). At the same time, despite the known aversion of publishers to risk taking in publishing experimental or avant-garde writing and market constraints on book sizing and pricing, the first step towards marginalization often starts with the editors’ conservative readings of the source literature that recycle the already established and the previously translated. By aiming towards the inclusion of more diverse texts that embrace different types of marginalized or minoritized authors and genres, editors may use their power as gatekeeping agents and literary custodians. Greater transparency in the selection of material and more reflexivity in relation to criteria and potential biases would help improve the situation – and these advances are indeed becoming more widespread in twenty-first century translated anthologies.

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Source-oriented Agency in Hungarian/Romanian to English Translation: Translator Testimonial

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Abstract

As someone who has embarked on their translation career as an offshoot from academic research and as a translator who works from native languages into a language of habitual use, I privilege source-culture oriented strategies. My aim is to contribute to the enrichment of the global literary canvas by celebrating less translated languages and I am striving to contribute to the diversity of the translation scene. On a practical level, this “supply-driven” agenda goes hand in hand with initiating translation projects, and in this respect, I am aiming to challenge dominant concepts of centre and periphery. Rather than waiting to be asked by publishers, I advocate reaching out to professional organizations and funding bodies in the source culture(s) and empowering the translator to act not only as a supplier of literature from another language but as an active participant in cultural diplomacy. My contribution to this special issue of *The AALITRA Review* reflects on my experience, drawing on collaborations with publishers, authors and funding bodies, and highlighting successful initiatives that have played a role in ensuring the visibility of less translated literatures in the English-speaking world.

Background

In this paper, I shall be reflecting on my experience as a Hungarian and Romanian to English translation professional.¹ My translation practice had gradually emerged from my academic research and teaching conducted over the last two decades in the United Kingdom, motivated by an insider knowledge of the source cultures and a sense of frustration with the limited representation of contemporary Hungarian and Romanian literature in English translation. To put it differently, I reacted to my dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between the indigenous and foreign recognition circuit, and my aim was to contribute to the Anglophone understanding of Hungarian and Romanian literary traditions. Looking back from the vantage point of nearly a decade of freelance translation work, I can point out that I had my ups and downs, including absolute joy and professional recognition, as well as moments of insecurity and self-doubt.

Starting out, I was reasonably aware of the necessary negotiations between what could be accessible for the target culture and what could be considered representative for the source culture, but I underestimated the baggage that being a non-native speaker of English would carry. As a widely published scholar and someone with UK-based doctoral studies in English and Comparative Literary Studies, I was not used to having to justify my right to express myself in English, and the issue of hierarchy between my languages or the order in which I acquired them had never come up in my academic career. English has been the language of my habitual use for more than twenty-five years and is the language in which I communicate day in, day out. As an aspiring translator, however, I suddenly found myself turned away from mentoring

¹ This paper reworks some ideas I presented in a paper delivered at the "Supplying Translation" symposium, hosted online by the University of Nottingham on 27 April 2021.

schemes and translation agencies or was invited to work in the opposite direction: into my native languages, Hungarian and Romanian. This attitude that privileges the translator's mother tongue is of course not entirely unjustified, however, it is deeply restrictive if not discriminative and constitutes a major obstacle to attempts at achieving diversity within the profession.

That being so, I hasten to add that this type of gatekeeping is not characteristic for the entire sector, and the translation scene has become considerably more inclusive in recent years despite the ongoing preference for native speaker translators. Even though I have stumbled upon endless obstacles over the last decade, in the end, I chose to continue translating – because I wanted to contribute to a plurality of voices in translation practice and to carve out a legitimate space for different nuances of English. I also wanted to challenge power relations and to have a say in what and how to translate. In my modest ways, I aspire to contribute to curating and managing translation flows between relatively small literatures on the semi- periphery and the hyper-centre that is English. As it happens, for neither Hungarian or Romanian is English the main target language. Romanian titles are generally picked up in French, Spanish, Italian translations and Hungarian titles in German, Dutch, Polish, and there is also a fair amount of mutual translation between Romanian and Hungarian, especially as far as Hungarian literary voices from Transylvania is concerned. For both Hungarian and Romanian literary outputs, the ultimate aim with English translations is not merely to set foot in the UK or US market but also to open up texts to a wider global access. In most cases, however, English versions are a realistic expectation after already existing foreign circulation, and they tend to get commissioned only in the wake of successful publications in other Western languages. The reasons for this are manifold apart from publishers playing safe, but when it comes to the flow of literary translations from the less widely spoken languages, which in this case equals less translated languages, the sheer terminology in use is illustrative of the status quo.

Terminology

Chitnis, Stougaard-Nielsen and Milutinovic edited a collection entitled *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations*, arising from a conference with the same name held in September 2015 at the University of Bristol. An affiliated event was organized in March 2016 at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest under the title *Small is Great. Cultural Transfer Through Translating the Literatures of Smaller European Nations*. Terms such as “translation as imposition” – to describe translation activity “driven by the source culture” (Dollerup 45-56); “source-culture driven” translations (Zauberga 67-78); “literary gifts” from the “source pole” (Leppihalme 789-804), and more recently, “supply-driven translation” (Vimr 46-68; Hellewell) make an explicit point of drawing attention to the forces that fuel this type of endeavour. Furthermore, specialist literature as well as personal accounts tend to use “native language(s)”, “mother tongue” and “first language” interchangeably, the latter often situated in opposition with “L2” and “acquired” language(s). The numerical references clearly signal the chronological order of language acquisition, whereas references to “native” or one’s female parent prioritize birth right to the detriment of geo-cultural affiliation. These terms, not to mention the negative “non-native”, also deny agency to the speaker and fail to acknowledge the possibility of multiple allegiances. In my case, for example, the languages I had been exposed to at birth stopped being the languages of habitual use decades ago. In their wake, a new complex relationship has emerged – this time between a cluster of languages that interlink, without the need of formulating hierarchies. This is not a case of “inversion” as the term “inverted translation” might suggest; it is simply a continuum of languages which I have access to and which are in constant dialogue with one another. That said, I recognize my own practice in these theoretical considerations, even if I wish that the landscape was more nuanced, and I had much wider options to navigate. Needless to say, my own experience detailed below is not

an exhaustive analysis of the overall scene and may not be representative for other translators who have come to the profession at other moments in time, in different ways and from different cultural locations.

Pitching and Championing Projects

Out of the nine published books that I translated to date, I directly pitched five, and I was commissioned to translate four, twice as a follow-up from earlier work. Two titles were funded by the author, and the rest by the respective publishers that include independent and academic presses. Three of my commissions were by publishers based in Romania, which means that I have basically cold-pitched all my UK-based publications. Pitching to publishers is of course common in academia and, in this regard, I have significant prior experience, but it is an endeavour with a very low success rate that demands plenty of effort and commitment. Only a small number of editors and literary publishers are open to pitches from translators, which means that even if a certain title might be a potentially good fit for a given publisher, it may not reach them in the absence of intermediaries. Recently, two pitches of mine were picked up by publishers (*Home* by Andrea Tompa by Istros Books in the United Kingdom and *MyLifeandMyLife* by Melinda Mátyus Ugly Duck Presse in the United States), and Romanian publisher Curtea Veche commissioned me to translate one of their titles into English (*The Magnificent Boar* by Péter Demény, soon forthcoming with US publisher New Meridian Arts).

As the translator of one of the few Hungarian or Romanian titles to be published in English in a given year, I am aware of the responsibilities attached to representing a niche strand within Anglophone translation spaces. Some of my translator colleagues from the Hungarian have recently addressed this at a panel chaired by Tímea Sipos at ALTA43 (the first such panel dedicated to translating Hungarian): Paul Olchvary stating that publishers often see the few Hungarian authors as spokespersons for Hungary per se. This is not what these authors generally intend themselves, and I feel that our task is to add to the diversity of literary imports from Romanian and Hungarian, and even though some authors may get slowly established in English, it is important to try to persuade publishers to take risks rather than commission the next book by (the very few) award-winning figures.

Translating Drama and Theatre

As a translator of drama, I find that this responsibility is even more prevalent and we could not even average one translation per year in my language combinations, even though we have the added support of performers and theatre companies, who fuel the interest of publishers in bringing out drama translations. In a UK context, print publications are generally predicated on productions at major theatre venues, in which case Methuen, Oberon (both now part of Bloomsbury Publishing) or Nick Hern Books are likely to publish the playtexts that are then sold independently and marketed as an accompanying programme during the show's run. Sadly, this rarely extends to fringe productions, despite the much greater variety of dramatic work being produced there. This is a major loss to the diversity and accessibility of the theatre scene, but it is somewhat counterbalanced by alternative approaches to making the broader theatre profession aware of new work.

This trend is exemplified by online theatre productions and/or audio dissemination – such as my recent projects with Trap Door Theatre in Chicago and with Trafika Europe Radio Theatre, where my translations of Matéi Visniec's *Cabaret of Words* and *Decomposed Theatre* were adapted for digital and radio theatre, respectively. Trap Door decided to undertake a very significant adaptive edit, retitling their production *Discourse without Grammar* after one of the scenes in the play, while Trafika Europe Radio framed their broadcast with an extended interview with the playwrights and translator conducted by Trafika Europe Radio editor and

influential cultural commentator Andrew Singer. In addition, I have also developed a habit of documenting my stage translations, and in parallel with having plays by the Hungarian András Visky and the Romanian Matéi Visniec (also known as Matei Vişniec) produced by the likes of Foreign Affairs in London and Trap Door and Theatre Y in Chicago, I have written about the translation and staging process for publications such as *The Theatre Times*, *Hungarian Literature Online*, the *ITI Bulletin* and most recently *Hungarian Cultural Studies*.

Relying on my expertise as a writer and critic, I edited substantial hybrid publications that transcend the boundaries between general readership and academia. In this way, I was able to bypass the rule whereby only productions staged by major theatre venues warrant the publication of plays and managed to persuade Seagull Books to publish the first English language anthology of Matéi Visniec's plays, titled *How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients and Other Plays*. I also prompted *Intellect* to bring out the critical anthology András Visky's *Barrack Dramaturgy: Memories of the Body*. Most recently, I edited and translated the volume *Plays from Romania: Dramaturgies of Subversion*, published by Bloomsbury in October 2021. This volume is the first transnational survey of playwriting featuring dramas by Romanian, Hungarian, German and Roma authors not only in English translation but also in Romanian. This book has received an exceptionally warm welcome, including a possible translation offer and several generous reviews and mentions in English, Hungarian and Romanian.

Supply-driven Translation

As indicated above, all these projects have been “supply-driven”, compensating for a perceived lack of demand from the target culture, in the sense that I identified the works to be translated, contacted the original authors and sought out publishers. Having written about most of the authors previously in prestigious academic publications such as the collection *Contemporary European Playwrights*, edited by Maria M Delgado, Bryce Lease and Dan Rebellato, and including introductory essays in my edited anthologies has certainly helped, and so did the fact that I involved fellow translators - thus suggesting broader preoccupation with the work than just my personal interest. In other words, I felt that curating a selection from what promises to be an extensive portfolio would seem preferable to vanity projects from the point of view of publishers. This also underlined the fact that, especially in such niche fields as Hungarian-English and Romanian-English translation, there are communities of translators.

It goes without saying that with limited publishing opportunities, there is a healthy competition (more than once, I found myself pitching titles that others were also promoting), but if anything, there is need for more translator voices to render the extremely diverse array of styles, genres and approaches in these rich literary traditions. Source language publishers have recently started to recognize the importance of reaching out to active translators, and the Hungarian Magvető and the Romanian Polirom in particular have decent English-language websites, alert translators to new publications and regularly commission translation samples from their recent titles. Needless to say, few of these titles get actually published, and contracts may not go to the translator who initially did the sample, partly because the sample scene is dominated by a handful of translators and because persuading publishers is such a laborious task.

Cultural Organizations and Their Roles in Facilitating Translation Projects

Informal public knowledge on which literary works are being translated, and the names of the translators, would be useful. Grant schemes run by the Petőfi Literary Fund in Hungary draw attention to some of the latest ventures on which individual translators are working. Since some of the grants are for emerging translators and no publishing contracts are required, people can

genuinely propose projects they would like to champion. One of the most successful examples is Owen Good's translation of *Pixel* by Krisztina Tóth (2019), which was the beneficiary of such an initial grant and then went on to successful publication and notable commendations from several prestigious translation awards. This is a rare case though. An array of completed samples are still waiting to be picked up by publishers, including my own translation samples from Árpád Kun's *Boldog észak* [*Blissful North*] and Johanna Bodor's *Nem baj, majd megértem* [*Never Mind, I'll Get It Later*] for which I am still on the look-out for a publisher. The Petőfi Literary Fund is also running schemes for publishers interested in bringing out Hungarian titles in translation, and as it is the case in other languages, most translators approach publishers with such information at hand knowing that without subsidies they are unlikely to get anywhere. My prospective translation of Andrea Tompa's fourth novel *Haza* [*Home*] has just received such a grant, albeit at a scale that in itself does not cover the full costs and hence further subsidies are needed. This initial vote of confidence – as well as a published excerpt in *World Literature Today* – may be helpful in persuading other funding bodies. I can only hope that when allocating future grants, the actual market value of translators' labour will also be taken into account.

The Romanian Cultural Institute is overseeing a similar award-scheme for the publishers of translations from Romanian. The Translation and Publication Support Programme (TPS) at Centrul Național al Cărții (CENNAC) [National Book Centre] has supported around 300 titles since 2018 (Novac), while FILIT (Iași International Festival of Literature and Translation) organizes translation residences in the quaint Moldavian village Ipotești and holds an annual festival. Each October, FILIT invites international translators from Romania and showcases their work alongside that of the translated authors. This festival is a very effective way of making translators from various parts of the world fall in love with Romania and facilitates direct contact not only with the source language/source culture but also with new authors and publications. Curated by Monica Joița and Monica Salvan, the prestigious cultural weekly *Observator Cultural* has run a series of articles on the literary translation scene in Romania. *Observator Cultural* highlights dominant themes, authors, translators and reception patterns in different countries. Such statistics show that the year of the pandemic was the richest so far in terms of international translations from Romanian (2020). One of the most translated Romanian authors in recent years is the interwar Jewish writer Mihail Sebastian, with several titles in English, including by Gabi Reigh – *The Town with Acacia Trees*; *Women*; *The Star with No Name* and Philip Ó Ceallaigh – *For Two Thousand Years*; *Women*. Contemporary names include Nobel-nominee Mircea Cărtărescu, whose novel *Nostalgia*, translated by Julian Semilian, was reissued by Penguin in 2021, and whose monumental *Solenoid* is forthcoming from Deep Vellum in a translation by Sean Cotter; poet Ana Blandiana, dramatist Matéi Vișniec and European Union Literature Prize winner Tatiana Țibuleac. The latter's visceral pandemic poetry was showcased in 2021 in *Modern Poetry in Translation (MPT)* in my translation, and it is genuinely baffling that her fiction, already available in French, Spanish, German, Polish, Norwegian, Hungarian among other languages, has not yet attracted the right Anglophone publisher.

Probably the most successful showcase of Romanian literature in the United Kingdom has been the ground-breaking "Romania Rocks" festival, co-organized by the European Literature Network (ELN) and the Romanian Cultural Institute in London. Launched online in the Autumn of 2020, it featured a host of events, such as a series in conversations where Romanian authors were paired with British counterparts, such as Ana Blandiana, Magda Cârneci, Ruxandra Cesereanu, Marius Chivu, Andrei Codrescu, Norman Manea, Ioana Pârvulescu, Bogdan Teodorescu and Matei Vișniec appearing alongside Paul Bailey, Vesna Goldsworthy, AL Kennedy, Deborah Levy, David Mitchell, Ben Okri, Ian Rankin, Elif Shafak,

Fiona Sampson, George Szirtes. The Festival also featured a dedicated translator focus and I was honoured to be invited to participate in the panel “Translating Romania” alongside colleagues Diana Manole, Philip Ó Ceallaigh, Gabi Reigh, Andrea Scridon, Adam Sorkin and Lidia Vianu, where we all read from our work in progress and contextualized our practice. The material we discussed covered several literary genres and styles, from poetry to drama and fiction, and included contemporary as well as historically distant pieces. The event grew out of the *Romanian Riveter*, the first collection of Romanian literature to be published in the United Kingdom (launched in September 2020), and was the brainchild of indefatigable ELN-founder Rosie Goldsmith and Carmel West, assisted by Gabriela Mocan and the RCI team led by Magda Stroe. The *Romanian Riveter* (2020), as well as the “Romania Rocks” festival (2020, 2021) aimed to draw international attention to the most outstanding literary outputs in Romania, and to engineer a debate around current themes and concerns as well as circulation and reception. My contribution to both the publication and the festival centred on the work of multi-award-winning playwright, novelist and poet Matéi Visniec, rooted in an ambition to carve out a space for drama in literary debates and to continue my efforts in raising awareness of this author’s work, started with the edited collection *How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients and Other Plays* and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Literature Award shortlisted novel *Mr K Released*. A second edition of “Romania Rocks”, in November 2021, took place in a hybrid format; Mircea Cărtărescu and Miruna Vlada travelled to London and met their readers face to face, while a number of other authors, such as Magda Cârnelci, Ioana Pârvulescu, Doina Ruști, Ioana Nicolaie and Lavinia Braniște joined online. British authors involved this year included Philippe Sands, Georgina Harding, Jonathan Coe, Tessa Dunlop, Monique Roffey, Lionel Shriver and Tracy Chevalier, and were, as before, in dialogue with their Romanian counterparts. The festival’s translation panel (entitled “The Arts of Translation: Romanian Literature Across Borders”) was also held in a hybrid fashion, with Gabriela Mocan and myself being present at the RCI in London, and Sean Cotter, Diana Manole and Viorica Patea participating online. The focus of the festival being on women writers, we all discussed our work from this perspective, and I showcased my latest stage translation, involving a female author, adaptor and director: Mihaela Panainte’s adaptation of Herta Müller’s *Niederungen/Ținuturile joase*, titled *Lowlands* in English. This text has recently been published in the Bloomsbury anthology *Plays from Romania: Dramaturgies of Subversion*, which I edited and translated in 2021. I found it essential to highlight that this work had arisen from my long-standing collaboration with a number of playwrights hailing from Romania and writing in different languages and cultural contexts, including German, Hungarian and Roma. I equally stressed that this book project would not have come to fruition without the involvement of theatre companies with whom we had the opportunity to test my translation in practice, both as works in progress and as actual stage productions. Theatre Y in Chicago and Foreign Affairs in London had literally acted as “godparents” to this book, nurturing my work over the years and overseeing its development through various drafts (Komporalý, “Translating” 164-175 and “Skopje”).

This source-culture oriented agenda goes hand in hand with translators initiating projects (rather than being asked by target culture publishers). In this respect, we are looking at a certain independence from the laws of supply and demand, because a fair amount of work is being undertaken without secure publishing prospects. The eminent translator of Péter Esterházy (among others), Judith Sollosy is a firm advocate of this approach, adding that “the most troublesome authors give translators the most creative freedom” (quoted in Sipos et al.). Of course, this approach is hardly workable financially for those without other incomes (most translators of Hungarian/Romanian literature have additional jobs, often in teaching or editing)

and one can rightfully have reservation towards it, but it is an avenue for utmost creative independence, whereby translators can focus on authors without having to worry about commercial viability. This is not to suggest that relevance in an Anglophone context is marginal, but there are translators who feel very strongly about championing authors without the pressure to focus only on voices that are most likely to be assimilated into the target canon. In other words, camouflaging that a particular title is a translation is not on the agenda, on the contrary, the aim is celebrating the unique flavour of texts and contributing to the diversity of the literary ecosystem. Ironically, some so-called “difficult” authors have actually gained major international recognition, such as 2015 Man Booker Prize-winner László Krasznahorkai, who is one of the most translated Hungarian writers and whose latest book *Herscht 07769* has been earmarked for English translation, for New Directions, in tandem with its Hungarian publication. I should add that Otilie Mulzet is perhaps the only Hungarian-English translator who does not need to follow this supply-driven strategy, and even though she certainly champions authors, she reached a stage of recognition where publishers show interest in her work in its own right and commission her.

The Hungarian Translators’ House in Balatonfüred has been the go-to place for those wishing to benefit from such creative freedom for over twenty years, and candidates only have to submit a brief proposal in order to be able to work in excellent conditions on their chosen projects. These projects can be at various stages of development and in any language out of Hungarian, and while the House has its regular returning guests, there is a concerted effort to attract a younger demographic. As Péter Rácz, the founder and managing director of the House has pointed out in a lecture at Collegium Hungaricum in Vienna (Dallos and Rácz), by organizing language-specific workshops in around twelve languages to date, the average age of residents has come down by over two decades. In 2020, I co-lead the first Hungarian-English week-long translation workshop (albeit online due to the pandemic), and we had a fruitful process where participants felt comfortable to volunteer their solutions and to draw attention to the multiplicity of translation strategies available. Instilling this kind of confidence in emerging translators is very important, and it is certainly something I wish I had the opportunity to benefit from when I was starting out. This collaborative sharing has actually continued over recent months in the shape of a regular online translation lab, very much driven by some of the emerging translators. This energy seems to parallel the successful translator-training programme at the Balassi Institute in Budapest, also initiated by Rácz, and there is an annual summer school-cum-translation camp aimed at young translators organized by PRAE.HU in a picturesque location by the Danube that also invites some of the most happening authors of the moment, thus facilitating much needed contact between writers and their prospective translators.

Conclusion

Looking at the current landscape of translators, there is a healthy balance between age groups, which includes people between their twenties and even over-seventies, and geographical locations, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Hungary, Romania, elsewhere in Europe and the world. There are also multiple approaches that include the experience of translators who have native-level familiarity with the source language or who work in both directions. I practice this myself to some extent, but perhaps most prominent is the case of Lidia Vianu, founder of the Centre for the Translation and Interpretation of the Contemporary Text (CTITC) at the University of Bucharest and of the publishing house Contemporary Literature Press. Vianu translated both eminent Romanian voices into English (Marin Sorescu, Mircea Dinescu), and English authors into Romanian (Joseph Conrad). I am bringing this issue up because less translated languages are also the ones where there is a much higher incidence

of L2 translators. Since these languages are “less often the source of translation in the international exchange of linguistic goods” (Branchadell and West 1), fewer native English speakers invest the effort to acquire them to an adequate standard with a prospective translation career in mind. I find that it is highly patronising and simply inaccurate to state that using L2 translators is a case of settling for second best. In the specific situation of Hungarian/Romanian-English, currently active L2 translators have spent most of their lives in their adopted cultures and are in a unique position to form a genuine bridge between source and target languages. Debates on the topic of translating into “non-native” languages, however, are still necessary, such as discussions on the UK Emerging Translators’ Network and the above-mentioned Translators Association panel. There is an urgent need for addressing the potential of both mother tongues and acquired languages in translation, especially if conducted dispassionately and acknowledging broader geopolitical concerns. Seeing that “L2”, “non-native” or “inverted” translation are highly charged terms, further theoretical inquiry into this field would be welcome, alongside collegial discussion and practical experimentation. First and foremost, however, all this only makes sense if we advocate utmost linguistic competence and – in Marta Dziurosz’s words – emphasize the “importance of the quality of the text produced over the identity of the translator” (27). In this translator testimonial I wanted to show that Hungarian and Romanian to English translation is predominantly marked by a supply-driven agenda, rooted in the passionate commitment of translators and the relative unfamiliarity of publishers in the English-speaking world with these literary traditions. A lot of work is translated on spec (without being sure of success, but with the hope of favourable outcome) and translators actively cold-pitch books to commissioning editors – effectively acting as literary agents, and very few titles are published without the financial contribution of funding bodies or grant schemes. Having said that, both Hungarian and Romanian titles have been nominated for prestigious awards, including EBRD, Warwick Prize for Women in Translation, TA First Translation, PEN Translates, and National Endowment for the Arts, Individual translators have gained wider recognition, such as Otilie Mulzet, Peter Sherwood, and Len Rix from Hungarian; Adam Sorokin, Sean Cotter, and Alistair Ian Blyth from Romanian. Kidlit events regularly reference Anna Bentley’s translation *Arnica, the Duck Princess* (authored by Ervin Lázár) published by Pushkin and *A Fairytale For Everyone* (edited by Boldizsar M. Nagy), forthcoming from Harper Collins, and publications are promoted by the Romanian Cultural Institute and the Hungarian Liszt Institute at international events and book fairs. Currently, the publishing industry is facing a significant backlog in many countries, but self-publishing is slowly taking on (see Zsuzsa Koltay’s well-received translation, from the Hungarian, of Nándor Gion’s *Soldier with Flower*) and hopefully we shall witness more demand-driven work initiated by target culture agencies as it is the case with more widely translated languages.

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Tasos Leivaditis - The Three

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This is a dark work. Dark in its gloomy setting and dark in the obscurity of its communication. When it was published in 1975, its author – the Greek poet and critic Tasos Leivaditis – had recently emerged out of one of the most violent and oppressive periods in modern Greek history. Born in Athens in 1922, Leivaditis was forced to cut his university studies short by the German invasion in April 1941. This was followed by a brutal civil war between the Left and Right factions which broke out even before the Germans departed in 1944 and which continued until August 1949. The communist-led forces were roundly defeated, while Leivaditis and scores of leftist writers and artists were imprisoned and terrorized in the archipelago of island camps spread across the Aegean. When Leivaditis came out of prison in 1951, he stepped into a society riven by the polarizations of the Cold War and dominated in the political sphere by the authoritarian Right, culminating in the seizure of power in 1967 by a military junta. The junta fell in 1974 and the country set out on the path of democratization, but by then so much blood had been spilled and so many lives lost or destroyed that a deep sense of disillusionment, if not defeat, had set in amongst formerly politically committed writers. This also was the trajectory followed by Leivaditis: the ardent communism of his youth began to thaw during the Khrushchev era, and by the time we get to *The Three* faith and hope have given way to an existential crisis over the futility of life.

In the context of Leivaditis' corpus, *The Three* is an unusual work. It is not a poem, despite its inclusion in (volume 2 of) Leivaditis' collected poetry. Rather, it is written in the form of a drama or play. Leivaditis had previously experimented with this genre on three occasions: *The Horse-Eyed Women* (1958), set in a dingy hotel where a married woman is caught in the act by her husband, who murders her, attacks her lover, and kills himself; *Cantata* (1960), which recounts the arrest, torture, trial and execution of an anonymous, Christ-like figure fighting for social justice; and *The Last Ones* (1966), consisting of vanquished veterans and comrades meeting in the aftermath of the civil war in an apartment block, visited also by the mythical Clytemnestra and Pylades. The almost-overpowering spirit of dejection in these works is carried over into *The Three*, but the latter abandons their verse form while also dispensing with standard dialogues and narrative arcs. Here the characters talk, but not with one another: in their disconnection, dialogue turns into monologue. And what they have to say concerns, not what is going on at present, but events or figures remembered or even fabricated, and then described fragmentarily. In short, this is a play that would not translate well on stage (for further discussion of Leivaditis' writings, see Benatsis and Filokyrou).

The setting is a ward in a psychiatric hospital, whose location is undisclosed. The building is in shabby condition: mention is made at the outset of poor lighting, dampness and crumbling walls; and later the asylum is pictured as “bare, run-down”, with a ceiling leaking water onto a patient's bed. As the narrator ironically states, these are “adornments suitable for outcasts”, for the condition of the facilities mirrors the subjective state of the inmates, marked as it is by the moods of fear, anxiety, insecurity, despair, sorrow, distrust, guilt, isolation and bewilderment. As if to reinforce this, nearly every scene is set at night or its approach, and in dreary weather.

It is in this bleak environment that Leivaditis places his two leading characters, Symeon and Raphael, both hospital inmates (the third person of the title is unnamed and never speaks directly). Symeon comes from a distinguished, wealthy family which subsequently fell into

poverty. He is suspicious and apprehensive, if not paranoid, particularly in relation to the psychiatric staff. Other people are encountered as strange and threatening, hence the lack of interaction and the turn inward, manifested in Symeon's religious temperament. His name, meaning in Hebrew "one who hears" (from Gen. 29:33), was perhaps borrowed from the Gospel figure of the old and devout man who sings the *Nunc Dimittis* in the Jerusalem Temple upon recognising the infant Jesus as the promised Messiah (Luke 2:25-35). Like his biblical namesake, Leivaditis' Symeon is engaged in prayer and infused with divine grace, and is thereby afforded signs of redemption, albeit much slighter ones (e.g., a small feather), and surrenders himself in the end entirely to God.

Most of the speaking parts, however, are allotted to the "talkative" Raphael who, unlike Symeon, has given up on prayer, finds the "eternal intimations" inscrutable, and is overpowered by feelings of alienation, worthlessness and purposelessness. It is primarily through Raphael that questions of intelligibility are explored – the intelligibility of the world and of the language employed to make sense of it. As one would expect in a psychiatric ward, the line between reality and fantasy is constantly crossed, as events are permeated by absurd, mysterious, otherworldly and paranormal phenomena (showcasing Leivaditis' variety of magical realism). Raphael mistakes his coat for a menacing man; the dead (Raphael's maidservants and Symeon's tailor) return to the world of the living; behind the mask worn by a dead man lies nothing at all; a voice in distress is heard from an unoccupied room; three musicians stand silent on the street but their singing is clearly audible; and Raphael gives expression to the incongruity between reality and desire when stating that "things fall from our hands without reason" and "there's somewhere you must go just when everything is of no avail".

Even the attempt to articulate these absurdities is undermined. There is a lack of transparency and coherence in the discourses, not because the language is difficult (Leivaditis is known for his direct, conversational style) but rather because of the many untruths, exaggerations and digressions, secrets and silences, paradoxes and ambiguities, all of which transfer meaning-making responsibility to the reader – and the translator. On the semantic level, indeterminacy is produced in part by the absence of context, especially around the use of pronouns. When, for example, Raphael's family members say "Maybe the previous tenant left it", or an unnamed third party is quoted as asking "Will we ever find out about it?", we are left in the dark as to what "it" refers to, though we are handed hints to something negative or sinister, like Symeon's reference to the capitalized "It". On the syntactic level, comprehension is obstructed by an idiosyncratic syntax of paratactic phrases, with copious use of commas but few periods, creating a staccato, scattered narration (replicating the piling of thoughts and images in the inmates' minds). (The Greek text I have used is that reproduced in Leivaditis' Collected Works of 2015, while earlier, stand-alone editions of *The Three* made even greater use of commas.) My aim has been to preserve as far as possible these complexities in sense and sound, in tone and voice, so as to evoke the desperate quest for connection and illumination played out in the text by its hapless characters – but played out also in the rewriting of the text by its translators, who (to borrow from Symeon's final words and one of Leivaditis' favourite tropes) may well be like the blind man lighting his lamp.

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ΟΙ ΤΡΕΙΣ
Τάσος Λειβαδίτης

THE THREE
Tasos Leivaditis

Translated by N N (Nick) Trakakis

Έπρεπε να συμβεί κι αυτό: ζήτησα το αδύνατο.

Και πια κανείς δεν έμαθε τί έγινε...

Σκηνικό:

Μεγάλος θάλαμος σ' ένα άσυλο, κάπου. Δυο σειρές κρεβάτια. Μισοσκοτάδο, υγρασία, τοίχοι πεσμένοι – διακόσμηση κατάλληλη γι' απόβλητους. Ένας ήσυχος θόρυβος έρχεται απ' το προαύλιο καθώς οι υπόλοιποι τρόφιμοι κάνουν τον περίπατό τους.

Πρόσωπα:

Ο Συμεών κι ο Ραφαήλ Ελεάζαρ – έτσι, τουλάχιστον, ισχυρίζεται. Γιατί είναι πολύ ωραίο όνομα για έναν μόνον άνθρωπο. Ίσως γι' αυτό είναι και τόσο ομιλητικός. Βέβαια, ήταν κι ο άλλος εκεί, αλλά σ' αυτόν είναι απαγορευμένο να μιλήσει.

Συμεών

Είναι παράξενο, αλήθεια, πώς βρίσκεται κανείς κάπου, εδώ ή εκεί, χωρίς να διαλέξει ή από απροσεξία (δική του, άραγε;), έτσι κι εκείνοι τώρα επέμεναν, «μα, κύριοι», τους λέω, «εγώ έχω τον ουρανό, τί να την κάνω τη δυστυχία»,

αποφάσισα, λοιπόν, ν' αμυνθώ, να υπερασπίσω τουλάχιστον, αν όχι τίποτ' άλλο, τα λίγα λόγια της προσευχής μου – εξάλλου πόσοι δεν παραπλανιούνται με τα πιο φανερά, κι αυτοί που μας παίρναν τα έπιπλα, γέλασαν, τότε, καθώς η μητέρα τους φώναζε: «προσέχτε το πιάνο», σαν να 'πρεπε κάθε πράγμα που υπάρχει να φαίνεται,

κ' ίσως είχε δίκιο ο Νικάνορας που έλεγε ότι είναι Θεός, γιατί, συχνά, πήγαινε σε μια γωνιά στην αποθήκη κι έκρυβε το πρόσωπό του, σαν τον Θεό την ώρα που στάθηκε μπροστά του ο πρώτος νεκρός.

This too had to take place:

I asked for the impossible.

But no one found out what happened...

Scene:

A large ward in an asylum, somewhere. Two rows of beds. Semi-darkness, humidity, crumbling walls – adornments suitable for outcasts. A muffled noise emerges from the courtyard as the remaining inmates take their walk.

Characters:

Symeon and Raphael Eleazar – this, at least, is what he claims. Because it is too beautiful a name for one person only. Perhaps that's why he is so talkative. But he was forbidden to converse with the other, who was of course there too.

Symeon

It really is strange that you find yourself somewhere, here or there, without having chosen it or out of carelessness (your own, perhaps?), and so they too were now insisting, “but gentlemen,” I said, “I have the sky, what need have I of unhappiness?”

I decided therefore to put up a defence, to at least stand up for, if nothing else, the few words of my prayer – besides, how many are not led astray by the most obvious things? and when they were taking our furniture away, they laughed after mother shouted at them: “watch the piano!” as though each thing that exists had to be visible,

and maybe Nikanoras was justified in saying that he was God, for he would often go to a corner of the storeroom and hide his face, like God when the first dead person stood before him.

Ραφαήλ

Ύστερα η πόρτα έκλεισε και δεν μπόρεσα ν' ακούσω τίποτ' άλλο, εξάλλου δεν ήταν παρά μια φτωχή τραγουδίστρια που δεν τραγουδούσε πια, μα ήξερε να κρατάει το μικρό μπουκέτο, σαν να την έβλεπαν, «Ραφαήλ», μου λέει, «δε λέγομαι Ραφαήλ», της λέω, «τότε, τί άλλο μπορεί να 'ναι», μου λέει, βρισκόμουν, ακριβώς, έξω απ' το ταχυδρομείο, νύχτα, γιατί του είχα στείλει αλληπάλληλα γράμματα, που μου επιστρέφονταν, όπως ήταν φυσικό, μα να που τώρα έπαιρνα την απάντηση, έψαξα για κάποιο φως να την διαβάσω, μα εκείνο το καταραμένο φανάρι το σάλευε ο άνεμος, όπως κάποτε ένα άλλο φανάρι στο αμάξι που έφευγε με την άρρωστη, κι εγώ έτρεχα πίσω του, και θυμάμαι, λίγο πριν ξεκινήσει, ωχρή, έσκυψε απ' το παράθυρο του αμαξιού, «να το φυλάξεις με προσοχή», είπε, κ' ίσως αυτό ήταν ό,τι ωραιότερο είχε ακούσει ο κόσμος.

(Παύση)

Ραφαήλ

Δεν μπορώ να φανταστώ τίποτα πιο ποταπό από κείνη τη σκηνή, υποψιαζόμουν, μάλιστα, πως πλήρωνε τον θυρωρό και τον άφηνε να παραμονεύει στις σκάλες, γιατί πώς αλλιώς να εξηγήσει κανείς αυτήν την απελπιστική ησυχία, και συχνά κρατούσε το καπέλο του μ' έναν τρόπο, σαν να 'χαμε κάνει μια τρομερή συμφωνία, «άθλιε», του φώναξα και τον έπιασα απ' το λαιμό, μα δεν κρατούσα παρά το φτωχό παλτό μου, που προσπαθούσα με λίγες καρφίτσες να το φέρω σε λογαριασμό, κι όπως είμαι δύσπιστος, πήγα και το κρέμασα κι αυτό, ποιός ξέρει τί μπορεί να συμβεί, και τί άλλο από δήμιος μπορεί να 'ναι εκείνος που σ' αναγνωρίζει αμέσως,

θυμάμαι, μάλιστα, πως οι γριές υπηρέτριες, παρόλο που είχαν πεθάνει, στέκαν ακόμα παράμερα, κι έπρεπε να χαμηλώνω το κεφάλι, για να το υπομείνω που δεν τους έφερνα τίποτα.

Συμεών

Raphael

The door then closed and I couldn't hear anything else, in any case she was nothing more than a penniless singer who no longer sang but knew how to hold a small bouquet as though they were watching her, "Raphael," she said to me, "I'm not Raphael," I replied, "what else then could it be?" she said, I was right outside the post office, at night, because I had sent him one letter after another, which were returned to me, as was expected, and yet here was the reply now being handed to me, I looked for some light to read it, but that damned lamp kept moving about in the wind, as once happened with that other lamp in the carriage departing with the sick woman, I was running after it and I remember, just before it set off, she leaned out the carriage window, looking pale, and said: "take good care of it," and that was possibly the most beautiful thing the world had ever heard.

(Pause)

Raphael

I can't imagine anything more vile than that scene, I even suspected that he was paying the doorman to let him lurk around the stairs, for how else could one explain that despairing silence? and he often held his hat in such a way as though we had made a dreadful agreement, "you scoundrel!" I shouted and grabbed him by the neck, but I was holding onto nothing more than my shabby coat, which I was trying to patch with a few pins, and distrustful as I am, I went ahead and hung it, who knows what could happen? and who else could the one who immediately recognizes you be but an executioner?

I indeed remember how the old maidservants, even though they had died, still stood to the side, and I had to bow my head so as to shoulder the fact that I hadn't brought them anything.

Symeon

Γυμνό, φτωχό άσυλο, μόνο η βροχή το γνωρίζει, και τη νύχτα στάζει απ' το ταβάνι, για να μη μαλώσουν τον γέρο που κατουρήθηκε πάνω του, κι όταν καμμιά φορά η τρελή γυναίκα θήλαζε το ξύλινο κουτάλι, ακούγαμε το κλάμα του μικρού Ιησού,

έτσι, με τόσα ασυνήθιστα γεγονότα πού να βρει καιρό να φτιάξει κανείς τη ζωή του, και προς τί; είναι όμορφο να βασιλεύει ο ήλιος και να κάθεται ήσυχος, καπνίζοντας το τσιγαράκι που πέταξε ο κύριος διευθυντής, και πλάι σου η Μαρία, την είχαν φέρει τελευταία (απ' το Ευαγγέλιο, βέβαια), κ' ήταν πάντα χαμογελαστή, καθώς ξεμπέρδευε ένα κουβάρι μαύρο μαλλί, «τί κάνεις εκεί, Μαρία;» της έλεγα, «πρέπει να του δείχνω το δρόμο», απαντούσε,

κ' η θεια-Αλόη, που 'χε ξεγεννήσει τόσες και τόσες, πίστευε στην άμωμη σύλληψη, αφού μια άλλη στιγμή γεννιέται πάντα κανείς.

Ραφαήλ

Δεν είχα ποτέ μεγαλοψυχία για τον εαυτό μου, έτσι εύκολα έπεφτα στην οποιαδήποτε παγίδα, και συχνά, πίσω από κάποιο παραβάν στα μικρά μαγαζιά καθόταν σιωπηλός, κοιτάζοντας τάχα αλλού, εκείνος που σε ταπεινώσε κάποτε, «αυτό είναι έγκλημα», φώναξα, βέβαια το αληθινό έγκλημα θα γινόταν αργότερα, γιατί, όπως το μαντεύετε, άνθρωπος ασήμαντος δεν είχα φτιάξει ποτέ στη ζωή μου επισκεπτήρια, προτιμούσα μια σκοτεινή στοά ή μια πάροδο, εκεί, όμως, στεκόταν η γριά, κρατούσε το παλιό σίδερο του σιδερώματος και φοβέριζε τα σκυλιά, «δεν έπρεπε να του το πάρεις», της λέω, γιατί αυτό το παλιό σίδερο τύλιγε μ' ένα βρόμικο πανί ο μεγάλος αδελφός (που 'χε γεννηθεί ηλίθιος), και το νανούριζε με μιαν ανείπωτη μητρότητα, σαν να γνώριζε όλους τους πόνους.

Συμεών

A bare, run-down asylum, recognized only by the rain, and at night the ceiling leaks so that they don't have to scold the old man who wets himself, and when at times the mad woman suckled the wooden spoon we could hear the cries of baby Jesus,

and so, with such unusual events, how could one find the time to fix their life? and what for? it's lovely for the sun to be setting as you sit quietly, smoking the cigarette butt thrown away by the warden, and next to you is Mary, they had brought her in last (from the Gospels, of course), and she was always smiling while untangling a ball of black wool, "what are you doing there, Mary?" I'd say, "I must show him the way," she'd reply,

and aunty Aloe, who had delivered countless babies, believed in the immaculate conception, since one is always born at some other moment.

Raphael

I never showed myself any magnanimity, and so I'd easily fall into whatever trap was set, and the one who once humiliated you would often sit silently behind a screen in a small shop, pretending to look elsewhere, "that's a crime!" I shouted, in fact the real crime would take place later, because as you would've guessed I am an insignificant man who has never in his life made a visiting card, I'd choose instead a dark arcade or a side street, but an old woman would be standing there, waving about a worn-out iron to scare the dogs away, "you should not have taken it from him," I said, because my older brother (who was born an idiot) would wrap that old iron with a dirty rag and lull it to sleep with an unspeakable motherliness, as though he had experienced all the pain there is.

Symeon

«Κύριε ελέησον, Κύριε, ελέησον», ψέλναμε
το βράδυ στον εσπερινό, μόνο τη δύστυχη
Ελισάβετ με τα εκζέματα την έδιωχναν, κι
εκείνη καθισμένη στον κήπο παράμερα
ξυνόταν τόσο βαθιά, που βλέπαμε, μια-μια,
να πέφτουν από πάνω της όλες οι αμαρτίες,
έτσι, τώρα προσέχω, αχ, πού τις
έβαλα, αναρωτιέμαι ακόμα – είχα κρύψει τις
παντόφλες του πατέρα, κάποτε, παιδί, το
ίδιο βράδυ ο πατέρας σηκώθηκε,
μεσάνυχτα, έφαξε λίγο για τις παντόφλες,
μα φαίνεται δεν πρόφταινε και πήγε
ξυπόλυτος κι άνοιξε την πόρτα, «πώς
τελείωσαν όλα, Θεέ μου», φώναξε,
κι όταν καμιά φορά με ρωτάνε, η
προετοιμασία τί θα πω και η θεία χάρη με
κάνουν να μην απαντώ όπως θα 'θελαν,
σώζοντας έτσι κάτι πιο πολύ.

Ραφαήλ

Εξάλλου ήταν μια συνήθειά μου, τί τους
πείραζε – όλα αυτά, βέβαια, είναι μια
ιδιωτική ιστορία, μόνο η μητέρα
καταλάβαινε κι έλεγε κάπως ταραγμένη,
«πάλι άφησες φως στην κάμαρά σου», αφού
ο συνένοχος είναι παντού κι ακουμπάς μ'
ευτέλεια πάνω του, ιδιαίτερα, όμως, τα
βράδια, όταν βγάζαμε τα λουλούδια έξω, η
μυρουδιά του σπιτιού γινόταν αποπνιχτική,
κι αργότερα έρχεται ο άλλος να σου θυμίσει
τη συμφωνία, αλλά καλύτερα ας τα διηγηθώ
απ' την αρχή, στο τέλος-τέλος θα την
παζάρεψα τη ζωή μου, δεν έχω άλλη, ίσως
γιαυτό γίνομαι πιστευτός,

κι όπως σκοτεινιάζε, ένα φθινόπωρο
άθλιο, μάζεψα ό,τι είχε απομείνει και
φώναξα τον πλανόδιο έμπορο, «δε θέλω
λεφτά», του λέω, «μόνο καθώς θα στρίβεις
το δρόμο, να πεις σιγανά τ' όνομά μου».

(Παύση)

Ραφαήλ

Σκέφτομαι, καμιά φορά, αν υπάρχει λίγος
τόπος άδειος μες στη ζωή μας, να μείνουμε
κι εμείς, και ποιός είναι τάχα ο παρείσακτος,
ίσως, κιάλας, γιαυτό σκεπάζουν τους

“Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy,” we
chanted in the evenings at vespers, but they
wanted to throw out wretched eczema-
ridden Elisabeth, and she would sit on her
own in the garden, scratching herself so
intensely that we could see all the sins
falling from her one by one,

and so now I take care, ah! where I
put them I still wonder – once, when I was
little, I hid father's slippers, that same night
father got up at midnight, he briefly looked
for his slippers but it seems he didn't have
time and went barefoot to open the door,
“my God! everything's come to an end!” he
exclaimed,

and when they sometimes ask me,
the preparations I make about what to say
and the divine grace compel me to answer in
a way they don't like, thus saving something
greater.

Raphael

It was in any case a habit of mine, why did it
bother them? – all this of course is a private
affair, mother alone understood and,
somewhat agitated, would say, “you again
left the light on in your room,” because the
accomplice is everywhere and you sordidly
lean upon him, but the odour in the house
would become suffocating especially in the
evening once we took the flowers outside,
and afterwards the other arrives to remind
you of the agreement, nonetheless it's best I
tell it from the beginning, in the end I would
have bargained my life away, I have no
other, maybe that's what makes me credible,

and as night fell, one miserable
autumn, I collected whatever was left and
shouted to the pedlar, “I don't want money, I
only want you to quietly say my name as
you turn the corner.”

(Pause)

Raphael

I sometimes question if there exists a bit of
empty space in our lives, so that we too
could stay there, and who, I wonder, is the
intruder? perhaps that's why they even cover

καθρέφτες, για να μη δούμε ποιός είναι ο αληθινός νεκρός, κι όταν κατεβήκαμε τη σκάλα, διωγμένοι, η σκάλα μας ακολούθησε, κι ας λένε οι άλλοι ότι τρικλίζουμε, αφού στο δρόμο δε συναντάς παρά φθαρμένα παπούτσια, όπου φεύγουν ψυχές κυνηγημένες, δίνοντας έναν καινούργιο δρόμο στον Θεό,

όμως, εκείνο το ηλίθιο παιδί που γελούσαμε όλοι μαζί του έρχεται τώρα τις νύχτες γερασμένο, «πώς έγινες έτσι», του λέω, «εσύ όταν πέθανες ήσουν σχεδόν παιδί», «δε γελάνε πια μαζί μου», μου λέει, κ' η νύχτα ήταν προχωρημένη πολύ, και πια δεν εύρισκα τα λόγια της προσευχής μου.

Συμεών

Αυτοί που πολύ βασανίστηκαν, γιατί δεν ξέρανε τί να κάνουν τον εαυτό τους, κι όταν το 'μαθαν είχε πια βραδιάσει – και, καμμιά φορά, βγάζουν το παλιό καπέλο τους έξω απ' το παράθυρο, στη βροχή, κ' ύστερα το κοιτάνε ευτυχισμένοι, αφού εκεί που πήγαν τους είχαν με χαρά υποδεχτεί και τους είχαν βάλει να καθίσουν στο ίδιο τραπέζι μαζί τους,

αυτοί, που έζησαν χωρίς ιστορία, σαν τον Θεό,

κι ο γερο-ράφτης, πεθαμένος χρόνια, πάντα λίγο πιωμένος, ήρθε εκείνο το βράδυ, «τα μέτρα», μου λέει, «δε μου τα 'δωσαν σωστά», «μα εγώ», του λέω, «δεν είχα ποτέ δική μου γωνιά – πού, λοιπόν, να το κρύψω;»

αυτοί, που με τα φτωγά παραμελημένα λόγια τους, ίσως να σκέπασαν εκείνο που θα πεθαίναμε, αν φανερωνόταν.

Ραφαήλ

Ήταν στ' αλήθεια παράλογο κι έπρεπε να θάψουμε το συντομότερο όλα αυτά τα περιστατικά, «Τερέζα», ψιθύρισα, χωρίς κι εγώ να το πιστεύω, ενώ εκείνος φορούσε πάντα το ξένο φαρδύ πανωφόρι, μ' έναν τρόπο, σαν να 'ταν μόνο για το κιγκλίδωμα πίσω του, και συχνά καθώς βράδιαζε, «τί είναι άραγε εκεί και γιατί πηγαίνω;» αναρωτιόμουν, χάνοντας έτσι τη ζωή μας σε

the mirrors, so that we don't see who the deceased really is, and when we came down the stairs, persecuted, the stairs followed us and let people say that we stagger, for on the road you come across nothing but worn-out shoes left by hounded souls, offering a new road to God,

but that idiot child we all used to laugh at now comes at night looking aged, “how did you get like that?” I ask, “when you died you were practically a child,” “they no longer laugh at me,” he replies, and the night was well advanced and I could no longer find the words of my prayer.

Symeon

Those who were greatly tormented because they didn't know what to do with themselves, and by the time they found out night had already fallen – and now and then they stick their old hat outside the window, in the rain, and afterwards they look at it blissfully, because where they went they were received with joy by the hosts, who seated them at their own table,

those who lived without history, like God,

and the old tailor, dead long ago, always a little drunk, came that evening, “the measurements they gave me,” he said, “they weren't correct,” “but I never had a nook of my own,” I replied, “so where could I hide it?”

those who, with their poor, neglected words, possibly covered that which we would have died from, had it appeared.

Raphael

It really was absurd and we had to bury all those incidents as soon as possible, “Teresa,” I whispered, without believing it myself, while he always wore that strange, large overcoat in such a way as if it was meant only for the railing behind him, and often as night fell I would wonder “what's there?” and “why am I going?” thereby losing our life in family names, or even in

οικογενειακά ονόματα, ή έστω με καθημερινές βρομερές σκηνές, «ίσως έχουν πένθος», σκέφτηκα, γιατί τότε μόνο μ' άφηναν να κάτσω κι εγώ στο τραπέζι, ώσπου ένιωθα στο πρόσωπό μου εκείνο το σημάδι από ένα ψεύτικο κόσμημα της μητέρας, τότε που μ' έσφιγγε πάνω της, κι εγώ πόναγα, αλλά δεν πόναγα, ο Θεός ξέρει πώς –

έτσι η πιο αλησμόνητη ιστορία δε θα γραφτεί ποτέ, αφού πρέπει να την ξεχάσουμε, για να ζούμε ακόμα...

(Παύση)

Ραφαήλ

«Ίσως να το άφησε ο προηγούμενος ενοικιαστής», λέγαμε, καμμιά φορά τρομαγμένοι, γιατί ποιός να καταλάβει τους αιώνιους υπαινιγμούς, έτσι είμαστε πάντοτε απροετοίμαστοι, και μόνο οι γυναίκες, μαζεμένες στη μέσα κάμαρα, κλαίγανε ήσυχα, γιατί ήταν στον καιρό που ξεχνάμε τα λόγια (κι ας γίνονται πιο απαραίτητα), κ' ύστερα, όταν ο πολυέλαιος έπεσε, μ' έναν τρομερό κρότο, αντικρίσαμε τον άνθρωπο με την προσωπίδα, νεκρό, «ώστε αυτός ήταν», σκεφτήκαμε όλοι με ανακούφιση, μα όπως ένα χέρι τού ξεσκέπασε το πρόσωπο, είδαμε με τρόμο πως δεν υπήρχε κανείς, κ' ήταν ακόμα μια φορά που μας είχε παραπλανήσει,

κι επειδή ο οικογενειακός γιατρός δεν είχε ακόμα ξυπνήσει, αναγκάστηκα να τον περιμένω έξω, καθισμένος στην πόρτα, εδώ που με βλέπετε.

Συμεών

Γιατί ποιός άλλος ζει αληθινά από κείνον που πάει στο χαμό, και το ξέρει, και συχνά ψηλαφώντας μες στο σκοτάδι το βρίσκαμε, ίσως γιατί ήταν η αναπάντεχη ώρα, ή ίσως γιατί αυτό κρατάει τη ζωή μες στους αιώνες, όμως, καμμιά φορά, ηρεμώ, όλα είναι ωραία γύρω μου, κι εγώ είμαι παιδί και βρίσκομαι με το θείο μου τον Ηλία, «θείε», του λέω, «είμαστε φτωχοί, πρέπει κάτι να κάνεις κι εσύ», «ψάχνω για τον Κύριο», μου λέει, «μα πώς ψάχνεις, καθισμένος εδώ, έξω

everyday dirty scenes, “maybe they’re mourning,” I thought, because only then would they allow me to sit at the table, until I felt on my face the imprint from mother’s cheap jewellery as she pressed me close to her, and I’d be in pain but I was not in pain, only God knows why –

and so the most unforgettable story will never be written, for we must forget it in order to go on living...

(Pause)

Raphael

“Maybe the previous tenant left it,” we would sometimes say, frightened, for who can understand the eternal intimations? and so we are always unprepared, and only the women, gathered in the inner room, quietly cried, because it was the time when we would forget the words (even though they had become more essential), and later, when the chandelier fell with a terrifying crash, we saw the mask-wearing man lying dead, “so it was him,” we all thought, relieved, but when his mask was taken off we noticed in terror that there was no one there, once again he had misled us,

and because the family doctor had not yet woken up, I had to wait outside and sit by the door,

here where you see me.

Symeon

For who is it that truly lives other than the one heading to one’s doom, in full awareness? and often, after fumbling around in the dark, we would find it, perhaps because it was the unexpected hour, or perhaps because that is what sustains life through the centuries,

but at times I calm down, everything around me is beautiful, I am a child and find myself with uncle Elias, “uncle,” I say to him, “we’re poor, you have to get a job,”

απ' το καπνοπωλείο;» «ναι», μου λέει, και μου 'δειξε κάτω απ' το σκαμνί,

κι εκείνος ο θλιμμένος άντρας, στο γειτονικό θάλαμο, ήθελε να πετάξει, έλεγε, και τρεφόταν μόνο με ψίχουλα, ώσπου βέβαια πέθανε, κι όταν τον θάψαμε, απ' τους δρόμους που πέρασε το φέρετρο, γυρίζοντας αργότερα, βρίσκαμε κι από ένα μικρό φτερό.

Αλλιώς θα 'ταν μάταιος ο κόσμος.

Ραφαήλ

«Θα το μάθουμε ποτέ;» ρώτησε, καθώς ανέβαινε τώρα σ' ένα θαμπό αφηρημένο αμάξι, αβοήθητος, όπως όταν μπαίνεις σε μια άλλη ηλικία, όταν, όμως πέρασε ο πρώτος τρόμος, αλλάξαμε τη θέση του καναπέ, ένα σπίτι ερείπιο που έπρεπε να το κρύβουμε με μικρές ψεύτικες χειρονομίες, «μόνο να ρίχνετε καμμιά φορά το βλέμμα προς τα κει», είπε, κ' είδα το χέρι του πάνω στο κιγκλίδωμα, εκτός απ' τις μέρες που έβρεχε κ' η θυρωρός το λυπόταν και το 'μπαζε στο δωμάτιό της, και συχνά, καθώς τρώγαμε σιωπηλοί, κοίταζα το μπαλκόνι, μα ήταν τώρα μια βεβαιότητα όμορφη, χωρίς κανένα θάρρος, ενώ ο πατέρας συνέχιζε την κουβέντα του με τον κηπουρό, που, όπως όλα, μας είχε εγκαταλείψει κι αυτός από χρόνια, «γιαυτό ταπεινώνομαι», του λέω, «για να 'ναι όλο δικό μου»,

χωρίς να το ξέρει κανείς!

Συμεών

«Συμεών, πρέπει να προσέχεις, καλέ μου», έλεγα μέσα μου, και κάρφωνα σφιχτά το σακάκι μου με μια παραμάνα, αφού κανένας δεν έμαθε ποτέ το μυστικό, κι όπου να 'ναι σημαίνει,

αυτοί, που όταν τους μιλάς, σου απαντάνε ύστερα από ώρα, σαν να 'πρεπε ο λόγος να κατεβεί πολύ βαθιά για να τους βρει,

“I’m searching for the Lord,” he replies, “how can you be searching when you’re sitting here, outside the tobacconist?” “yes,” he says and points under the stool,

and that sorrowful man in the adjacent ward said that he wanted to fly, and he would feed only on crumbs, until naturally he died, and after we had buried him, whenever we walked along the streets the coffin had passed through, we’d even come upon a little feather.

Otherwise the world would have been meaningless.

Raphael

“Will we ever find out about it?” he asked as he now, all by himself, stepped into a blurred, spectral carriage, the way one enters upon another year of life, but after the initial terror had passed we moved the position of the couch, a house in ruins, one we had to hide with small, hollow gestures, “but every now and then cast your glance over there,” he said, and I saw his hand on the railing, except on rainy days when the doorkeeper would take pity on it and slip it into her room, and often, as we silently ate, I would look at the balcony, yet it was now a lovely certainty, lacking all valour, while father continued his conversation with the gardener, who, as with everything else, had abandoned us long ago, “that’s why I humiliate myself,” I said to him, “so that it will all be mine,”

without anyone knowing!

Symeon

“Symeon, you must watch out, my dear,” I’d say to myself as I tightly fastened my jacket with a safety pin, since no one ever discovered the secret, and anytime now the bell will toll,

those who, when you speak to them, take a long time to reply, as though each word spoken had to descend very deep before encountering them,

κι εκείνος με τ' απαλά μάτια που 'χε σφάξει τις τρεις γριές, «δε μ' άφηναν να δω στο υπόγειο», έλεγε, κ' ίσως εκεί να 'ταν το παλιό χριστουγεννιάτικο δέντρο,

αυτοί, που μόλις στέκεσαι μπροστά τους, *αχ*, όλα τα καταλαβαίνεις, ώσπου βράδιαζε, ερημιά, δεν ακουγόταν τίποτα, μονάχα κάποιος που κινούσε τις φτερούγες του μέσα στον ύπνο του μανιακού, που είχε αποκοιμηθεί στην άκρη της στέγης.

Ραφαήλ

«Προπάντων γι' αυτό», έλεγε, κι εμείς χαμηλώναμε το βλέμμα, γιατί μας φόβιζε η υποψία πως τελικά αυτό θα μας ξέφευγε, «ίσως είναι η τιμωρία», σκέφτηκα, γιατί πάντα μια παγερή πνοή φυσούσε από κρυφές εξομολογήσεις, κ' ίσως αργότερα μάθουν πώς έζησα,

στεκόμουν, λοιπόν, στις γωνιές ή πίσω απ' τα έπιπλα, με μια κίνηση θείας αγνότητας, σαν κάποιον που τον ξεκρέμασαν και τον λησμόνησαν κάπου, ενώ η γυναίκα περνούσε το βράδυ στο δρόμο μ' ένα ωραίο άσπρο φόρεμα (από μια παλιά ταπείνωση ίσως), αλλά γιατί αργοπορούσε το βήμα της έξω απ' το σπίτι; Ή μήπως, άραγε, το άκουγε κι αυτή!

(Παύση)

Ραφαήλ

Ποιός είναι, λοιπόν, αυτός που σωπαίνει και τί του οφείλουμε, που τα πράγματα μας πέφτουν δίχως λόγο απ' τα χέρια, μονάχα η μεγάλη αδελφή σηκωνόταν άξαφνα, αινιγματική, αφού έτσι γράφεται η τύχη των ανθρώπων – ποιός είναι αυτός που στέκει παράμερα, και με τί άλλο να ζήσεις, «σαν την Ελένη είσαι κι εσύ», μου λέει (και το είχα κι εγώ καταλάβει),

γιατί είναι κάπου που πρέπει να πας και τότε δεν ωφελεί τίποτα, η λάμπα αχνίζει απ' το ανομολόγητο, κ' οι χυμένες καρφίτσες στο πάτωμα είναι τώρα ο μόνος δρόμος, βέβαια, εμένα προσωπικά δε με

and that man with the gentle eyes who slew the three old women, said: “they didn't let me look in the basement,” and perhaps that's where the old Christmas tree was,

those who, once you stand before them, *ah!* you understand everything, night fell, desolation, nothing could be heard, except for someone stirring their wings within the sleep of a maniac who had dozed off on the edge of the roof.

Raphael

“Above all because of that,” he'd say, and we'd lower our gaze, for we were frightened of the suspicion that in the end it would escape from us, “this could be the punishment,” I thought, because an ice-cold breeze always blew from secret confessions, and afterwards they might find out how I had lived,

and so I'd go and stand at the corner of the room or behind the furniture, in a bearing of divine purity, like someone who has been unfastened from his noose and left behind somewhere, while the woman would spend the night on the street wearing a beautiful white dress (from some old humiliation perhaps), but why was she walking at a slow pace outside the house? Is it possible that she too could hear it?

(Pause)

Raphael

Who is the one, then, that falls silent and what do we owe them, given that things fall from our hands without reason, our elder sister alone would suddenly get up, mystified, because that's how the destiny of each person is written – who is the one standing to the side? and how else is one to live? “you are just like Helen,” he said to me (and I too could see it),

because there's somewhere you must go just when everything is of no avail, the lamp steams up from the unutterable, and the only path now is marked by the spilled pins on the floor, and as happens in the most

είχαν δει ποτέ, όπως γίνεται στις πιο όμορφες ιστορίες, κ'είχε αρχίσει κιόλας να σκοτεινιάζει, που είναι πάντα πιο εύκολο να συγχωρήσει κανείς.

Συμεών

Αυτοί που δεν έχουν παρά μια μικρή χαρτονένια βαλίτσα, μ' ένα λυπημένο άλογο μέσα, κι όταν οι άλλοι τους βρίζουν, εκείνοι βρίσκονται κιόλας εκεί πέρα,

«ακούστε», τους λέω, «ή δεν υπάρχει Θεός, οπότε πρέπει να προφτάσουμε αυτόν που κατεβαίνει τη σκάλα, ή υπάρχει, και τότε τί είναι μια θλίψη ακόμα περισσότερο», και θυμήθηκα τη ζωή μου, αγιάτρευτη απ' τις ακαθόριστες κάμαρες, «και μένα δε μ' άφησαν», είπα, εννοώντας το σούρουπο και την αιώνια νοσταλγία,

κι ο ήσυχος εκείνος άντρας δεν είχε μιλήσει ποτέ όλα αυτά τα χρόνια, μόνο ένα βράδυ βρήκε ένα κραγιόν κι έβαψε τα χείλη του, «είσαι γυναίκα, ρε;» του φωνάξαμε, εκείνος χαμογέλασε ντροπαλά και είπε μονάχα: «ο πατέρας έδερνε συχνά τη μητέρα, μα εκείνη δεν έβγαζε μιλιά».

Αλλιώς θα 'ταν μάταιος ο κόσμος.

Ραφαήλ

«Δεν έχω, δεν έχω, σου λέω» ακούστηκε άξαφνα βραχνά απ' το πάνω πάτωμα, που έμενε χρόνια ακατοίκητο, κοιταχτήκαμε μ' έκπληξη που δεν άργησε να γίνει φόβος, όταν το άλλο βράδυ ακούστηκε ξανά, «δεν έχω, δεν έχω», με παράπονο, για κάτι άγνωστο ή ίσως κι ανύπαρκτο, «δεν έχω», κ' οι γυναίκες άπλωναν τώρα το χέρι χλωμές, σαν να μην εύρισκαν πια την πόρτα, κι ο νεαρός κληρικός του τρίτου μπαινόβγαινε κλεφτά στο σπίτι, ώσπου τελικά έφυγε.

Το μυστήριο, ωστόσο, λύθηκε ξαφνικά, ήταν Κυριακή απόγευμα κι όπως συνήθως οι τρεις πλανόδιοι τραγουδιστές είχαν σταθεί στην άκρη του δρόμου, φτωχοί, γκρίζοι, βέβαια δεν τραγουδούσαν, γιατί είχαν γεράσει, μα κοίταζαν τόσο θλιμμένα

beautiful stories they had never seen me in person, and it had already begun to grow dark, the time when forgiveness always comes more easily.

Symeon

Those who have nothing but a small cardboard suitcase with a sad horse inside, and when others insult them, they are already to be found over there,

“listen,” I say to them, “either there is no God, in which case we must catch up with the one coming down the stairs, or there is a God and then what’s one more sorrow?” and I recalled my life, placed as it was beyond remedy by nondescript rooms, “they didn’t allow me either,” I said, referring to the twilight and the everlasting nostalgia,

and that quiet man had never spoken all those years, but one night he found some lipstick and painted his lips, “are you a woman, eh?” we shouted, he merely replied with a sheepish grin: “father often beat up mother, but she always held her tongue.”

Otherwise the world would have been meaningless.

Raphael

“I don’t have any, I don’t have any, I tell you,” was suddenly heard in a hoarse voice from the floor above, which had been vacant for years, we looked at each other in surprise, this soon turned into fear when the next night we again heard, “I don’t have any, I don’t have any,” in a grumbling tone, about something unknown or even nonexistent, “I don’t have any,” and the pale women now stretched out their hands as though they could no longer find the door, and the young clergyman from the third floor was sneaking in and out of the house, until he finally left.

The mystery, however, was suddenly solved, it was Sunday afternoon and as usual the three itinerant musicians stood by the side of the road, looking shabby and drab, they were not of course singing, because

το ηλιοβασίλεμα, που το τραγούδι
ακουγόταν πολύ καθαρά.

Συμεών

«Συμεών, ασ' τους, καλέ μου, να ψάχνουν»,
έλεγα πάλι μέσα μου, αφού το μυστήριο
είναι εδώ, στη σκεπασμένη ζωή μας, και το
παιδί που σκότωσε τη μητέρα του, ο Θεός
του είχε δώσει το μέγα έλεος ν' αγκαλιάζει,
σαν μητέρα, το κάθε δέντρο του δρόμου,
αχ, αυτοί που Το είδαν, άξαφνα, και
για να μην μας τρομάξουν στέκονται στη
μέση των δρόμων και χαμογελάνε
παραπλανητικά,

κι εκείνος ο φτωχός, κρατούσε
αδιάκοπα το καπέλο του πάνω στο στήθος,
σαν να 'πρεπε κάτι να υπερασπιστεί, κι
όταν, κάποτε, του πήραμε με κόπο το
καπέλο, είδαμε την πληγή, και μέσα
κάποιον που έγερνε πάνω απ' τη μεγάλη
άρπα – ίσως γιαυτό είχαμε πάντα στο άσυλο
υπομονή.

Ραφαήλ

«Όλα αυτά τα πρόσεξα, καθώς, ύστερα από
χρόνια, είπα να παρουσιαστώ κι εγώ λίγο,
φυσικά ήταν και το κουδούνι που χτυπούσε,
όλοι έκαναν τόπο τότε στον προθάλαμο να
περάσει, γιατί, σας βεβαιώνω, το χέρι της
ετοιμοθάνατης κατέβηκε μέχρι κάτω την
πόρτα και την άνοιξε, γεμάτο αναμνήσεις
από παλιές εξόδους, κι αχ, οι μακριοί δρόμοι
που τους αφήσαμε για μια άλλη φορά,

ούτε θα 'χουμε ποτέ μια παιδική
νύχτα, τότε, που ο πατέρας γύριζε, αλλά είχε
μεγαλώσει και δεν εύρισκε το αληθινό σπίτι,
και μόνο τα βήματά του ακούγαμε κάπου, κι
άξαφνα ένα σκοτεινό προαίσθημα μας
άγγιζε, πως όλα ήταν ανώφελα, και πως όλα
είχαν κιάλας γίνει, μες στις αβέβαιες,
παραπλανητικά ασήμαντες, παιδικές νύχτες
– και κλαίγαμε, γιατί εκεί δεν μπορούσε να
μας ακολουθήσει ούτε η μητέρα.

(Παύση)

they had grown old, yet they gazed so
dejectedly upon the setting sun that the song
could be heard very clearly.

Symeon

“Symeon, my dear, let them search,” I again
told myself, for the mystery is here, in our
veiled life, and the child which killed its
mother was bestowed by God with the great
mercy of embracing, like a mother, every
tree on the road,

ah! those who suddenly saw It, and
so as not to frighten us they stand in the
middle of the road and smile deceptively,
and that poor man held his hat to his
chest at all times, as though there was
something he had to defend, and when at
one point we wrested the hat from him, we
noticed the wound and, within it, someone
hunched over a great harp – maybe that's
why we always had patience in the asylum.

Raphael

I took notice of all these things when, after
many years, I decided that I too would show
up for a little while, but also of course the
bell was ringing, everyone then moved aside
in the entrance hall for her to pass through,
for I assure you, the hand of the dying
woman reached all the way down under the
door and opened it, full of memories from
past exits, and ah! the long roads we
abandoned one more time,

nor will we ever have a childhood
night, the time when father would make his
way back, but he had aged and couldn't find
the actual home, and only his footsteps
somewhere could we hear, and suddenly we
were struck by a dark premonition, that
everything was futile and that everything
had already happened within the doubtful,
deceptively trivial nights of childhood – and
we wept, because not even mother could
follow us there.

(Pause)

Ραφαήλ

Αν μπορούσα κάποτε να εξηγήσω σε κάποιον, αλλά τί θα ωφελούσε, αφού μόνον εκεί υπάρχουμε, απρόσβλητοι, σαν έναν γέρο που κλαίει, και κάτω απ' τη σκάλα έστεκε αυτός που αρχίζει τις ιστορίες, χωρίς να τις τελειώνει ποτέ, οι άλλοι, μάλιστα, απορούσαν που είχα μείνει ακόμα παιδί, δεν ξέρανε πως αυτό που νομίζουν καμμιά φορά υπερβολή είναι όλος ο πόνος μας, έτσι πάντα υπέκυπτα, αφού όλα τότε είναι πιο αληθινά, όμως, επειδή φοβόμουν τ' απρόοπτα, όταν όλοι κοιμήθηκαν, κατέβηκα και μετακίνησα τα μεγάλο σκοτεινό ερμάρι (με πόσο κόπο, Θεέ μου) – ήταν ένα σχέδιο υπέροχο, τώρα δε θα μπορούσαν να με κατηγορήσουν πια σε τίποτα, και απερίσπαστος θα δινόμουν στο ωραίο έργο που είχα αφιερώσει τη ζωή μου.

Συμεών

Ας είναι άλλοι το σπίτι σου, Κύριε, ο κήπος σου ή η συγκομιδή σου, εγώ ερήμωσα τη ζωή μου για να μπορείς να με βλέπεις από παντού.

Ίσως, αν είχα ρούχο ή φωτιά, δρόμο ή όνειρο, να μη σ' άκουγα την ώρα που θα με ζητούσες.

Δεν κράτησα παρά ένα μόνο βράδυ, κάπου στα παιδικά χρόνια ή αργότερα, στην άκρα εγκατάλειψη, για ν' ακουμπάς κάποτε, αιώνιε οδοιπόρε, ανάμεσα στις σκιές...

(Παύση)

Συμεών

Μα ώρα για ύπνο, η μέρα τέλειωσε, ώρα που ο αιμομίκτης πρέπει να ονειρευτεί τη μητέρα του, ο φονιάς το άλλο του χέρι, η πόρνη να γυρίσει, επιτέλους, στο πλευρό της, και ν' ανάψει το λύχνο του ο τυφλός.

Κι αυτό που έγινε εδώ, σε λίγο θα τραβήξει το μεγάλο του δρόμο...

Raphael

If only I could explain it someday to someone, but what's the point, since there alone do we exist, invulnerable, like an old man weeping, and under the stairs stood the one who begins stories without ever finishing them, the others naturally marvelled that I had remained a child still, they didn't know that what they sometimes regard as exaggeration is our pain entire, and so I always gave in, because everything is then more real, but since unexpected things frightened me, when everyone went to sleep I went down and moved the large, dark armoire (with such difficulty, my God!) – it was a brilliant plan, now they would no longer be able to reproach me for anything, and undistracted, I'd apply myself to the beautiful work to which I had dedicated my life.

Symeon

Let others be your dwelling, Lord, your garden or your harvest, I laid my life to waste so that you could see me from everywhere.

Perhaps, if I had clothes or fire, a path or a dream, I would not have heard you when you went looking for me.

I lasted no more than one night, somewhere in childhood or later, in utter abandonment,

so that you, eternal wayfarer, might occasionally repose amongst the shadows...

(Pause)

Symeon

It's time to sleep, the day is done, the time when the incestuous man must dream about his mother and the murderer about his other hand, when the prostitute must turn finally to her side and the blind man light his lamp.

And what happened here will in a short while make its own great way...

**Caught up between Nets, Hooks, and Rhymes:
Translator's commentary for the *Entremès del Pasquedó***

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At first glance, this anonymous Mallorcan cuckoldry play could be easily dismissed as comical and one-dimensional, but when you scratch the surface, it reveals itself to be stark social criticism as economic hardship, ravenous hunger, and class divisions stalk the world of the play. Whilst we have no specific date for the play, which has been passed down to us through numerous manuscripts, its setting does provide some clues as Massutí and Llompart (12) note that, in the sixteenth century, fishing went into rapid decline because of the threat of Barbary pirates. The dictionary of theatre from the Balearic Islands (Mas i Vives 37) suggests its origins are rooted in the oral tradition of the 1400s or 1500s. Regardless of its original date, the play continues to be recycled and its eighteenth-century version serves as the base for a radical re-writing by Llorenç Moyà Gilabert in 1980.

The language of hunger and eating punctuate the text, giving us some interesting utterances to consider. At the start of the play, Llacinta laments living hand to mouth, referring to making “se pasterade” (a kneaded mass), but she is often unable to finish her dish as her husband must return with the day’s catch. Rather than grapple with what this unrefined dish would resemble, I have referred instead to a “cooking pot” in need of ingredients. Originally, I had thought of a “kitchen”, but such a room would not be found in the homes belonging to the lower rungs of society. The couple’s precarious existence is further emphasized as Llacinta asks her husband whether they eat as well as others during times “de coreme” (the forty days of Lent) and “de carnal” (non-fast days when meat could be consumed). Given how different our eating habits are today, this historical reference would be largely lost on a contemporary audience, and so my translation limits itself to Lenten fasting.

One tricky item of culture-bound realia appears in a reference to a “rahol”, a flat, circular shelf that would hang from the ceiling. This was used to keep foodstuffs, particularly freshly baked bread, out of the reach of rodents. Given how unfamiliar this item is to us today, I have chosen to refer to a “larder” in my translation. Later in the play, in an attempt to come to terms with his sudden transformation, the fisherman makes a clear reference to the improved diet that comes with this new role and social status, “A lo menos des pa més blanc / poré menjar” (“At least now I’ll eat the finest white bread”). This aspiration certainly clashes with our current desire for artisanal breads made from ancient grains, but I have decided not to make a change here as the friar previously clarifies that the transformation into a friar is a promotion of sorts (“Ton marit gananci té”) for the lowly fisherman. One strange utterance, “just just, com un ca, de paye, pes seu menjà”, comes from the Mallorcan saying, “com un ca és afectat de menjar palla” (“as a dog is affected by eating hay”), meaning that someone has no desire to work. I have been less creative here, and simply stated the meaning.

Hunger aside, there is a daunting economic dimension to Llacinta’s opening lament. During Lent and fast days, medieval Christians switched meat for fish, making it a profitable time for Mallorca’s fishing communities. Llacinta reveals this social reality as she gloats about how they will make forty Mallorcan sous (translated more loosely as “plenty of money”) from the catch. However, by sleeping on through the afternoon, the fisherman’s folly would have severe economic consequences for his household. In Llacinta’s eyes, her husband has shifted from being an asset to becoming a liability, and this justifies her pact with the friar. Both the act of fishing and the sale of the catch were carried out under strict conditions in medieval

Mallorca. Any fish that were not sold during the market day would have their tailfins removed and could then be sold again the following day, but a prefect would have to inspect any fish brought to market to ensure their freshness (Sastre Moll 54). Whilst there is no textual evidence to suggest that such fish had to be sold at a lower price, we can assume that any punter would want to buy the freshest produce.

The text's setting does bring up questions of how we negotiate and translate a different world for a contemporary audience, but it is the wide range of rhyme schemes (alternate/ABAB, coupled/AABB, enclosed/ABBA) that present the most challenging textual features. Overall, the source text's rhyme schemes have been mimicked in my translation, but, in some instances, the rhyme is curtailed in the Catalan. This could be down to the text's long history and constant state of being recycled, a process through which words or entire verses may have been lost. Textual instability is nothing unusual and should be expected with the passage of time and as language evolves. For example, as Horobin (54) reveals, the words "glass" and "was" rhyme in Chaucer's English, as do "nice" and "malice", but they have all since lost that quality. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act 4, Scene 5, verses 197-98), Ophelia is able to rhyme the words "gone" and "moan", but these two no longer acoustically correspond in contemporary English. A similar phenomenon occurs in this text, as "castigat" should rhyme with "cap" (No pot ser sinó que Déu / m'à castigat, / perquè es frares aforjés / duya al cap). In response to this textual tension, and the rich poetic fossils that are buried within, I have focused on maintaining a flow through the text, given that this is a play and therefore has to be performed. That is why I have taken the decision to insert rhymes into my translation in an attempt to repair those sudden and irregular breaks where none can be found in the source text.

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Entremès del Pasquedó

The Fisherman's Short Play

Translated by Richard Huddleson

Dramatis personae:

Pasquedó
Llacinta
Frare

Pescadó

O que ofici atribulat
té un pascadó!
sempre pase fam o set,
fret o caló.

Llacinta

O, que mal és ser muller
d'un pascadó
De aquests de ray o de cañe,
que ja és pitjó!
Moltes voltes tote sole
me he de colguà
y, com vui se pasterade,
la tenc dins ma.

Pescadó

Llacinta, espoze mia,
no caleu tema:
dins breu tems arriberem
a la coreme
y aleshores guoñerem
algun diné,
perquè no-s poden valer
des carnisé.

Llacinta

Voleu dir que, de coreme
y de carnal,
no tenim sempre es rahol
a un igual?

Dramatis personae:

Fisherman
Llacinta
Friar

Fisherman

Oh, what a strange trade the
fisherman does ply!
Always beset by hunger or thirst,
whether it's bucketing down or bone dry.

Llacinta

Oh, what a tragedy it is
to be a fisherman's wife,
the sort with rods and nets.
For me, it's a life full of strife!
I am often left here alone.
I'd soon throw myself from the quay.
For when my cooking pot needs ingredients,
My husband's to be found out at sea.

Fisherman

Llacinta, my dear wife,
stop your lament:
I'll be back shortly,
just before Lent.
I'll then have money,
and as a fine treat,
we'll have ourselves
a helping of meat.

Llacinta

Are you telling me,
whether it's Lent or not,
our larder's not as well stocked
as any another man's lot?

Pescadó

Llacinta, jo som pertit
 a devés ma;
 fereu de tractar-vos bé,
 quant no, en tornà,
 es guarrot de sas sanayes
 faré serví.
 Vós ja sabeu quinas voltes
 solec tení.

Llacinta

Que direu vós que jo em sia
 trectade mal,
 quant ausent y present
 vos som lleal?

Pescadó

Ay! Si algú qui no's conyex
 vos sentigués,
 poria ser que vos conpràs
 ab bons doblés.
 Me han dit que com som a ma,
 moltes vegades,
 ab aquell frare aforjé
 feys conversades.

Llacinta

Y quin mal ey à fins aquí ?
 Li deman algun rosari.

Pescadó

Vós no'n teniu necesari,
 un me baste un any per mi.

Llacinta

De un frare té jalousia.
 Què feria si altri vengués?

Pescadó

Jo no crec que res digués;

Fisherman

Llacinta, I'm off.
 I'm called to the sea;
 Try to behave, do it for me.
 For if you don't, upon my return,
 I'll take a straw bag, untie it,
 and beat you hard.
 You've seen my strength.
 So, be on your guard.

Llacinta

When I am ill-treated,
 you'll soon come to.
 Whether you're on land or at sea,
 to you, I remain true.

Fisherman

Oh, if someone who didn't know us
 overheard you,
 as your husband, I'd be expected to
 beat you black and blue.
 Many's the time I've been told
 that long conversations with that
 mendicant saddle-bag monk
 you're eager to hold.

Llacinta

And what's wrong with some idle chitchat?
 A rosary prayer is all I ask, and that's that.

Fisherman

Prayers are not needed. Can't you see?
 I pray once a year and that's enough for me.

Llacinta

I see you're jealous of the friar,
 but what would you do with another man by
 your fire?

Fisherman

I don't think I'd say a single word,

però frare y, a més,
de aquells qui fan de auforjés
no en vui per ninguna via.
Jo me'n vayx y en tornà,
si trop aquí s'auforjé,
vós veureu es paxaté
com sa sabrà descartà.

Llacinta

Jo's don llasenci de mi
que faseu lo que es plaurà.
(*Aparte.*)
Justament se estrevendrà
que tròpia es frare así?

(Se'n va)

Pescadó

Falt a ont falt, jo no deyx
de dur-me'n sa carabase.
Sempre bec de pase en pase.
tot eu farà un bon peyx.

(Beu.)

Vui-me aseure asuasí,
que encare eu trop dejornet.
Meyam si em treuria es fret
sa carabase des vi.

(Se asseu.)

Vui prende una roegade
y, si puc, la buidaré.
Meyam si encalentré
Se panxe qui'stà enrredade.

(Beu.)

Benaje qui't trepicjà!
Quin tranc tenia!
Tant gustós és que, a poc a poc,
dóna alegría.
Que aquest vi pugua torbà
jo no eu creuré,
perquè com més ne bec
més bon gust té.

but that friar, or any other
saddlebag-wielding, mendicant lovebird,
I don't want near my home.

I'm off now, but upon my return,
should I meet a saddlebag man-of-strife,
you'll soon see what a fisherman
can do when armed with a knife.

Llacinta

Dear husband, I give to you my consent
to do as you please.
(*Aside*)
Should the friar be seen at my knees,
my husband's anger would soon be vent.

Llacinta exits.

Fisherman

On land or at sea, my only wish
is to have my flask not too far from my lips.
Whether I'm in port or out on the ships,
I find myself drinking like a fish.

Takes a swig.

I'll take a moment to sit down here,
for the current tide's no-good.
A sip of wine from my flask should
banish these chills before I head to the weir.

He sits down.

My belly fancies a good drenchin',
and, if I can, I'll soon empty this flask.
When I neck down this thirst-quenchin'
lovely liquid, I'll soon return to my task.

Takes a swig.

Blessed are the feet that stomped these
grapes.
That thirst near had me!
Such delicious wine and, little by little,
it makes me happy.
They say this wine can blur the senses,
But I've no interest in such pretences.
The more I drink of this fine wine,

(Beu.)

Prenguem colque roeguade
y colque glop
y, si axí eu fas, porà ser
que anit no sop.
Hare prendem es camí
a cercar pex.

(Es vol alsar y no pot)

Ola! Jo no em puc alsà!
Que euré fet fex?
Sas sanayes de sa terre
no puc alsà :
Com crec jo que será poc
es meu pescà!
Vose mersè, señó vi
de mi governe:
No hem maltrat, que jo no som
persona esterna.
Asus-suasí, es qui vénen,
los y aguart.
Porà ser que demà es pex
mènjan molt tart.

(Queda adormit y surt es Frare aufferjer)

Frare

Hermano som, molt tems ha,
de aquest convent;
Sempre he servit de bon cor
y llealment.
A prendre capilla may
puc arribà.
Per dolent crec que em treuran
en afinà
Que jo eu maresch,
perquè tot es pa que aplach
jo el partesch
y no en don a jent qui'n tengua
necesitat.
Axò és esser un frare
ben enseñat!

the better it tastes, it's simply divine.

Drinks some more.

Have another little taste,
and knock back another swig,
and sure enough before supper,
I'll be full up like a pig.
Well, I'd best get moving and
catch us some fish.

He tries to get up, but fails to do so.

Oh my, I can't get up!
What have I done?
I can't lift up my straw bags.
It's as if they weighed a tonne!
I don't think I'll be bringing home
any fish now.
Oh, wine, lordly liquid
that holds sway over me:
Let us not come to blows, for I
must hurry to the quay.
I need to fill my nets and get back
to this very place.
For if I bring my fish late to market,
I'll be a downright disgrace.

He falls asleep. The Friar enters.

Friar

I am a righteous man of God,
in the convent near here.
With loyalty and enthusiasm,
I've served many a year.
Despite that, I don't see myself
ever reaching the top.
The others find me nasty,
so, my career's hit a stop.
Perhaps my name's deserved,
for every of loaf of bread my hand touches,
I make sure some reaches the poorest ones'
clutches.
But I don't give it out to those who aren't
truly needy.
After all, who can stand a friar that's
greedy?

(Trobe es Pascadó qui jeu.)

Què és axò que veyx así ?
Homo qui jeu,
homo qui dorm a tal hora...
Axò no treu!
Aquí ey à cose,
perquè pareyx que se robe
no li fa nose.

(El toca)

Germà, què feis aquí?
Que será mort?
Encare parex que alena,
però dorm fort.
Vaje! Aquesta carabase
li eurà fet mal,
Per axò es miix des res
ha fet hostal.
Y ell pareyx es pascadó
de na Llacinta.
Vax-la a vèurer y li diré
es joc com pinta.

(Se'n va el Frare y surt na Llacinta.)

Llacinta

Mon marit sa deu trobà
a la ribera.
Qui sap deu aguafà pex
sobra manera.
Corante sous goñerà
aquesta nit.

Surt es Frare y diu:

No et penses que guaño res,
que està dormit.

Llacinta

Què deys?

Frare

Que qui dorm no guaño
ab son trabay;

He comes across the sleeping fisherman.

What's this that I see?
A man dozing.
A man fast asleep at this hour...
It cannot be!
There's something going on here
that seems rather odd,
and I can safely say it's not an act of God.

The Friar nudges the Fisherman.

Brother, what are you doing here?
Have you dropped dead?
It seems he's still breathing.
The snoring rings through his head.
Ah, look! This flask and its contents
must have taken its toll.
That's why he's sleepy,
the drink's got his soul.
And it seems he's a fisherman,
the one married to Llacinta – that's him!
I shall go and tell her
of the state her husband's in.

*The **Friar** exits. **Llacinta** enters.*

Llacinta

My husband should be off fishing,
dragging them out of the sea's fresh foam.
Who knows how many big baskets of fish
he'll be bringing back home.
And we'll make plenty of money
when he gets back with the stock tonight.

*The **Friar** enters and says:*

I don't think you'll be making any money.
Your husband's out like a light.

Llacinta

What?

Friar

Whosoever sleeps on earns nothing
when there's toil to be done.

y jo, de trebay, no en vui
hare ni may;
perquè som tan afectat
de trebayà,
just just, com un ca, de paye,
pes seu menjà.

Llacinta

Fraret, apertau-vos
d'aquest portal,
perquè, si mon marit ve,
heu prendrà a mal.

Frare

Ton marit, dexe'l anà :
jo el tenc segú.
Prest, aquí, no le y tendràs,
si no'l fas du.
Si, per si, ha de venir,
sa torbarie:
No l'espers d'aquí demà
pasat mixdie.

Llacinta

Y per què?

Frare

Perquè està estès
prop de camí,
qui no y veu de mal de cap
des fum des vi.

Llacinta

Prou ma avia comenat
que, ab aforjés,
hare ni per ningun temps
no les agués.

Frare

Que ha sentit oló de res?

Although as a friar, I can't say I do much
work.

I prefer to avoid the sun.
I'm always so drained
just watching the efforts of others,
so I leave all the hard work
to my fellow Christian brothers.

Llacinta

My dear friar, come away
from the doorway and be quick.
For if my husband were to see you,
anger would overtake him fast and thick.

Friar

Don't worry about your husband.
I've got my eye on him.
He's not in any hurry to be here,
unless you drag him by the limb.
If he's to come, bearing fish,
he'd surely take this time.
Don't wait for him any longer
once the day's past its midday prime.

Llacinta

What for?

Friar

Well, he's out for the count
on a nearby path.
His body couldn't cope with
the wine's aftermath.

Llacinta

Many's the time my husband told me
that saddle-bag-wielding, mendicant monks
do not deserve so much as the time of day.
So, to you, 'be gone' is all I have say.

Friar

Do you think I'm out on the hunt for prey?

Llacinta

Jo pens que sí.
 Hem prometé que, si euforjé
 trobava así,
 el matarie
 y sa meva part, a mi,
 no hem faltarie.

Frare

Bones ofertes, per cert,
 que te ha fetas!
 Jo no volria repicà
 per tals completas.

Llacinta

Vols que jo y tu, per riure,
 el vestiguem
 de aquests àbits que dus
 y que el dexam
 al mitx des ras?

Frare

Per Déu, que bé has pensat !
 Serà bon cas!
 Jo en ses sanayes feré
 de pasquedó.
 Y ell, en voure-se frare,
 tindrà temó:
 creurà que l' à castigat Déu,
 y només,
 perquè tenia avorrits
 ets euforjès.

Llacinta

Però ell se'n temerà.

Frare

No tengas po.
 Ja és conexedó que ets done
 de molt poc cor.
 Un homo qui està més gat
 que una rebase
 no's tem de ninguna cosa

Llacinta

I think so. Yes.
 He promised me that should he
 come across a monk like you,
 he'd soon butcher the man,
 and then, for my part,
 beat me black and blue.

Friar

What thrilling threats
 he has promised you.
 I wouldn't want to deny
 you a brawl or two.

Llacinta

What say you if we, for fun,
 were to dress him up
 in one of your habits
 and then leave him out
 in the middle of nowhere?

Friar

By God! What an idea!
 We are indeed a devilish pair!
 With his woven bags,
 I'll pretend to be a fisherman.
 Upon seeing himself transformed into a friar
 he'll be struck with fear – what a plan!
 He'll soon believe it's
 a punishment from God
 for his slight against us friars.
 We'll soon fool the silly sod!

Llacinta

He'll maybe know it's all just a trick.

Friar

Don't be afraid!
 You're well-known for
 not having much mettle.
 A poor fisherman who's
 as pissed as a newt
 will hardly know what's going on.

que se li fase.

Se'n van y tórnan sortir.

Vays-lo que està de adormit!

Llacinta

Sí, ja dorm ferm.

Frare

Ature't idò y estz àbit
li posarem.

Li pòsan els àbits.

Llacinta

A poc a poc, que malguañy
que ell se'n temés.

Frare

Noltros som dos y ell un:
què vols que fes?
Sas esperdeñes li deyx
y es garrot.
Ab ses aforjes serà
frare de tot.

Llacinta

Y com se desperterà...

Frare

Què creus que fase ?
Si pren malici, no pot
goñar-i mase.

Se posa ses senayes al coll.

A fer barrina milló.
Mai en el món m'i vouré.
Ton marit gananci té:
serà frare; y jo seré,
d'esí al davant, pescadó.

He's low-hanging fruit.

They exit, but soon return.

Look at how deep in sleep he is!

Llacinta

Indeed, sleeping like a log.

Friar

Grab hold of him and
we'll slip this habit on.

They dress him in the habit.

Llatina

Little by little, or all will be in vain
should he realize what's afoot.

Friar

We are two, he is but one:
What do you want me to do?
I'll put these shoes on him too,
And this here length of wire.
Give him these saddle-bags,
and he'll be a fully-fledged friar.

Llacinta

And if he wakes up...

Friar

What do you think he'll do?
If he gets upset,
his lot's been decided.

*Puts the straw bag around the fisherman's
neck.*

I'll never be seen again. They can search for
me high and low, to the bottom of the ocean.
Your husband's moving up in the world
with his new promotion.

Se'n van.

Pescadó

Com és? Que heuré fet llare
en es dormí ?
Demà demetí quin pex
poré tení ?
Ola ! Jo no vex sanayes
ni baverons:
Que eurà pasat colca lladre
van macions.
Bé estiré hare:
ell parex que dormint
som tornat frare !
Axò cí que seria bo
per un qui frisa!
Y ara no sé si som llec
o som de misa...

Se toca el cap.

No duc corone: llec som
com un remell.
Ja pore jo di que som
frare novell.
Y jo dec aser auforjé,
segons sas señes:
Jo vex auforjes así
y esperdeñes.
Bon andà, segons veig,
no hem faltará.
A lo menos des pa més blanc
poré menjar.
Però y quin convent
dec aser frare?
Jo pens es majors trabays
si vendran hare.
No es penseu que és un ofici,
aquest, dolent,
esser frare y no sabra
de quin convent.
Y a ont m'è de retirà,
masquí de mi ?
Sa dona no hem volrà veure
en anar-i,

He'll be a friar; And I, from now onwards,
shall be a fisherman.

They exit.

Fisherman

What's this? What has happened
whilst I was fast asleep?
With no fish tomorrow,
there'll be no money to reap.
Oh no! My straw bags are gone,
and so are my nets.
A dirty thief surely stole them,
without any regrets.
Let me get up, stretch, and respire.
I've transformed whilst I was sleeping,
and now I'm a friar.
Well, this would be a blessing
for any hairdresser with flair.
Should I scurry off to mass?
Or shave away my hair?

He taps his head.

Well, on my head, I still have a crown of
hair.
Surely then, I'm still a layman.
Perhaps I can now say that I'm
a novice friar.
I'll have to make saddle bags,
God's given me these clues.
I've also seen monks sporting
straw-woven shoes.
Well, as I see it, I won't ever
be left wanting.
At least now only the finest white bread
shall touch my lips.
But, as a friar, at which convent
am I to be sent?
No matter how hard the toil,
I'll give my hundred percent.
But don't you find it odd
to be serving to keep God content,
and yet not even know
which one's your convent?
Where should I go?
What's to become of me?
My wife will not want me

perquè jo la vayx privà
 desz euforjés;
 Y hare maraxaria
 que no hem volgués.
 Però jo dec somià:
 axò no és sert.
 Que jo sia frare, no eu crec:
 y somià... axò és inpocitble.
 No eu crec encare;
 però, vuie o no vuie,
 jo som frare.
 No pot ser sinó que Déu
 m' à castigat,
 perquè es frares auforjés
 duya al cap.
 Ell me ha fet tornà auforjé
 y eu saré
 ara y, tal volta, qui sap,
 tan com viuré.
 a sa caze vui jo anà
 a l' entretant :
 meam si m' hauran fet
 es dijous sant.

Surt na Llacinta

Llacinta
(Aparte.)

Mon marit eurà terdat
 a despertar-se.
 Jo vos promet que li hem feta
 bona farsa.

Pescadó

Ma mullé, com és axò ?

Llacinta

Què és 'me mullé' ?
 Mon marit mai no és estat
 frare auforjé.
 Y a ont vos ne veniu,
 mal estrangol ?
 Vós què sou, més que un mal frare ?
 Un batzol ?

to darken her door.
 After all, I warned her
 not to be a monk's whore.
 She'll soon cast me out,
 I'd just be in the way.
 But maybe I'm still dreaming...
 It simply can't be.
 I can't be a friar, arms to God outstretched.
 I find this all somewhat farfetched.
 Believe me now for I am no liar,
 but whether I like it or not,
 I've become a friar.
 It's surely a punishment
 from God up on high,
 but my head's not shaved,
 and I wonder why.
 Well, he's made me a monk and
 who knows how I'll live
 out this new life.
 But I just want to go home,
 back to my wife.
 I'll check in on her,
 and put an end to my complaint.
 Perhaps I've now become a saint.

Llacinta enters

Llacinta
(aside)

My husband will have taken
 his time in waking up from his snooze.
 But I promise you all, this little trick
 will surely amuse.

Fisherman

My wife, is that you?

Llacinta

Who are you to be calling me 'my wife' ?
 My husband's never touched a
 saddlebag ever in his life.
 Why call me that and subject
 me to this ridicule?
 Are you a deviant trickster,
 or just another holy fool?

Pescadó

No som jo vòstron marit?

Llacinta

No: un traydó.
 Vos sou frare y mon marit
 és pascadó.
 Y, axí, no teniu que fer-me
 ninguna trassa.
 Mon marit el trobareu
 si anau a plase.

Pescadó

Si jo del teu costat
 vaig partí ahí.

Llacinta

Tot aquest raonement
 no val per mi.
 Mon marit és a plase,
 qui pex ha duit.
 Vós deys que sou mon marit ?
 Vós anau fuit !

Pescadó

Done, jo hen vax adormí
 y torní frare.

Llacinta

No és un dolent pensament
 que jo eu cregue hare.
 Que dormint tornàseu loco
 és bo de fe,
 però que tornàseu frare
 jo no u creuré.

Pescadó

Sobretot, axò és ca meua.

Llacinta**Fisherman**

Am I not your husband?

Llacinta

No, you poor confused soul.
 You're a friar, and my husband's
 a fisherman – that's his role.
 Don't you be trying to play
 a trick on me!
 My husband's down at the square – go for
 yourself and see.

Fisherman

I was with you only yesterday,
 before heading to the sea.

Llacinta

Your jibber-jabber
 won't work on me.
 My husband's in the square,
 selling his fish, brought up from the quay.
 But now you claim to be my spouse?
 Well, go on back to the alehouse!

Fisherman

My dear wife, I fell asleep and
 have now awoken as a friar.

Llacinta

I'm not that naïve, but
 you must think my head's hollow.
 That snooze has left you demented.
 A sure sign of faith for us all to follow,
 but suddenly transforming into a friar,
 is a lie I just can't swallow.

Fisherman

Well, that's my house right there!

Llacinta

Si jo eu comport!
Primerement a barrades
quedereu mort.
Apartau-vos prest de aquí!

Pescadó

No se pot fer;
perquè axò és casa meua,
vós, me muller.

Llacinta

Mon marit té prou al cap
etsz euforjés ;
Y jo hare, dins sa case,
que n'i volgués...

Surt es Frare ab ses senayas al coll.

Frare

Ma muller, jo som aquí.
Qui ha vingut?

Llacinta

Aquest traidor de frare;
y se és retut.

Frare

Y no vos vaig dir jo
que, d'auforjers,
Ara ni per ningún temps,
en vull mai més?
Veureu aquest garrot
com jugarà.
Y s'auforjer que se'n vaje
a aplegar pa.

Pescadó

Si jo som l'amo d'aquí.

That's it, I've heard enough.
One more word and we'll
soon see if you're so tough.
For your sake, get moving, be gone from
here.

Fisherman

This isn't in line!
That's my home and
you are mine.

Llacinta

My husband has enough to deal with,
So, be off with you friar.
I'll do what I want in my own house.
With you, I shan't conspire...

*The Friar enters, carrying woven baskets
round his neck.*

Friar

My dear wife, I'm back.
Who is this here?

Llacinta

This treacherous friar
has neither sense nor fear.

Friar

Did I not say that
saddlebag makers,
not now, not never,
should be welcome here?
Pass me that garrot.
It'll soon end this farce,
when it glides through the air
and smacks this friar up the arse.

Fisherman

But I am the master of this house.

Frare

Com pot esser?
 Vós que em voldreu llevar
 es meu poder?
 Ma muller, vós que's casàreu
 ab frare ? O no ?

Llacinta

Ab pasacadó.

Frare

Ydò què cerque
 aquest polisó ?

Lo atúpan.

Pescadó

Per amor del Bon Jesús,
 no me atupeu.

Llacinta

Ydò arrux!

Pescadó

Ja me n'aniré,
 que no hem voureu.
 Sols que no hem toque sa escana,
 me n'aniré.
 Tant burro som que, sa case,
 la dexaré ?
 Com és ve que tenc de veure
 qui és es velent
 qui pugua treura de case
 la seva jent.

Se atúpan.

Jo som l'amo, jovenent !
 Fore de aquí!
 Me auríau de fe sas figuas
 a devant mi!

Friar

It's time for you to confess.
 Are you trying to rob me
 of all that I possess?
 My dear wife, did you
 marry a friar?

Llacinta

I married a fisherman. And I'm no liar.

Friar

Then this spalpeen is looking
 for some business most dire.

They strike at him.

Fisherman

For the love of God,
 don't hit me!

Llacinta

Then shoo!

Fisherman

I'm off now,
 you won't clap eyes on me.
 There's no need to beat at my back,
 I'm ready to go.
 But is this beaten man ready
 to leave it all behind though?
 It's cruelty disguised as bravery,
 forcing me out to roam.
 I curse those who banish people
 from their very own home.

They swing for each other.

I'm the owner of this house, young man!
 And it's you that should be going!
 With my fists clenched hard,
 my anger's only growing!

Frare

O frare endemoniat.
 Vós la arrareu!
 Malbé fase sa gananci
 que ab mi teandreu!

Llacinta se posa de se banda des Frare.

Llacinta

Mon marit, jo som aquí
 y vos ajudaré :
 Sas barres a bofetades
 jo li ronpré.

Pescadó

Dos són: velrà més fugí.
 Mal pinta es joc.
 Ell me heuran tret de sa caze
 a poc a poc !

Llacinta

Callau, frare descarat ;
 sinós, vos y afijirem.

Pescadó

De quin modo m'an posat!
 Antes que ey tornen, vax-me'n.
 Advertiu: axò treu ferm.
 Me'n vaig cornut y atupat.

Fin.

Friar

You damned friar,
 you're in for it now!
 You won't be getting anything from us.
 So, go on, take your bow!

Llacinta stands next to the **Friar**.

Llacinta

Husband dear, I'm here by your side,
 ready to lend you support.
 With a few hard slaps to the cheeks,
 this friar will be easy to thwart.

Fisherman

Two against one: I'd best flee.
 I'm playing a losing game – the worst.
 But they'll have to remove me
 from my house feet first!

Llacinta

Hold your tongue, you flagrant friar;
 Otherwise, we'll run you through.

Fisherman

Oh dear, what a mess my life has come to!
 Before they grab hold of me, I'd better go.
 Be sure to learn from my mistake, though.
 For now I'm a cuckold, beaten black and
 blue.

End.

The Tank by Alia Mamdouh, published in 2019 in Arabic by AL Mutawassit publishing, was shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2020. Iraqi novelist Alia Mamdouh is a towering figure of Arabic literature. She won the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature for her novel *The Loved Ones*. Her popular and acclaimed novel *Naphthalene* has been translated into nine languages.

The sophisticated novel *The Tank* is about belonging and longing, and the transformation of Iraq – politically and socially from 1958 until 2011. It is a historical book based on real events and some real people. It can be considered a reference to the places and people in Baghdad in a period of prominent names in the community, such as the famous Iraqi architect Maath Alousi who built a house in the shape of a Cube and lived there until he was forced to leave the country. The author metaphorically invites the characters into the Cube.

The main character, Afaf was born in 1958, and grew up on Tank Street.¹ She fell in love with the “Cube”, which led her to enrol in the Faculty of Engineering for two years before changing to Fine Arts Academy. She was an unsettled soul who wanted to find herself. She then decided to study in Paris and left in 1979. She kept in touch with her family for a while, then she disappeared, and her family could not find her. We do not hear her voice until chapter seven, and we learn that she had some mental issues.

In the first chapter, and via the family photo, we know the family and the structure of the family, from the father Ayoub, the mother Makiah, the uncle Mukhtar, the aunties Fatihiya and Saneea, *Bebe* Fatim and the children – Hilal and Afaf. We are also introduced to Samin and Tarab and Maath Al Aousi. Later in the chapters we are introduced to Younis, Yassin and Dr Karl.

The story in each chapter is told by one narrator: Samim, Maath, Mukhtar, Hilal, Dr Karl, Younis and Afaf. And each chapter is a letter to Dr Karl talking about Afaf, apart from his chapter and the Afaf chapter.

What inspired me to translate *The Tank* is the author’s style which is unique to the Arabic novel. She used space, place and real people and events to build up the novel. Tank Street is one of the largest streets in the Al Athamiya district. It is the street where Baghdad College was located and where people of the elite class, such as ministers and generals, lived in the early years between the 1950s until the late 1970s. It reflects how things changed over the years because of war, sanctions, disappearance and how the people who stayed longed for the ones who left. She cleverly linked the characters that shape the events of the street, and to the Cube.

Each character played a role in building the narration, and each character unfolds as they all search for Afaf who disappeared in Paris. The characters’ developments are in alignment with the political changes of Iraq – Hilal the brother, who travelled to the United Kingdom and married an old woman so that he may be able to live there, Ayoub the father who disappears, Mukhtar who tries to defeat death and is defeated by being alcoholic, Sami the uncle who committed suicide, Maath who left the country, Samin and Tarab who stayed in the country, and Dr Karl who was Afaf’s doctor and saw the situation from a different point of view.

¹ Tank Street – the name of the street came from the largest Water tank in the city that stands at the end of the street. “The large tank looks like a spaceship, standing on three large legs” the author described the tank in one of her interviews (Mamdouh in *France 24 Arabic*).

The book holds and presents various important cultural contexts that are accessible to all readers. The author blended place, space, historical and cultural events with the characters' lives, and that allows readers to imagine the life of the street and its people and how that changed during the years.

The text was not easy to translate, for its complicated introduction on the first chapter where the author introduced the characters through Samim who is writing the letter. Mamdouh used long paragraphs in some parts, which I transferred into shorter paragraphs in English without losing the context. Mamdouh also used some Iraqi dialect words which I preserved, in translation. I believe they can be understood from the context and they keep the cultural sensitivities of the book.

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التانكي
الكاتبة عالية ممدوح

ترجمة هند سعيد

The Tank
By Alia Mamdouh

Translated by Hend Saeed

Chapter One: First Snap of the
Clapperboard

Mr. Samim, surname unknown

الفصل الأول

كلاييت أول مرّة

الأستاذ صميم مجهول النّسب

كما في صور الألبومات العتيقة، فكّرنا جميعاً: نحن الموقعين أدناه، عائلة أيّوب آل الذين سيظهرون بالتدرّج معنا، بجوارنا، بعدنا بقليل، أمامنا، أو أبعد قليلاً. من المفيد أن ندع الوالدة مكّية جالسة على كرسي، فهي غير قادرة على الوقوف طويلاً حتى لو أن الأمر لأجل التقاط صورة. بجوارها الخالة فتحية، بعدها الخالة الأصغر سنية. الوالدة بيبى فاطم مكانها غير موجود بيننا، بقيت في الطابق الأعلى.

حسناً، من المفضّل ولأجل الهيبة أن نقف وراءهم، نحن الرجال. أنا الوالد أيّوب، وبجوارني أخي مختار. هنا يستحسن أن نترك مكاناً لهلال، ولدنا البكر، ولها، ابنتنا عفاف التي أوكلنا شؤون قضيتها الى الأستاذ صميم. هيا، يا أخي، خذ عني المهمّة، ودعني أعود إلى مكاني في الألبوم.

حسناً، ظهر طيف الأنسة عفاف وأنا أكتب اسمك فقط:

عزيزي الدكتور كارل فالينو،

أنا صميم، كاتب سرّي أشتغل باسم حرّكيّ. هو الرجل ذاته الذي قدم معنا في العام 1986 إلى عيادتك الخاصة الكاننة في شارع جاسمان في الحيّ السادس عشر. أمل أن لا تحبطك الذاكرة، وهي، الأنسة عفاف، كانت تتقدّم ببنيته الرشيقة والقصيرة، ويدها لوحة مرّبعة من لوحاتها، لكي تقدّمها إليك بدون كلام. وطرب زوجتي، النّحاتة، صديقتها وزميلتها في الأكاديمية. ومعاذ الأوسى، صاحبي ومرشدها الهندسي، المعمار، الذي شغفت بتصميمه المبدئي ل-المكعب - فسجّلت في كّلية الهندسة، وداومت لعامين، ثم غيّرت مسارها بالانتقال

Much as in old photo albums, we the undersigned—the Ayoub A.L. family—gradually appear either standing together, or behind one another, or in front, or a little further off. We thought it better to let our mother Makiah sit on a chair, as she can't stand for long, even if it's for a photo. Beside her is Auntie Fatihiya, and then the younger auntie, Sanea. Our grandmother Bebe Fatim has no place among us; she stayed upstairs.

Good. As is preferable, and to preserve our reputation, we men stand behind them. I am the father Ayoub, and beside me is my brother Mukhtar. Here, it's better that we leave a place for Hilal, our eldest son, and our daughter Afaf, whose case we assigned to Mr. Samim.

Come now, brother, take this responsibility off my shoulders, and let me return to my place in the album.

Good. Now, just as I write your name, the shadow of Miss Afaf appears.

Dear Dr. Karl Falino,

I am Samim—or that was my working codename. I am the one who came with *her*, in 1986, to your private clinic on Jasmine Street in the Sixteenth Arrondissement.

I do hope your memory will not fail you as she, Miss Afaf, walked ahead of us with her short skinny frame. In her hand was one of her square paintings that she gifted you without a word. And there was my wife, Tarab, the sculptor, a friend of hers and a colleague at the academy.

إلى أكاديمية الفنون الجميلة الكائنة في الوزيرية، هذا معاذ، من الجائز أفسدها حين قال لها في أحد الأيام: ننصمّ المكعب – معاً، وندعو من نغرم بهم إليه.

ربّما، من مسار المكعب ذاك والفنون عامّة، وسياق مدينتنا كلها، كانت الأنسة، وأنا أصرّ على هذا اللقب قبل اسمها، في الوقت الحاضر، واضعاً الأشواق، أو أيّ شيء قريب منها، في أوّل الخطاب. ثمّ المحامي مختار، عمها الذي قد يرشدنا إلى بعض الحثيات القانونية والاستشارات الإدارية التي قد نجد بعض العزاء في أرشيفها. وهلال شقيقها الذي ما زلنا نخاطبه ونستعجله بالرسائل، لكنه لا يردّ علينا حتّى الآن، من يدري؟ من الجائز وفي الساعات الأخيرة وقبل إقفال الستارة عن آخر وجه من وجوهنا يظهر وينضمّ إلى هذه المخطوطة، أو سمّها ما تشاء.

معاذ يقول، إن يونس تغيّرت ابتسامته في الفترة الأخيرة، وصارت محيرة، وسأله إن كان يفكر بالانضمام إلينا، فبمقدوره أن يخبر عمّا يعتدل في داخله. أضاف معاذ، سنكتسب هذه التدوينات أهميّة خاصّة، وستأخذ مكانها حتّى لو بعد حين. ولو كنّا نعرف عنوان السيّد ياسين، لأرسلنا في طلبه، وجعلناه ينضمّ إلينا.. كما سنزوّدك ببعض الهوامش والإضافات، وأشياء لا نعرف عنواناً لها.

كما قد تستهوي خطاباتنا الخالة فتحية، ويظهر صوتها للعلن ... سنتدبّر الأمر، أمرنا. وأنت، سيّدي الحكيم، ستحوّل بدورك من محتكر لبعض، أو الحقيقة كلها، إلى قولها لنا، لأفراد عائلتها التي تنتظر منّا البحث عنها قبل فوات الأوان.

There was also Ma'ath Al Alousi, my friend and her engineering adviser, the architect, about whose initial design of the "Cube" she was so passionate, and who had been the reason she'd enrolled in the Faculty of Engineering, studying there two years before she changed her focus, moving to the Fine Arts Academy in Al Wazireya. This Ma'ath might have ruined her when he told her one day:

"We'll design the 'Cube' together, and we'll invite those we fall in love with to come to it."

Perhaps the path to the Cube, and to the arts in general, and to the whole framework of the city, was the Miss. And here I insist on adding that title to the front of her name, as it puts my nostalgia for her, and for anything connected to her, at the beginning of speech.

Then there was Mukhtar, the lawyer and her uncle, who could provide us with legal advice and administrative consultation in order to help us find consolation in the archives.

And Hilal, her brother, who had not yet replied to our letters, despite our continuous urging that he answer. Who knows? Maybe, in the final hours, before we close the curtain on the last of our faces, he will show up and become a part of this manuscript, or whatever you'd like to call it.

Ma'ath said: "Younis's smile has changed of late. It's become odd and confusing." He asked: Would he like to join us? He can tell us what is going on in his mind. Ma'ath added: 'These notes will have an important role. Perhaps not now, but after a while.' If we'd known Mr. Yassin's address, we would have asked him to join us.

We will also provide you with a few footnotes, additions, and documents that lack titles.

Our letters might be of interest to auntie Fatihya, and, if that happens, her voice will be heard in public. But we will manage the situation. And you, Dear doctor, who kept part or all of the truth to

حضرتك من سئُطلب منك بالمصادقة على جميع ما تعلمته وتعرفه، ما سمعته، ما تناهى إليك بالمصادقة أو تعمداً، فتقرّ بالفاعل: أنتم أم نحن، وكل واحد منا يحيل قصصه في إثرها، متورعا من زعزعة يقينه بالبراءة المخادعة. بالطبع، نحن نعرف بعض الحقب، وماذا أنجزت وحفرت فينا، وستفتح علينا وعليكم، ومن الجهات والأمكنة جميعها، الانتقادات والشروع بخيانة الأصول في حالة، حالات الترجمة المؤقتة أو النهائية للوقائع السرّية والعلنية جميعها ... ستلاحظ ذلك، سيدي. آثارنا جميعاً، ونحن نباغت أنفسنا قبلك، فقد كنّا نفضّل بقاء الأسرار خفية ما بيننا، أما اليوم، فسنجد مشقة وبعض الخطر، كلّ من جهته، ونحن نضعها بين يديك وأيدينا. آثارنا هي، كلنا، وما تبقى منها بين أيدينا، وعلى ثيابنا، وقبل أي شيء آخر، فكرنا، ربّما، هذه هي الطريقة الوحيدة التي نستعيد الاتصال بها، أو نستعيد شخصياً، إذا تمّ إلقاء القبض علينا من بعضنا لأنفسنا، لسجلنا العدلي واللغوي والفكري والديني والفتي والجنسي والسياسي. فكرنا لو استعدنا أنفسنا، نحن المشرفين على الغرق، فقد يراودها كما يراودنا الخلم يوماً بالظهور أمامنا، دون توقّع أو انتظار. ياه، كم فكرنا بحفظ بعض الأسرار، وإفشاء البعض الآخر، كلّ واحد منا وما يمليه الطرف من اعتبارات.

معاذ، أوكل لي خطّة تدوين هذه المخطوطة مردداً بصوت ودود: نعم، خطّك واضح قوي، وحر وفكّ تامّة التكوين. وهذا أمر يجعل القراءة يسيرة من أجل الترجمة. أنا سأزودك بقصاصات ورق، ربّما مطبوعة أو بخطّي الركيك.

وطرب!

yourself, now you will share it with us and with her family, as they are waiting for us to search for her before it's too late.

You will be asked to tell everything you know, everything you heard, either by accident or intentionally. You will admit who is responsible: you, or us?

Each of us will direct their story toward the traces of her and avoid undermining what we have with a feigned innocence. Of course, we know about some chapters of her life, and what she'd achieved, and her influence on us. Everyone from everywhere will criticize you, and us, and they'll accuse us of betraying the origins of the facts in the process of a temporary or final explication of events both secretive and public.

You will notice all this, sir.

All of our traces, and we surprised ourselves before surprising you. We preferred to keep the secrets between us. But today, we will find ourselves both in hardship and in danger, each as they see it, and we place ourselves in your hands and in our own. The traces of her are all that is left in our hands, on our clothing, and, most importantly, in our minds.

We thought perhaps this was the only way we could reconnect with her, or to have her back in person. That if we captured ourselves in all our legal, linguistic, intellectual, religious, artistic, sexual, and political thoughts, we could recover ourselves from drowning.

Then perhaps she will have the same dream we had, and she will show up without notice or waiting.

Ohh, how much we all thought of keeping some secrets and disclosing others, each according to their circumstances.

Ma'ath gave me the responsibility of writing this manuscript. So, in an echo of his friendly voice:

“Yes, you have a strong and clear handwriting, and your letters are perfectly formed. That will make it easy to read during the process of translation. I will provide you with scraps of paper, perhaps

ما زالت مترددة. هي متحفظة على إفشاء الأسرار كلها
قائلة:

بعضنا يختلقها، ويثقل نفسه بها، لكي يبدو صاحب أبتها،
والبعض ينقلها إلى عالم الفنون والآداب، فتأخذ مسارات
غير متوقعة.

العَمّ مختار هو الذي دعم جهودنا بطريقته غير المبالية
التي تحبها الأنسة، فأدخلته معنا. هو الذي لا يجيد المحادثة
كما يجب، ومخمور كما تحب أن تراه، فمن الجائز إذا
اشتغل في أدوات عمل جديدة، فلن يصبح هناك أي عائق
أمام نفسه، فسيتخلص لسانه من التأتأة، وتدعو روايته
الموازية عنها تجاوزاً لروايتنا. ربما عائلة أيوب آل لا
تفضل هذه الأنواع كلها من المسارات السردية، فهذا قد
يحاصر خطوات البحث عنها، وربما العكس، لا نعلم
دكتور.

العائلة تريد أمراً عاجلاً واحداً، مردده من فوق رؤوسنا
جميعاً: هيّا، ابدؤوا رواية القصة حالاً. ابحثوا عن ابنتنا،
فوقت اختفائها لا يقاس بدورة الصبا والشباب، ولا بدوام
الصحة وتوهم المرض.. هيّا، قوموا بالغناء مثلها أو الهمس
مثلنا، وليردد الصدى ويصل بلاد الفرنج المشؤومة التي
ضللت ابنتنا. هيّا، انتقلوا إلى المكان نفسه.. ها، هل بدأتم
تشاهدونها؟ هي ابنتنا نفسها، أو مجرد شخصية داخل
صفحات كتاب تنوون تأليفه، ولا يدلّ عليها، لا تطرحوا
أسئلة لا تعثرون على أجوبتها قط، فليس لديكم إلا كلمات
وحفنة أصباغ يابسة على لوحات ضاعت بين أصدقائها.

لكننا كلنا أدلة، أليس كذلك؟ عال، نحن لا يرقى إلينا الشكّ،
فلا تتحاشوا أخذنا في نظر الاعتبار. توقّفوا عندنا،
وتحدّثوا معنا، توقّفوا عندكم، أو عند غيركم، نحن لا
نعرف خططكم. هل ستفتحون محضراً، كما هي محاضر
البوليس؟ أم ستكتفون بالإعلان؟: هل هي فقيده؟ لماذا
تذهبون إلى أراضي الغير، ها؟ مجرد صدادع في الرأس،
رأسها، يقوم بدور القاتل.. هذه ليست مشكلة قانونية كما
يردد مختار، عمّها. ونحن، أسرتها، مختلفون على
العنوان: هل هي جريمة؟ أم حالة رعب بشكل عام، تنتقل

you can print or copy out my bad
handwriting.”

And Tarab!

She still hesitated and was cautious
about disclosing all the secrets, saying:

“Some of us create and burden
themselves with secrets, just to feel
important. Some take them to the world of
art and literature, which then takes another
unexpected path.”

Uncle Mukhtar supported our efforts
in his careless way, which she liked. She
brought him into our group. He doesn't
have conversational skills and he's a drunk,
or that's how she likes to see him. It's
possible that if he used new and different
tools, he would overcome his stammering,
and perhaps his parallel story about her will
overtake ours. Perhaps the Ayoub A.L.
family doesn't like all these narratives, as
they might narrow the search for her, or
perhaps it's to the contrary. Doctor, we
don't know.

The family has one urgent matter,
echoing through all of our heads. *Yalla*, start
telling the story now: search for our
daughter.

The time of her disappearance can't
be measured, neither by the cycle of youth,
nor by health or the illusion of sickness.
Come, start singing like her or whispering
like us, and let the echoes reach out to the
pessimistic foreign land that misled our
daughter. Come, move to that place—have
you seen her yet? Is she our daughter
herself, or is she just a character inside the
pages of a book you want to write? A
character, then, that doesn't represent her.
Don't ask questions to which you will never
find answers. All you have are words and a
cluster of dried colors on paintings that are
scattered between her friends.

But all of us are evidence, are we not?
Excellent, we are, beyond all doubt. But
don't hesitate to take us into consideration.
Stop here and talk to us; stop where you are
or where others are. We don't know your
plans. Are you going to open an
interrogation, like the one the police

ما بين العواصم والقارّات؟ نحن لم نرَ قطرة دم على ثياب ابنتنا، وهي تغدو خارج مجال نظرنا، لم نرَ ذلك. آه، صارت بعيدة عنّا جدّاً. نعم، نعم. والخطوط والطرقات إليها مقطوعة منذ زمن بعيد، ليس بسبب الحروب فقط. ونحن نشناق إليها، ولا نعرف ماذا نفعّل بالشوق؟ وكيف نقوم بإدارته فيما بيننا؟ وأين نضعه؟ وكيف نورّعه؟ وهل أخذ أحدنا حصّة منه أكثر من الآخر؟ وهل بمقدورنا أن نُؤخّره أو نستعجله، لكي تنتهي منه مرّة واحدة؟ لكنه كان يمتصّ نصف أعمارنا، فلا نعلم إلى أين ذهبت الأعوام؟ وكيف انقضت؟ من الجائز أن يكون الطبيب الأجنبي بصحة جيّدة، وقلبه توقّف عن الشوق، نحن لا نعرف أسباب ذلك، ربّما، هو يكسب عيشه لهذا السبب. وأنتم مثله، قلّتم: الشوق لا طائل منه، واسترحتم. صحيح، هو من المزعجات، وطبيبيكم لا يكلف نفسه عناء البحث عن تشخيص المرض الصحيح: الشوق، نعم، لم يسجّل في معجم الأمراض، لكنه مرض مميت، وهو فرصتنا الوحيدة الباقية التي تتدفّق بها دماؤنا.

هيّا، أخبروني، ماذا تفعلون بهذه الأقلام والأوراق والأقداح والأشربة كلها، وابنتنا تأخّرت، يا سيّد صميم؟ ماذا سنفعل بهذه القوافل كلها من المرارة والطريق إليها ليست آمنة، وبعضها مقطوعة، والجميع يعرف الأسباب. ونحن لن نستطيع التمسك بها، وابنتنا لا نعرف كم بلغ سنّها اليوم؟ ونحن، كل يوم، يزداد شوقنا. ويصير أكثر وطأة من اليوم الأسبق، والذي يليه. لا نعرف كيف تُشاغل هذه الأمور؟ وبمن؟ وكيف يحصل هذا التلازم ما بين الاختفاء والأشواق وقطع الطرقات والحروب؟ ظننّت أنكم تعرفون السبب، وسيكون بمقدوركم إخبارنا، ها.. أنتم تبحثون هنا، الطرُق إليها مقطوعة، وهناك، لا يُرجى الشفاء، وإن، من سيقيم بالبحث عنها؟ لا يجوز التلاعب بنا وعلينا، أو التملّق والنفاق لهم، ولو تتقلّم وحملتم المراجع والمجلّدات جميعها، وبيضّ سواد

conducted? Or you will be satisfied with an advertisement?

Is she dead? What don't you go to other lands, eh? Only headaches. And her head plays the role of a killer.

This isn't a legal problem, as her uncle Mukhtar says, and we her family disagree on how it should be titled: Is it a crime? Or a horror shows that moves between capitals and continents?

We didn't see a drop of blood on our daughter's clothes as she vanished from our sight. And oh, she is far from us now. Yes, yes, and the lines and roads to her have been severed for some time now, and it isn't only because of wars. We miss her a lot, and we don't know: What do we do with that feeling?

How can we manage it between us? Where should we put it? How can we distribute it? Did any one of us take a larger portion than the other? Can we delay it, or can we speed it up—so we can be done with it? This feeling has sucked up half of our lives, and we don't know where all these years have gone.

The foreign doctor might be in good health, and his heart may have stopped longing for her. We don't know the reasons, perhaps, for how he makes his living.

And you're like him when you say: 'What's the use of longing?' and then feel relieved. It's true. It is irritating. Your doctor doesn't even bother to find the diagnosis to the correct disease: longing. Yes, this disease isn't registered in most medical dictionaries, but it is both a fatal disease, and it is the only way we can warm our blood.

Come, tell me what you're doing with all these pens, papers, cups, and drinks when our daughter is late? Mr. Samim? What are we going to do with all that conveys of bitterness, when the road to her isn't safe and some roads are cut off, and everyone knows the reason. We can't hold on to her and we don't know: How old is our daughter today? Every day our longing

عيونكم، فلن نعثر لها على أثر وأنتم تشتغلون بهذه الطريقة الباردة، فهذا لن يعيدها إلينا، وربما إليكم. ألم تدركوا أنها تركتكم جميعاً قبل أن تُقطع الطُّرقات؟! تركت طرب ويونس وياسين، وأنت، سيّد صميم، وذلك المهندس الذي كان يعتبرها أمينة سرّه، فعاقته وأخذت أسرارها معها.

ونحن الخالات: نعم، أنا الخالة فتحية التي استقبل مرضي وأنا أصوغ الجمل البسيطة التي كانت تحبّها علّها تعود، فصرّت أحداثها يومياً وأنادي عليها كما تبدأ القصص عادة وحسب ما نشاء. نقدر أن نُوقف البنت هنا، ونُقرّب الكاميرا من كل وجه من وجوه العائلة، ذكّرتي، يا سيّد صميم، فيما إذا نسيّت واحداً منّا. سيبتسم طبيبك قليلاً، فهي كانت الأصغر سنّاً بين العائلة يوم انتقلنا إلى شارع التانكي... نعم، أنا التي قسمت اسمها إلى قسمين، فما إن أرفع رأسي وأراها أمامي، أعود وأناديها: عفو نظّفي المنفضة زين، يمكن تمرّ علينا واحدة من الخانات والخواتين. هنا الجيران مو مثل أهل السفينة. عملتُ استطلاعاتي على أصحاب الشارع وأعيانه، وسجّلت كل شيء في مفكّرتي، يا نور عيني، وأول ما استقرت الأحوال في السكن الجديد، أمسكتها من يدها، وقلتُ لها: هيا، امشي نكتشف الطُّرُق والفيلات والقصور العجيبة هنا. امشي، وخزني في رأسك ألوان السماء وطين الأرض ورائحة الرارنج، وهو ينفلع على الشجرة ... شمّي يا عفو زين، وبعدين اجلسي ولّوني وارسمي.

for her grows heavier than the day before, and it will be heavier on the day after.

We don't know how to get around these things, and with whom? And how are all these things connected to one another: the disappearance, the longing, the closed roads, and the wars? I thought you knew the reason, and you would be able to tell us.

Oh, you are searching here. All the roads to her are cut off and there—there is no hope in healing. So, who will search for her? You can't manipulate us, lie to us, or play the hypocrite.

The way you're going about this will not bring her back to us or to you. Even if you were to move around and take all the references and the books until you went blind, you would not be able to find any trace of her.

Don't you all realize that she left before the roads were cut off? She left Tarab, Younis, Yassin and you, Mr. Samim, and that engineer who considers her his secret-keeper; she left him and took his secrets with her.

And we, the aunties...yes, I am Auntie Fatihya. My sickness worsens as I formulate these simple sentences that she loved, in the hopes that she will come back. I have started talking to her every day and calling her, much like how stories usually start, or how we want them to.

We can get her to stand here, and we can bring the camera closer to the face of each of the family members. Remind me, Mr. Samim, if I have forgotten one of us.

Your doctor will smile. She was the youngest in the family when we moved to Tank Street. Yes, I am the one who divided her name into two, as soon as I lifted my head up and saw her in front of me, and I called her again: "Afo, clean the ashtray, as maybe one of

the *khanims* and *khowateen* will come to visit us. Neighbors here aren't like the people in Al Safina. I made my own search of the people in the street and the notable families and recorded everything in my diary, *ya noor ayeni*.'

صحيح، يا سيّد صميم كانت عفو لا تستجيب لندائي، فأكرّر ويرتفع صوتي، وأمطّ لساني شوية، لكي أمارحها هكذا:

عفوووووووو...

لا تجيب، فهي تدري ماذا أريد.. أكلّم نفسي وهي واقفة ورائي:

يالّا عيني، ارسمي صورهم كلهم. أني حضّرتهم لك بأشكالهم وثيابهم، بالفينة والسدارة الفيصلية (نسبة إلى الملك فيصل الأول) والعمامة فوق رؤوس بعضهم الآخر. يالّا، أريد أشوفهم بكامل قيافتهم. خليّ قنادرهم تلمع مثل صلعاتهم، وبدلاتهم جديدة طالعة من يد الخياط حالاً، وياقات قمصانهم ناصعة البياض. زين بنتي. أفكر لو تسوين معرض للوزراء العراقيين..
ها عيني. طلعت التصاوير من كتاب تشكيل الوزارات العراقية، وكبّرتها بمكتبة الصباح في أول شارع عشرين، تعالي شوفي الشياكة والذوق الحلو، الصديري والفيونكا لعبد المحسن السعدون رئيس الوزراء.

تعرفين عفو من نظافة الجميع كنت أشمّ بعض العطور تطلع من الثياب والشوارب...هههه ترى في تلك السنين كانت عندهم عادات لطيفة في المأكل والملبس وحركات الأيدي والوقوف أمام المصوّر وأخذ الصور. كانوا رجالاً من صدق.

تسكتُ وأنا أردّد اسم التصغير عفو عفو. كانت تتضايق منه وتسكت. هل كان الأمر مزعجاً لها ودون علمي أنا بالذات؟! فهل التصغير أشعرها بشيء من الضالة؟ هذا هو سوء الفهم الذي يفسد العلاقات، ربّما على مرّ الأجيال، فأنا كنتُ أعتقد أنّه نوع من التّحبّب أو الاستحسان، أليس كذلك، يا سيّد صميم؟ ففي أحد الأيام، أوقفّتها أمامي، وشرحتُ لها الأمر على الصورة التالية:
لا تصدّقيهم. أمك اختارت لك اسم عفيفة على اسم والدتنا، لكن والدك صاحب الذوق اللطيف حسم الأمر قائلاً:
لا، عفاف أحلى.

وحين أصفن وأسكت أو أدخّن، عفو تُطلق صوتها بالغناء، فكانت تشاهدني أتمخّط وأمسخ الدموع من عيني، ودائماً

As soon as we'd settled in the new home, I took her hand and told her. "Come with me to discover the streets, villas, and strange palaces. Walk and record in your mind the color of the sky, the land, the mud and how the *naranj* smells when it snaps off on the tree. Smell well, *Afo*, and then sit down and draw and color."

Yes, Mr. Samim. *Afo* didn't respond to my calls, so I repeated myself, my voice growing louder as I stretched my tongue out to tease her, *Afooooo*.

She didn't reply; she knew what I wanted. I talked to myself, and she was standing behind me. "Come *ayeni*, draw them all. I prepared them for you in all their different looks and clothes: the *fina*, the *sidara*, and some have turbans on their heads. *Yalla*, I want to see them at their best. Let their shoes shine like their bold heads, their new suits as if they'd just come from the tailor, and the collars of their shirts clear white. Okay, daughter. I think you should have an art exhibition for the Iraqi ministers."

Ha ayeni, I took the photos from the book of the Establishment of the Iraqi Ministries and enlarged them at Al Sabah Bookshop at the top of Road 20. Can you see how fashionable they were, how well they dressed? Abdul Muhsin Al Sadooun, the prime minister, with the *sidara* and the bow.

You know *Afo*; they were so clean I could even smell the cologne off their clothes and moustaches. Ha! In those years, they had good manners in eating, dressing, the movement of their hands, and when standing in front of the photographer. They were real men.

She kept silent while I repeat *Afo...Afo*. She would get annoyed, but kept silent. Was it bothering her, and was I the only one who didn't know it? Did shortening her name make her feel diminished or smaller? This was faulty communication between different generations, because I thought it was a

يكون الأمر بهذا الشكل وهي تغني ومع أفراد العائلة جميعهم، فيقع على عاتقنا أن نردّد بعض كلمات الاستطاف والإعجاب، لكننا لا نفعل، حتّى الكلمات العائلية البسيطة والسخيفة لا نقوى على ترديدها أمامها. أه، من الطبيعي أن تقدّم لها بعض الكلمات شاكرين لها أمراً لا نجد تماماً التعبير عنه، إمّا بالسكوت أو بالدموع، وقد عرفت عفو ميكرأ بعض الندوب منذ تلك السنّ الصغيرة، لكنني لا أظنّ أن هذا أثر في حبالها الصوتية، فبعض نوبات الكآبة والقلق الشديد كانت تنتابها، وهلال هو الذي يخبرنا بها، وفي بعض الأحيان سنية أو العمّ مختار. فالغناء سخّفه ياسين، ومن الجائز أنها أخبرت طرب وربما أخبرتك جميعاً..

كنتُ أضعها وأخدع نفسي، وأردّد: هذه مسؤوليتي وحدي، أمّا هي فكانت ترتحل أبعد ممّا سبق، وتبتعد عنّا جميعاً، وهي بيننا... أني الآن أمامك، يا سيّد صميم، حضرتُ بنفسي إلى بيتكم، هيّا أنظر إليّ، وأنا أرثدي ثيابي التي كانت تُفضّلها: طقم رصاصي مكسّم على جسمي، أزراره الذهبية لا تُقفل، وياقته رفعتها إلى أعلى لإخفاء ترهل جلدة رقبتني، وسحاب التّورة لم يصعد كله للأخير، فشكّلتُه بدبوس أبو رأسين. والقندرة ذاتها بكعب متوسط الارتفاع، جلد روغان يلمع، زديّة لمعاناً بمسحة بزيت ناشف. والشال، الأتراه؟ انظر إليه جيّداً، هل تذكره؟ كان ذلك منذ سنين، طرب جلبته من هناك، نعم، هذا منها، أرسلته معك، هل تذكر؟ ..ها، هل تراني مهنّمة وبلا عطر فوّاح إلا عرقي الخفيف، والحقيبة العتيقة تحت إبّطي، وأنا أمامك كما كنّا نذهب، نحن أفراد العائلة جميعهم لأخذ العزاء وعمل الواجب ..أنا حاضرة باسم الجميع، ومن الجائز ستري من وقت لآخر سنية تمدّ رأسها وتقول لك: هل تريد أحداً يصحّح لك مساء الخير، أستاذ صميم، المشاعر؟ هل وصلت للحديث عن الأحران؟ هيّا، ناديني في أيّ وقت تشاء.

compliment or a favor, and wasn't it, Mr. Samin?

One day, I made her stand in front of me, and I explained to her that the matter was like this: "Don't believe them. Your mother chose the name Afifa, after our mother, but your father, with his good judgment said: No, Afaf is nicer."

When I'd sit in silent thought, smoking, she'd release her voice in song. I, along with the rest of the family, would wipe my tears and blow my nose—it was always like that when she sang. Then we felt the responsibility of saying a few kind words to praise her, although we were even unable to voice the family's foolish and simple words. It was a natural thing to do, but something we weren't able to express fully in words, but by being silent, and by tears.

Afo endured a few pains at a young age, but I don't think they affected her vocal cords. Hilal, Sanea, and Uncle Muktar told us about her depression and her fits of anxiety.

Yassin mocked her singing, and she'd likely told Tarab, and perhaps told all of you.

I deceived her and myself, repeating: "This is my responsibility." As for her, she was drifting away from us even while she was still with us.

I am here in front of you, Mr. Samim. I came to your house of my own will. Look at me. I'm wearing the clothes that she liked: a gray fitted suit with golden buttons that can't be fastened. I put the collars up to hide my flabby neck. The skirt's zipper doesn't fasten, so I put a pin in to hold it, and the shiny leather shoes have medium heels, and I cleaned them with dry oil to make them more shiny. And the shawl, can you see it? Look well. Can you remember it? This was years ago. Tarab brought it from there. Yes, this is from her, and Tarab send it to me with you, do you remember?

Do you see me all dressed up with no perfume apart from my sweat, and with the old handbag under my arm? I am in front of

you as we use to go, all of us family members, to give our condolences and do our duty.

I'm here on behalf of all of the family members. Perhaps you will see, every now and then, Sanea sticking her head out and saying good evening. Mr. Samim, do you want anyone to correct the feelings? Are you talking about sadness yet? Come now. Call me anytime you want.

Her mother Makia, used to cook feasts for you and for us, and these were the best feasts without any feeling of her being burdened. Perhaps our hunger for food is same as our hunger for her. For all of us, women and men: her brother Hilal, Uncle Mukhtar, her father Ayoub, and the people of this street and this neighborhood. Oh! And if Bebe Fatim, her grandmother, knew that I'd forgotten her name, she would not forgive me. Bebe Fatim's longing for her made her ready to go into her room and stay in it, after a crazy cleaning campaign, while listening to the tapes recorded while she was singing Sayed Darwish, Abedlwahab, Suad Mohammed, and Asmahan. That doesn't say anything about her, but she was almost twenty-three when the age and the stories stopped.

For eight years, Tarab went on traveling to Paris to see her, and, when she came back, she would neither confirm or deny anything, while she'd say:

"Listen Samim, the story can't end at a hospital, or in a lobby, or in the clinic of that doctor. She goes in and out from there, the situation isn't dangerous, and she still mocks everything."

Then she'd add in a sad tone: "There's a possibility that she thinks we've let go of her. We also stopped missing her and looking for her. We're being stubborn, angry with her and for her. Are we the reason for her sickness? No, no I don't want to decide now."

Dear doctor, Ma'ath is inviting you to visit us. Yes, in our country, the one we mention in our narrative, fearing that the characters and family members in our story

وأما مكّيّة كانت تحضّر لكم ولنا ألدّ الولايم، وبلا مئة، علّ جوع المأكّل يوازي الجوع إليها. وهلال أخوها، والعمّ مختار، أبوها أيّوب...كلنا، الرجال والنساء، وسكان هذا الحّي والشارع... يا ويلي عليّ من لسان بيبي فاطم، جدّتها لو عرفت أنني تناسيتُ اسمها، لما غفرت لي. شوق بيبي كان متأهباً لدخول غرفتها، والإقامة فيها بعد حملة تنظيف جنونية. تفتح الشرائط التي سجّلنا عليها صوتها وهي تشدو بأغاني سيد درويش وعبد الوهاب وسعاد محمّد هذا لا يخبر أيّ شيء عنها، لكنها كانت على وأسماهان.. أعتاب الثالثة والعشرين، فتوقّفت الأعمار والقصص هناك.

طرب، وطوال ثمانية أعوام بقيت تسافر إليها في باريس، وحين تعود لا تؤكّد ولا تنفي، وهي تقول: اسمع صميم، لا يمكن أن تتوقّف القصة في المشفى ذاك أو تلك الرّدهة أو عيادة ذلك الطبيب إياه. فهي تدخل وتخرج إلى هناك، فالحالة ليست خطيرة، وهي ما زالت تسخر من كل شيء.

كانت تضيف بنبرة حزينة:

هي تعتقد أننا تركناها تضيع من بين أيدينا. من الجائز، فنحن أيضاً توقّفنا عن الشوق إليها والبحث عنها. هكذا عناداً، حنفاً، منها، وعليها. هل نحن أسباب المرض؟ كلا، كلا، لا أريد الحكم الآن.

معاذ يدعوك، يا سيّدي الدكتور، لزيارتنا، أه عندنا، في بلدنا الذي نتداوله بتقطيع السرد، والخوف من فرار شخصيات القصة والعائلة من الصفحات قبل التّعريف إليك، بدءاً من الخال سامي مروراً بالأخ هلال، ثمّ بالأنسة عفاف. وكلّما انقطع السرد فجأة لسبب سياسي، أو حربي، أو عسكري، أو ديني، منحنا أنفسنا بعض المكافآت، وعملنا وجبة طعام معتبرة في الحديقة الخلفية، وشربنا نخب أفراد هذه العائلة.

فتدخل على الخطّ دكتور، وأنت تضع قدمك على أرضية - المكعب - وتتمكّن من دراستنا جميعاً، تضحك ولا تُعلّق! لن نضع أمامك قطعاً من لحم الأنسة، أو ثيابها، فنزيتها هنا في بلدها، ونهدّها أمامك كالفرسة المولودة حديثاً..

will run away from the pages before they get to know you – starting with Uncle Sami, the brother of Hilal and Ms. Afaf.

Whenever the story stops suddenly for political, military, or religious reasons, we grant ourselves a few rewards and cook a good meal in the backyard and drank a toast to the family.

You come in, Doctor, and put your feet on the ground of the Cube and study us all. You laugh, but you don't comment. We won't offer you a piece of her, or of her clothes. We won't offer her to you as though she were a newborn mare. No, in short, here we are negotiating with you, taking turns in telling the story. We don't know who will come in or go out, and who will be provoked, come for a few minutes, and leave. Who will tell us horrible tales to scare us, and who would like to live with us, such that he will show off, saying, "Oh, I was with them all, one by one, enjoying the hunting and the hurting."

They probably present themselves to you so that you will cooperate with them. Of course, there is the possibility of doubt, and of mistaking what we're about to say. We are not as you think, theorists analysing crimes, but instead the abundance of crimes and the different ways in which they are committed may lead some people, such as our Miss, to the idea that life itself is useless.

كلا، هذه طريقة قصيرة النفس، وها نحن الذين نتفاوض معك، وتتناوب على إدارة عملية السرد، ولا علم لنا من سيدخل ولا يخرج، ومن سيستقر ويحضر لدقائق ويغيب، ومن يعرض علينا الفطاعات لإخافتنا، ومن يريد العيش معنا، لكي ينفخ صدره قائلاً: أه، كنت معهم نقرأ فرداً واحداً يتلذذ بالصيد والأذية، هؤلاء كلهم، ومن الجائز أكثر، يقدمون أنفسهم أمامك، فلا تبخل بالتعاون معنا. بالطبع، هناك احتمالات للشكوك والأخطاء فيما سنرويه، فلنسا كما نتصور، أصحاب نظريات في تحليل الجرائم، لكن وفرة ارتكابها، وتنوع طرقها قد تدفع بعض البشر، كالأنسة، إلى فكرة لا جدوى الحياة ذاتها.

The Tragedy of Mannikins

MARK BACZONI

"Your father's nimble craft took just that course,
Bound for a war beyond our own frontiers.
Barbarians live there, a reckless people,
Threatening our country's liberty.
Pray, pray, my son, that heaven defend our cause
And bring your noble father safely home."
(Imre Madách, *The Tragedy of Man*, Scene 5)

"Foreign armies all do seek
To subjugate the ancient Greek.
Miltiades is gone to war,
To give the bearded lot what for."
(Frigyes Karinthy, *The Tragedy of Mannikins*, Scene 5)

Imre Madách's (1823-1864) *The Tragedy of Man* is one of the great classics of Hungarian literature and a work of extraordinary scope and humanity, sadly neglected, and worthy of international attention. A verse drama about the Fall of Man and the battle between God and Lucifer in fifteen dramatic scenes, set in various times and places and told in rhyming verse, it is a masterpiece of language and a beautiful, heart-rending read. It can most directly be compared to *Paradise Lost*, though of course it is much later and concerned with the questions of the spirit of the mid-nineteenth century. It takes us from the Garden of Eden to the Egypt of the Pharaohs, the Byzantium of the Crusaders, a Phalanstery in the style of Charles Fourier and even the cold, impersonal reaches of outer space.

Almost unknown in English, it has been translated several times, most recently by George Szirtes (Corvina, Budapest, 1988). It has also been illustrated over the years by a wide variety of artists in a number of different styles.

A little-known fact is that the outstanding Hungarian humourist Frigyes Karinthy (1887-1938) published, posthumously in 1946, a little companion-piece, *Az Emberke Tragédiája* (*The Tragedy of Mannikins*), a satire of the original play, also in rhyme, covering the action brilliantly, but in the style of a nursery tale (sort of like the RSC versions of the Bard. Here, too, the better you know the original, the funnier it is). This was re-published in 2005 (Háttér Kiadó) and has never, to my knowledge, been translated into English.

It is full of anarchic humour, inspired wordplay and is a tour de force in rhyme and fixed form, undershot throughout with Karinthy's brilliant, playful, irreverent tone.

This, however, leads to a number of challenges when it comes to translation. In fact, the attempt was born out of a friend's project to showcase "untranslatable" texts in translation – and I felt that this piece was suitably skirting the limits of the possible. For one thing, of course, it rhymes, for another, it is in fixed form. And, while maintaining a cohesive satirical voice of nursery-rhyme throughout, it also conveys the plot of the original story and reflects upon it, as well as bringing in other cultural references. There would have to be a careful balance between form and meaning here, I thought: between *belle* and *fidèle*. I translated one stanza, and that went well. I left it at that.

Then lockdown hit, and I found myself with time on my hands, and I thought, let's see if I can extend that one stanza, maybe to the whole first scene? I soon got into it. I found I had to change the register slightly, from nursery rhyme to young adult level (though of course, this piece is not in fact for young readers at all), because English simply could not keep the conciseness of the Hungarian without losing meaning. The words, and therefore the lines, had to be longer, and soon lost that nursery-rhyme aspect. However, I tried to stick close to the original meaning while respecting (roughly) the rhyme scheme and trying to maintain some sense of form. This became my first draft, in January 2021.

I was lucky enough to have outstanding readers for this draft, whose help allowed me to progress to the next. Daniel Hahn suggested iambic tetrameter as the appropriate form, and Roald Dahl's *Jack and the Beanstalk* from *Revolting Rhymes* as the model. I borrowed my god-daughter's copy. The next draft tried to stick as close to this as I could. Dr Ruth Diver helped with comments, and both she and Prof. Ádám Nádasdy (the outstanding translator into Hungarian of Shakespeare and Dante, among others) helped me hone the rhythm and pointed out where the meaning did not come across. George Szirtes gave helpful general feedback on this draft, too.

I then let the text rest and came back to it with *The AALITRA Review* in mind. I ran through the draft again, read it aloud, and decided to let the rhythm dictate more fully. I therefore ended up re-working most of the first half of the text, and the balance tipped towards *belle*. I broke the tetrameter form, because it was too restrictive and started taking a few liberties (there are no swear words in the original). Nonetheless, I think I have mostly kept true to the sense of the original, and I can still say that this is a translation, albeit with some liberties taken and a few lines swapped here and there for purposes of rhyme, rather than a *version*.

The part that gave the greatest difficulty was Scene Nine. Here, Karinthy not only plays with Madách's original, which places the players in Revolutionary France, Adam taking on the role of Danton (not an easy name to rhyme!), but also takes a sideswipe at Hungarian 19th-century rural romanticism, in the form of Sándor Petőfi's *John the Valiant* (translated into English by John Ridland, for anyone interested) which would be a reference immediately recognized and easily understood for most Hungarian readers, but obviously will be lost on most Anglophone ones. Initially, this digression threw me - I thought Karinthy was making a reference to the hero of *John the Valiant* himself, or satirising Petőfi, but eventually, having consulted my mother (who spent the first half of her adult life in Hungary), the conclusion was that this was less about the story of *John the Valiant* and more about the romanticization of rural life in nineteenth century Hungarian literature. I therefore dropped the specific reference and instead, tried to empathize the connection to land, food, farming, etc. with which Karinthy plays.

I then read the piece aloud again, and went back and corrected the lines, or words, that were sticking out of the rhythm. That has brought us to this version.

I hope this text's journey does not end here. Firstly, I am sure that, based on future feedback, I will once again have to, or want to, revisit the text. Secondly, I would very much one day like to find a publisher who would be willing to put out Madách's original *tête-bêche* with Karinthy's satire, all illustrated, either with traditional illustrations to the text or, more excitingly, new illustrations commissioned from contemporary Hungarian artists. The chances, I know, are slim, but I can only console myself with God's advice to Adam in both Madách's and Karinthy's version of this tale: I must have *faith*.

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AZ EMBERKE TRAGÉDIÁJA

[*Madách Imrike után Istenkéről, Ádámkáról
és Luci Ferkóról a versikéket írta KARINTHY
FRICIKE*]

Bevezetés

Toncsi, Fercsi, Jancsi, Náncsi.
Csupa kandi, meg kíváncsi
Kisgyerek.
Amit Imre bácsi néktek
Elmesél most - attól égték
Ifjak, öregek.
Egyik izzad, másik fázik,
Egyik vigan hahotázik,
Másik pityereg.
Ha így nézed, domború,
Ha így nézed, homorú.
Egynek szörnyű mulatságos,
Másnak szomorú.

Első szín

Utcu Lajcsi, hopsza Lenke,
Volt egyszer egy jó Istenke,
Azt gondolja magában:
Mit ülök itt hiában?
Megteremtem a világot,
Hogy olyat még kend nem látott.
Hogyha látod, szádat tátod,
Mesterségem megcsodálod.

Amint mondta, úgy is tett,
Dolgozott egy keveset,
Hat nap alatt úgy, ahogy
Összecsapta valahogy,
Rajta nem is másított,
Csak egy nagyot ásitott.

Rafael, Miska, meg Gábor.
Ebből állt az angyaltábor.
Rafi mondta: halihó,
Ez a világ jaj be jó!
Miska mondta: gyerekek!
Ez a világ de remek!
Gabi mondta: mi lesz még,

The Tragedy of Mannikins,

*or, all about Ads and Evie, the Lord, and
Louie Cipher,
much as described by Mr. Madách
by Frigyes "Call me Frank" Karinty.*

**Translated by Mark "Call me Maybe"
Baczoni**

PROLOGUE

Come Prudence, Constance, Julius
All wise children, curious,
Gather 'round and listen well,
Imre has a tale to tell.
And what Imre has to say
Will simply take your breath away.
You can fidget, you can wriggle
Hide your faces, even giggle
At a tale of Good and Bad,
You may find funny, maybe sad.
When it's done and all is through
You will have your point of view -
And you can tell us which is true!

SCENE ONE

Hello children, how d'you do?
Once there was a Lordy-pooh:
"I should not sit around like this,
When it's time for Genesis!
I'll make a world just like a dream,
The likes of which you've never seen.
When you do, your eyes will pop,
Praising me you'll never stop."

The Lord was good as his own Word
He threw together this old world
Took him six whole days and yet
He never really broke a sweat.
"Done", he muttered, "that's a wrap,"
And off he sidled for a nap.

Rafe, Mike, Gabe are at their post -
Boys and girls: the angel host!
Rafe pipes up: "my, how jolly nice,
This Earth place is a Paradise!"
Mike chips in: "what a splendid show,
You've made, O Lord, down there below."
Gabe: "think nothing could get near it?"

Ha meglátjuk az eszmét?

Luci Ferkó azomba'
Íríg्य volt és goromba.
Meee, mondta, szebb is akad,
Nekem nem kell, edd meg magad.
Ilyen volt a Luci Feri,
De Istenke meg is veri,
Nem kell szárny, repülj gyalog,
Dobjátok ki, angyalok!

Második szín

Ádámka, meg Évike
Édenkertnek végibe
Hancuroztak, ittak, ettek,
Állatokkal verekedtek.

Ádámka nem akart menni
Évikével almát enni.
Évi mondta: ne légy fád,
Láttam két szép almafát.

Angyalka jött, nagyon mérges,
Vigyázz, az az alma férges!
Istenke se akarja,
Hasacskrátok csikarja.

Luci Ferkó rossz kölök,
Éppen arra lődörög,
Juszt is, mondta: egyetek,
Tömjétek meg begyetek.

No most tele van a bendő,
Itt a bűn, az eredendő.
Mars ki innen, istenverték!
Bezárjuk az Édenkertet.

Harmadik szín

Vége lett a jó életnek,
Éviék szegények lettek,
Mert elkövették a rosszat,
Dolgozhatnak most naphosszat.
Mi lesz ebből, Évikém?
Nem bírom egy évig én.
Csak tudnám, mi lesz belőlem,
Mit akar Istenke tőlem.

Luci Ferkó majd megmondja,
Annak ez a legfőbb gondja,

Just wait until you see the *spirit!*"

Then along comes Louie Cipher,
Feeling mean and mighty bitter.
"Bah, what rot! I see right through it,
Like this world? You're welcome to it!"
But the Lord could not abide
Rudeness and such wanton pride:
"Off with his wings! Fly on your feet.
Boys - throw him out into the street!"

SCENE TWO

The First Man and his charming mate
Were sitting by the Garden gate
Eating, drinking, having fun,
Keeping fauna on the run.

But Adam did not want to go
Scrumpling dinner down below
Eve said: "Come on, darling, please,
I've seen a pair of apple trees."

Down comes an angel, very cross
Brings this warning from the Boss:
"Don't touch that fruit, no not at all,
Or you'll be heading for a Fall."

But Louie Cipher, oh so sly,
Happens to be idling by,
"Eat," he whispers, "come and scoff,
Get your noses in the trough."

One small bite, so *wafer thin*,
Gave us all Original Sin.
"Out! Out, you go, you cursed lot -
Of Paradise that's all you got."

SCENE THREE

Now they're out of Paradise
A and E are poor as mice.
As the wages of their sin,
They have to work, day out, day in.
"Eve, what are we supposed to do?
I can't do this all year through.
I only wish that we just knew
What God intends for me and you.

Maybe Louie C can tell us
With the truth, he won't be jealous

Mióta büntetés végből
Őt is kidobták az égből.

Feküdjete a bokorba,
Kimondom most nektek sorba,
Évi, Ádám,
Kibontom a meseládám.
De előbb módját megadni,
Van szerencsém bemutatni,
Ha nem tetszik a regény,
Vagy az ágyacska kemény,
Ez a kislány megpuhítja,
Úgy hívják, hogy zöld remény.

Negyedik szín

Ádámkából azon nyomba
Fáraó lett Egyiptomba.
Nagyon finom volt a dolga:
Mint a pelyva, annyi szolgál,
Dolgozott egy kőhegyen,
Csak hogy neki jó legyen.
Gile-gula, tarka-barka,
Rabszolgának fáj a marka,
Férfiszolga, nőcseléd
Liheg-lohog, csöcselék!

Ha kilóg a nyelvecskéd,
Megverünk, mint kis kecskét,
Csihi-puhi, mertek-gyertek,
És egy szolgát agyonverték.

Évike, hogy látja ezt,
Nosza pityeregni kezd.
- Mit pityeregsz, te gyerek?
Évi tovább pityereg.
- Na megállj csak, az apád!
Eltörtétek a babát!
- No majd veszek frisset, másat,
Finomat és elegánsat!
- Ez már úgylis régi, ócska,
Így szólt a jó Fáraócska.

Égszakadás, földindulás,
A fejemen egy koppanás,
Átszaladunk egy más korba,
Szaladj te is, pajtás!

Ötödik szín

Görög hazát akkor éppen

For he himself has paid the price
And got kicked out of Paradise."

Lou says: "lie down there and rest,
As I open up my storychest.
Now listen up and don't look pale,
While I relate your sorry tale.
Before that story I produce,
Allow me though to introduce -
That precious maid who'll help you cope
When you're reaching for the rope -
Or in jail you've dropped the soap -
Let us call her: mistress Hope."

SCENE FOUR

Adam now is, don't you know,
Down in Egypt, Pharaoh.
Has everything that he could crave,
Everywhere he looks, a slave
All working hard and heaping stones,
Just to bury his old bones.
But life for some is not so grand,
That slavey's hurt his little hand,
A life of toil in the sun
Isn't really all that fun!

Slowing down there, getting slack?
What you need's a damn good smack,
Bish-bash, bash-bish, catch your breath
They've gone and whacked a slave to death.

When this horrid scene she sees,
Eve starts weeping in the breeze.
"What's all this, these waterworks?"
But Eve is too upset for words.
"What d'you do, you silly muppet?
Gone and broke her favourite puppet!
Don't worry, darling, don't you fear,
I'll find you one that's just as dear.
Yours was past it anyway,"
Answered Pharaoh bright and gay.

Thunder, lightning,
Curtain drop,
To another age we hop,
Come on pals, no time to stop!

SCENE FIVE

Foreign armies all do seek

Megtámadták, kérem szépen
Miltiades fővezér
A csatába ment ezér!

Hát ahogy ott csatázott,
Mint valódi hellén,
Arrament egy ellenség,
Megszúrta a mellén.

No ez mégis hallatlan,
Hogy a nép ily hálátlan.
Nincs hálátlanabb a népnél,
Otthagyták őt a faképnél.

Királynak, ha nincs szószéke,
Hatalmának bezzeg vége.
Igyuk meg a tejecskét,
Csapjuk le a fejecskét.

Égszakadás, földindulás,
A nyakamon egy koppanás,
Átszaladunk egy más korba,
Szaladj te is, pajtás!

Hatodik szín

Hü, ezek de rosszak lettek,
Énekeltek, ittak, ettek,
Évi, Ádi gonoszcsontok,
Elvetettek minden gondot.
Évi röhög, mintha ráznák,
Csintalanok és paráznák,
Nincsen benne semmi könyör,
Azt mondja, hogy fő a gyönyör,
Fő a gyönyör, meg a gyomor,
Persze, lett is szörnyü nyomor.

Ádi, Évi rossz is, rest is,
Hát egyszer csak jött a pestis,
Jött a csunya dögvészecske,
Hullt a nép, mint a legyecske,
Kézzel, lábbal kalimpált
És aztán meghalukált.

Ekkor jött a szent Peti,
Ki a rosszat megveti.
- Ádi, Évi, nézd meg eztet,
S megmutatta a keresztet.

To subjugate the ancient Greek.
Miltiades is gone to war,
To give the bearded lot what for.

In all that's pugilistic,
He is brave and Hellenistic
But as he struggles without rest
Someone stabs him in the chest.

Well, you know, it really grates,
That people *will* be such ingrates.
If you listen to them prate,
You'd think this was a polis state.

But once a King has gone and lost
A war of words, there goes his post,
So give us all a crust of bread
And we'll cut off the tyrant's head!

Thunder, lighting,
Stage-lights drop
To another age we hop,
Come on chums, no time to stop!

SCENE SIX

Belching, wine, regalia,
A full-blown saturnalia!
See them drinking over there?
Ads and Eve have ceased to care.
Eve is giggling like she's crazy,
Both are decadent and lazy.
No wonder that she's always pissed -
She's turned into a hedonist.
Only ever eats and drinks,
Of other people never thinks.

Ads and Eve became so horrid
The atmosphere grew pretty torrid.
There came along a fearful plague,
Everywhere you look, the ague,
Gurgles, wailing, spitting red,
Everybody's dropping dead.

Then St Peter wanders in
Who thinks this all a grievous sin.
"Adam, Eve, stop being pricks!"
He shows them both a crucifix.

Égszakadás, földindulás,
A szívemen egy koppanás,
Átszaladunk egy más korba,
Szaladj te is, pajtás!

Hetedik szín

Tankréd bácsi énekel,
Azt mondja, hogy hinni kell.
Egyik hiszi eztet, aztat,
Másik hiszi aztat, eztet.
Egymás kezéből kitépik,
Rongyolják a szent keresztet.
Ejnye, csípje meg a macska!
Hol az exact fogalmacska?

Évi a zárdába ment,
Nem szép tőle, annyi szent.
Lett belőle Izidóra,
Nem hallgatott okos szóra.
Ádi mondja: csip, csip, csip,
Gyere már ki egy kicsit.
Évi, Évi, gyere ki,
Ég a házad ideki.
Évi mondja: nem, nem, nem.
Nem enged a korszellem.
Feri mondja: a kereszt!
Megfogtad, de nem ereszt!

Égszakadás, földindulás,
A hátamon egy koppanás,
Átszaladunk egy más korba,
Szaladj te is, pajtás!

Nyolcadik szín

Ádi, Évi, ácsi, pácsi,
Ez meg itt a Kepler bácsi,
Nem ám holmi fecske-locska
Kenyere a csillagocska,
A nagy bolygó náció,
Meg a gravitáció.
Egyedem-begyedem,
Meg a világegyetem.

Közben Évi: juj, juj, juj,
Egy fiúval összebúj,
Hogy majd vesznek, éljen, vivát,
Ádámkának vásárfiát.
Nem fügét és nem narancsot,
Icipici kis agancsot,

Thunder, lightning,
Flashbulbs pop,
To another age we hop,
Come on troupe, no time to stop!

SCENE SEVEN

Brave young Tancred comes and sings
'Belief is key above all things'.
Some believe the truth is *this*
While some think that's so much piss.
Neither party gives a toss -
They've torn apart the One True Cross!
Brothers, where's thy Charity,
And where doctrinal clarity?!

Then Eve cries out, perfunctory,
Get me to a nunnery!
But Isaura, brand new novice,
Of persuasion takes no notice.
Adam counts, "one, two, three, four,
Come out of that blessed door!
Evie, come out into town,
Byzantium is falling down."
But Eve says "never, no, no, no,
The zeitgeist will not let me go."
"It seems to me," says naughty Lou,
"The Holy Cross got hold of you."

Thunder, lightning,
A handbag drops,
To another age we hop,
Come on boys, no time to stop!

SCENE EIGHT

Hello there now, and who is this?
It's old man Kepler, scientist.
No armchair expert this one here,
His subject is the celestial sphere,
The stars, their every station,
The sky and gravitation;
Harmonies and prose and verse,
In short, the whole damn Universe.

But Eve meanwhile tends to be
Engaging in adultery.
For every girl must have some fun,
And though it may be dearly won
There's something left for Adam too,
Look, dear, cuckold's horns for you!

Felteszik a fejére,
Jól fog állni nekie.

Csakhogy ahhoz pénz kell ám.
Adjál nékem, Ádikám.
Ádi mondja: no, mi lesz még?
Nem szeretem ezt az eszmét,
Unció-smunció,
Szebb a revolúció.

Égyszakadás, földindulás,
A szememen egy koppanás,
Átszaladunk egy más korba,
Szaladj te is, pajtás!

Kilencedik szín

Játsszunk fej vagy írást mostan,
Mondta Ádám a magosban.
Hogyha írás, semmi sírás,
Mindennapra egy tojás.
Hogyha fej lesz, de sok hely lesz,
Minden bögre csupa tej lesz.
Megisszuk a tejeckét,
Lecsapjuk a fejeckét.

Utolsó pár legelőre,
Kimegyünk a legelőre,
Mienk a föld, rontom-bontom,
Az én nevem Kukorica,
Kukorica, Kukorica Danton.

Utcu bizony megérett a meggy,
Danton bácsi ki a rétre megy.
Kint a réten a fűbe harap,
Hiányzik belőle egy darab.

Égyszakadás, földindulás,
Könyökömön egy koppanás,
Gyerünk vissza, pajtás!

Tizedik szín

Ádámkának mi nem jut eszébe,
Hogy ő mostan beleül a székbe.
A tudományt onnan magyarázza,
Hú tanítványt a hideg kirázza.

-Tudós bácsi, mondd meg nékem,
Mi legyen a mesterségem?
-Vegyél könyvet, tollat, irkát,

Something he can wear to bed
Each night upon his aged head.

She knows in life that nothing's free
"Adam, give me currency!"
"Are you kidding? You been drinking?"
I don't like this way of thinking.
Stuff a Rational Solution,
Just give me the Revolution."

Thunder, lightning,
Someone coughs,
To another age we hop,
Come on girls, no time to stop!

SCENE NINE

"Now let us play heads or tails,"
Said Adam, in between hay bales.
If it's tails, then never fear,
We've a rustic idyll over here.
Lots of flour with which to bake -
And if you can't get bread, there's cake.
If it's heads, then wait a bit,
We'll knock some off while women knit.

"Hello there, you noble pair,
Come and get some country air,
We've taken over everywhere;
Danton here, how do you do,
Allow me to take care of you."

As you sow thus you shall reap
Danton heads off with a leap,
In the end, he bites the dust,
A little shorter, only just.

Thunder, lightning,
My watch has stopped,
One step back we do hop!

SCENE TEN

Adam, what does he do next?
Extemporize a learned text!
Like a don, he takes a chair -
While his pupil tears his hair.

"O learned sage, please tell me true,
What is it that I should do?"
"Paper, quills, and books do bring,

Mindenféle irka-firkát!
-Tudós bácsi, vettem, hoztam,
Mit csináljak velem mostan?
-Dobd a tűzbe hamarjába,
Jó meleg lesz a szobába!
-Beledobtam, lángol, ég is,
Mit csináljak mostan mégis?

-Mostan hányjál egy bukfcencet,
Mert a tanító csak henceg,
Nem tud ő se jobbat ennél,
Amitől okosabb lennél!
Égszakadás, földindulás,
Az agyamban egy pattanás,
Átszaladunk egy más korba,
Szaladj te is, pajtás!

Tizenegyedik szín

Hálaisten, nem kell
Iskolába menni,
Ádámnak, Ferkónak
Nincsen dolga semmi.
Kimennek sétálni
A piacra ketten,
Azt mondja az Ádám:
-Jaj, de éhes lettem!

Ferkó mondja - Addig ehetsz,
Míg a zsírtól meg nem repedsz,
Amíg tele van az erszény,
Te maradsz a polgáreszmény!
Pénzért mindent megkapunk,
Vedd elő a bukszát,
Vendéglőben sört iszunk,
Megesszük a buktát!

Arra megy az Évike,
Figyeli, hogy nézik-e?
Játékot kér Ádámtól
Szereti is hálából.

De a gonosz Luci Feri,
A játékot összetöri,
-Nem kellesz már nékem Ádám,
Tanuld meg a versen:
Akad, aki többet ad ám,
Ez a szabad verseny.

Every sort of writing thing."
"Sage, I've fetched them and returned,
Where must my efforts now be turned?"
"Throw them in the fire, son,
It's time to turn the heating on!"
"Now 'tis done, they flame and burn,
What's next to do, O sage, in turn?"

"Go do cartwheels on the bank,
All I told you's been a prank,
In truth I don't know anything
That could wisdom your way bring. "
Thunder, lightning,
Champagne slops,
To another age we hop,
Come on y'all, no time to stop!

SCENE ELEVEN

Thankfully, there's no more school
Ads and Lou can play the fool.
Out they go to the market square,
To walk around and take the air.
Suddenly then Adam grumbles,

"Listen how my stomach rumbles!
I must be starving, I am famished,
I want this hunger swiftly banished."

So Louie tells him, "go and feast
Until you burst just like a beast.
If you're in funds, they'll ooh-and-ah,
You will be Top Bourgeois.
Because the world is all for sale,
So let's go grab a pint of ale.
But pay our way I fear we must,
Or eat the bill if we go bust!"

Along comes Eve from where she's been,
And looks to see if she's been seen.
"A token, Ads, to prove you yearn,
And I will love you in return."

But that naughty Louie Cipher
Spoils the trinket Ads did give her.
"Who needs you, Ads, you're a bore,
I've found someone who'll give me more.
Listen close, be wise and mark it,
'Tis the way of the free market."

Égszakadás, földindulás,
A zsebemben egy koppanás,
Átszaladunk egy más korba,
Szaladj te is, pajtás!

Tizenkettedik szín

Hát ez meg már micsoda?
Gőzmalom vagy mosoda?
Akár gyár, akár malom,
Benne nagy az unalom.
Olyan tiszta, olyan csendes,
Olyan sima, olyan rendes.

Nem lehet bent hajkurászni,
Henteregni, falramászni.
Nem csinálnak benne ácsok
Kardot, csákót, kalapácsot,
Csak gépet, meg kereket,
Csupa rendes gyerekek.

Gyerünk Ferkó, lássuk,
Itt fogunk ma hálni!
Hadd lám, tudnak-e valóban
Mint mi tudtunk, fűben, hóban
Olyan édes, kicsi, kedves
Kereket csinálni?
Ez ló, kutya, macska, virág;
Ilyen volt a régi világ.
-Hát ma nincs belőle már!
-Egy maradt csak: a szamár.
Égszakadás, földindulás,
Csak a ketyegés és kopogás,
Fel az égbe, pajtás!

Tizenharmadik szín

Jancsi, Pista, Marcsa, Lenke,
Ez itten a végtelenke!
Ferkó mondja: hallga, csitt,
Itt elbújunk egy kicsit!

Ádi fél, remeg, gyanakszik,
-Földtanár úr megharagszik,
Hogyha jön és nem talál.
Ferkó röhög: - Oh, te gyáva,
Szebb a pulyka, mint a páva,
Mit nekem föld és halál?
Ádi mondja: - Ecki-becki,
Engem ugyan nem nevensz ki,
Vagyok én is, idenézz,

Thunder, lightning,
Will it never stop?
To another age we hop,
Come on kids, no time to drop!

SCENE TWELVE

Well, hello, and what's all this?
Steam mill or Metropolis?
Be it mill or factory,
One thing's certain: drudgery.
So orderly, so very clean,
So polished and so damn routine.

No pootling here, no messing 'bout,
No stopping for a pint of stout,
No armourer a sword to make,
No chisel, hammer, or a rake,
Just machinery and cogs
A sorry bunch of clever-clogs.

Come on Lou, let's stay the night,
And find out if they're really right -
If scientists can really do
What nature taught us, me and you,
And reproduce without a s....
Look, a horse, a dog, a deer,
Relics of a world held dear
"Nothing left, what's come to pass?"
"Nothing but a braying ass."
Thunder, lightning,
Out people flock,
Into outer space we rock!

SCENE THIRTEEN

Prudence, Constance, little Nate,
Welcome to the infinite!
"Shush," says Louie, "quiet, sit,
We'll hide out here and wait a bit."

But Ads thinks this is spurious:
"Grandpa Earth gets furious,
When my location's curious."
"Ads, you're such a towering wuss,
You don't see *me* make such a fuss;
I don't care for Earth or Death."
"So much mouth, so little trouser,
You're nothing but a rabble-rouser,
I still exist, I've still got it,

Nekem semmi az egész!

Földtanár úr dúl-fúl, dörög,
Hol van az a komisz kölök?
Meg kell írni, ecke-becke,
Még mindig nincs meg a lecke!

Égszakadás, földindulás,
A léghajón egy robbanás,
Le a földre, pajtás!

Tizennegyedik szín

Ejnye, csípje meg a csóka,
Több az ember, mint a fóka.
Ez már nem vicc, nem is móka,
Félre jelmez és paróka!

Csupa jég és csupa hó,
Vörös a nap, halihó.
Bife-befagyott a tó,
Didereg az eszkimó,
Mégsincs kedve korcsolyázni,
Inkább volna falramászni.
De a kunyhó fala sík,
Ha rámászik, leesik.
-Évi, Évi, - Ádi mondja:
-Hol a puder meg a spongya,
Mert itt kissé ronda vagy.
Évi mondja: majd ha fagy.
Nem kell szépség, nem, nem, nem,
Fázom, nem ér a nevem.
Veletek tovább nem játszok,
Vigyetek már haza, srácok!

Ferkó mondja: csipje csóka,
Nem kell móka, nem kell fóka.
Álommozi lepereg,
Ébredjete, gyerekek!

Utolsó szín

Álommozi nem forog.
Ádi, Évi hunyorog.
Csodálkozva széttelint,
No most itt vagyunk megint.

Édenkertből kihajítva
Kuksolunk megint sunyítva.
Kinek volna tovább kedve

Watch me now, I'm like a rocket!"

But old Father Earth *does* care:
"Adam? Can't see you anywhere!
You can hide but you can't run,
Your homework isn't nearly done!"

Thunder, lightning,
Taxi! Stop!
Down to earth, friends, now we hop.

SCENE FOURTEEN

Goodness gracious, what's the deal?
Man Outnumbers Common Seal?
No more joking, if this is real
Our masks, disguises, off we peel!

All around it's snow and ice
The sun's gone red and that's not nice.
All the water's frozen solid,
That Eskimo is downright squalid!
He's in no mood for snowball fights
More likely climbs the walls at nights,
But igloo walls are smooth as ice,
He slides down them in a trice.
"Evie, where's your powder puff,
I have to say you're looking rough,"
Evie's having nothing of it,
"Leave it, Ads, don't you mock it!
I don't need beauty, this I know,
To freeze my tits off in the snow.
Boys, I'm through with this charade,
Take me back where down we laid."

Lou says: "there, the alarm bell peals,
We're through with games and done with
seals,
As the dream sequence goes shaky,
Time for you to wakey-wakey!"

FINAL SCENE

The dream is over, so is night,
Ads is squinting in the light.
Looks about him in surprise,
"Back here? I can't believe my eyes!"

Left again to lick our wounds,
Remembering old Eden's grounds,
What's the point of going on,

Hinni, élni lelkesedve.

Luci Ferkó nyavalyás,
Te vagy mindenben hibás!
Hagytál volna nekünk békét,
Mért csináltad ezt a zrít?
Most a remény nem virít,
Elmondta a mese végét.

Ádi henceg: - Tudod mit,
Mondok neked valamit
Oda álom, ide álom,
Nekem ez nem ideálom,
Ha akarom, nem csinálom,
Ez az élet piszokfészek -
Nem csinálom az egészet,
Én elmegyek, kegyed ül,
Rám a Gellért hegye dül,
Csináljátok egyedül!

S ugorna már lefelé,
Ekkor jön az Évike:
Ádi gyere, csitt-csitt-csitt,
Súgok neked valamit.

Únom én az egész mesét,
Ez a játék egy hülyeség.
Te is hagyd ott Lilit, Ferit.
Akik mindig egymást verik,
Nem kell nekem több fiú,
Mind hencegő és hiú.
Fiú lánynak nem barát,
Únom már a maskarát.
Csinnadratta, kereplő,
Nem leszek már szereplő,
Mindig másnak látszani
Nem kell kalap és kabát,
Csinálok kócból babát,
Azzal fogok játszani.

Ádi is szól szemlesütve:
Mégis jobb a zsemle sütve,
Puha kenyér, házi koszt,
Ördög vigye a gonoszt.

Jó Istenke hallva eztet,
Csendben mosolyogni kezdett
Hegyes bajusza mögött

When hope and faith are simply gone?

Louie CIPHER, you're to blame!
Things were fine before you came,
In peace our days were we spending,
Now you've gone and spoiled the ending.
Why come here and make such trouble?
With your tale, you've burst hope's bubble."

Ads continues: "Listen here
While I whisper in your ear.
Dream, schmeam, all this makes me scream.
Just a neverending stream
Of melancholy and strife;
I've had enough of so-called life.
If this is what it's all about,
I'm leaping off this here redoubt -
Gentlemen, include me out!"

Just as he's about to jump,
Evie that way comes a-clump,
And says: "Ads, come to me my dear,
Let me whisper in your ear.

I'm bored of this old hoary tale,
This game is growing very stale.
Come and leave the boys and girls,
To yank each other's golden curls.
I've had as much as I can take,
Every man's a puffed-up rake.
Men and women can't be friends,
So let's stop trying to pretend.
Apple crumble, treacle tart,
I refuse to play this part,
Forever in a changing guise.
I'll make myself a doll with eyes -
No need, then, for coat or hat;
Instead of you, I'll play with that."

Ads comes over penitent:
"Home and hearth are heaven sent,
Someone there to tuck me in,
Who needs more? I'm done with sin!"

The Lord was listening meanwhile,
And broke into a knowing smile,
Then, sounding a harmonium,

S elküldte az ördögöt.

Aztán így szólt: no, mit mondok,
Kell-e még az almakompót?
Mért ettétek azt a vackot,
Kaptok érte két barackot.

Az egyiket Évi kapta,
Fejebubját tapogatta,
-Csak azért, hogy meg ne hízzál,
Másik Ádám fülét érte,
Nem is haragudott érte.
-Te meg fiam, bízva bizzál.

Így mesélte ember a fiának,
S ezzel vége a komédiának.

Sent Lou to Pandemonium.

Then he said: "Well, how about it,
Apple - can you live without it?
I told you not to touch those trees
You've got to learn some boundaries!"

The Lord gave Eve a big old clout,
Before she knew what he's about,
The next one was on Adam's ear,
But no grudge did the first man bear.
"Eve, stay thin, my pretty wraith,
And you, my son, you must have *faith*."

That's how this tale was told to me:
Here ends our little comedy.

Mints, by Ataqam, translated from Azerbaijani

ANNE THOMPSON-AHMADOVA

Ataqam is the pen name of Azerbaijani author Azer Hasanli. He wrote *Mints* in 1999 and published it in a collection of his short stories entitled *The Winged Bridge (Qanadlı körpü)*. *Mints* is set in two locations: a village in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, and a camp for people displaced from this region when much of it was occupied by Armenian forces in the early 1990s. The story sits in an Azerbaijani literary tradition of focusing on the human impact of a situation rather than its causes.

I chose the story *Mints* for this special issue of *The AALITRA Review* as it presents challenges frequently encountered by those working from less translated languages, as well as problems familiar to all literary translators. In this commentary I look at some of these challenges and how I dealt with them. My overall approach to translating *Mints* was to seek to be faithful to the text, while creating an English equivalent that reads well and reflects the atmosphere and tone of the original.

One challenge that is more marked when working from a less frequently translated language has to do with cultural background. The culture to which the language belongs is usually less well known, or maybe hardly known at all, to English-speaking readers. *Mints* opens with the narrator arriving at a refugee camp. There is no mention of where the refugees have come from, but any Azerbaijani reader would know that they have fled the conflict in Karabakh. Does the English-speaking reader need to know this? I am not sure, as the story stands on its own. I mention the Karabakh war in my introduction, however, as the journal asked contributors to put their translations into context.

An issue closely linked to cultural background is the use of footnotes, anathema to many publishers. As a reader I rather enjoy judiciously chosen footnotes, so have included three. The first concerns the Willys jeep. It is so much part of Uncle Osman's identity that I thought it worth giving an explanation (I should add that author Ataqam added explanatory notes to the text for me, so it was much easier to write the footnotes than it might otherwise have been). However, not wanting to make the text seem too culturally complex and, therefore, potentially off-putting, I did not add a footnote four paragraphs later to explain the term "trophy" used to describe the Willys. To readers from Azerbaijan and the former Soviet Union as a whole, it clearly echoes the popular "trophy films" seized from Germany by the Red Army.

I added the next footnote on Nizami's *Eskander-name* or *Tale of Alexander the Great* for readers particularly interested in language. The quotation in the original *Mints* is an Azerbaijani translation and uses the Azerbaijani version of Alexander's name, İskəndər (Iskandar). I used the English Alexander so that readers would know who is being referred to without having to look at the footnote. The lines have both rhythm and rhyme in the Azerbaijani, but unfortunately I could create only limited rhythm in my translation.

The final footnote gives a brief description of a balaban. I chose not to refer to it in the text as a clarinet, as this would deprive the instrument of some of its distinctive features. I opted against a footnote on the dervish though, as the story makes clear that he is someone who travels from place to place and gives moral teaching.

Translators from Turkic languages frequently face the challenge of long, complex sentences. Though *Mints* is written in a relatively simple style, it does have some longer sentences. For example, in the opening paragraph, I broke a single sentence into four:

Everywhere were shabby tents, countless shelters draped in threadbare kilims and faded carpet runners. They stood in random rows, like headstones in a Muslim cemetery. Young women waited in line at the water tanker, plastic buckets in their hands. Subdued men, shoulders hunched and arms folded, stood in silence beneath a large awning, sunlight filtering through the holes.

The original Azerbaijani sentence has the effect of conveying almost all at once the different elements that make up the scene.

Another issue faced by all literary translators is the use of dialect and regional words. I thought it would sound odd to use English dialect in the story's context, so where possible I tried to use more colloquial words, such as "lug" rather than "carry" for the Azerbaijani *hərləmək*. "I had entered year five and would lug about with me all the books our teacher had assigned us for the summer holidays". I could not always find a colloquial way of rendering these dialect words, though. For example, I gave a straightforward translation of *Əl-qolunu oynadıb nə haqdasa vərəvurd eləyirdi*, "waving his hands in the air as he talked to himself".

The Azerbaijani words *dayı* and *əmi* also needed special treatment. Their direct translation, "maternal uncle" and "paternal uncle", can work well in other contexts, but here the words are used as a form of address. I opted for "uncle" and "great-uncle" to differentiate between them, but still wonder if there is a better solution. My English version reads, "The village children called sweet-tongued men like Osman Qaramanli 'uncle', and used 'great-uncle' for angry, bitter men like Restless Maharram...".

I will finish my commentary by highlighting a challenge that must be common to many who work from languages less frequently translated into English: a lack of dictionaries and online resources. There is a good, but far from comprehensive, Azerbaijani-English dictionary in the Latin script, and I well remember my delight as a struggling learner when it was published in 1998. The dictionary forms the basis of the *azerdict.com* online resource, which includes users' additions of varying accuracy. I am very grateful to another site too – *obastan.com* – which pulls together all the Azerbaijani dictionary resources, but even the main Azerbaijani dictionaries are not comprehensive. This did not pose too great a challenge in terms of comprehension when working on *Mints*, as author Ataşam provided explanations of dialect and other words. However, I like to look up words that I know in dictionaries, often online, in the hunt for the translation that hits the spot. I may find exactly what I am looking for, but often the act of browsing is enough for the right translation to come to me. To make up for the lack of Azerbaijani-English resources, I sometimes took the Russian translation of an Azerbaijani word or phrase and looked it up in English on the site *multitran.ru* which has many fine suggestions from Russian translators.

I should add in explanation (maybe this is a rather long footnote) that the language of what is now the Azerbaijan Republic has been written in three different alphabets over the past century: in modified versions of the Arabic script, the Latin script and the Cyrillic script. The use of the Latin alphabet was reimposed in 2001. A consequence of all these changes is the loss of the older corpus, made much worse during the Soviet anti-religion drive when many books written in the Arabic script were destroyed, sometimes in the mistaken belief that they were religious texts or copies of the Koran. Iran's large ethnic Azerbaijani minority still uses the Arabic script, although the government discourages the use of Azerbaijani as a literary language.

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**Ataqam - Nanəli konfet
(hekayə)**

Qaçqın düşərgəsi yoluna burulub bir anlıq ayaq saxladım. Gördüyüm mənzərəni canıma hopdurmaq istəyirdim: Yan-yərəsi nımdaş çadırlar, süzölmüş palazlar, rəngi qaçmış layçalarla örtölmüş, müsəlman qəbiristanlığının başdaşları kimi baysaq sıralanmış saysız alaçıqlar, əllərində plastik vedrələr su maşınının yanına düzölüb növbəsni gözləyən qız-gəlinlər, dəlmə-deşiyindən gün şüaları süzölən talvarın altında dinməz, əlləri qoynunda, boynubükük durmuş kişilər...

Havada bir azot atomu da tərənmiydi. Addım atdıqca qalın toz qalxıb havadaca asılı qalırdı.

Osman dayını şəkildə necə görmüşdüm, elə də qarşımdaydı. Komasının kölgəsində, “Villis”indən qalan şirmayı halqalarla bəzədiyi sükanı sürtüb təmizləyirdi. Tez-tez cibindən kirli dəsmalını çıxarıb alnından gözünə axan təri silirdi.

Yaxınlaşdım. Sükanı sol qoluna keçirdi, sağ əlini gözünün üstünə günlükləyib mənə xeyli baxdı. Tanımadı. Qalın eynəyini silib bir də baxdı...

Osman dayı ilə çoxdan dostlaşmışdım – düz qırx il qabaq...

Kənddə uşaqlar qaramanlı Osman kimi şirindil kişilərə “dayı”, Quşdan Məhərrəm kimi, nə bilim, Sərəncamın əri Abdal Əvəz kimi acıdıl, əzazil kişilərə “əmi” deyirdi. Niyəsini bilmirdik, elə eşitmişdik, elə də deyirdik.

Osman dayı dədəsindənqalma iki cöngəni, bir qısır düyəni, on iki keçini əldən-ələ keçmiş yağmal “Villis”ə dəyişmişdi.

Mints – by Ataqam

**Translated by Anne Thompson-
Ahmadova**

I turned onto the refugee camp road and paused for a moment to take in the scene before me. Everywhere were shabby tents, countless shelters draped in threadbare kilims and faded carpet runners. They stood in random rows, like headstones in a Muslim cemetery. Young women waited in line at the water tanker, plastic buckets in their hands. Subdued men, shoulders hunched, arms folded, stood in silence beneath a large awning, sunlight filtering through the holes.

Not an atom of nitrogen stirred. My footsteps kicked up a thick cloud of dust which remained suspended in the air.

Uncle Osman looked just as I had pictured him. He was standing in the shade of his hut, polishing the steering wheel decorated with mother-of-pearl rings, all he had left of his Willys jeep¹. Sweat trickled into his eyes, so he kept taking a grubby handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his forehead.

I walked towards him. Shading his eyes with his right hand, he stared at me, but didn't recognize me. He cleaned his thick spectacles and looked at me again.

Uncle Osman and I had become friends a long time ago—forty years to be precise...

The village children called sweet-tongued men like Osman Qaramanlı “uncle”, and used “great-uncle” for angry, bitter men like Restless Maharram, or, let's say, Serenjam's husband Abdal Avaz. We didn't know why. We'd heard other people doing it so we did it too.

Uncle Osman had inherited two young bulls, a heifer and twelve goats from his father, and he swapped them all for the Willys trophy.

¹ During World War II, the USA gave the Soviet Union a variety of vehicles, including the very first jeep, the Willys, under the Lend-Lease programme. Most of the vehicles were not returned after the war and were sold illegally into private hands. Uncle Osman's Willys is one of these vehicles.

“Villis”inə qoşqu qoşub dağ kəndlərində qənd-çay, şirniyat, ətir, qab-qaçaq, uşaq paltarları satardı. Qoşquya “kəcavə” deyərdi. Ərzağı, pal-paltarları Bəkir kişinin dükanından nisyə götürərdi.

Dağ kəndlərində müəllimlərdən, tibb işçilərindən savayı az adamın əlində nağd pul olurdu. Osman kişi nisyə aldığı malın çoxunu elə nisyə də verərdi. Evinə dönəndə maşınını kəndin başındakı kəhrizin üstündə saxlayıb əl-ayağını yuyar, gülpəmbəli qırmızı Çin termosundan çay süzüb nisyə dəftərinin üzünü ağlamaya köçürərdi.

Dəftəri hamıdan gizlədərdi. Bir dəfə dəftəri “Villis”in oturacağına açıq qalmışdı. Boylandım, dəftərdəki yazılardan heç nə anlamadım: üçbucaq, ortasından qoşa xətt çəkilməmiş dördbucaq, buynuz, parabüzənə oxşar xırda dairələr...

Osman dayı məktəb oxumamışdı, hamının bildiyi hərflərlə yazmırdı, özü üçün ayrı yazı sistemi qurmuşdu.

Onu bir dəfə pəncərədən “Əlifba” öyrənən birincilərin sinif otağına kədərlə baxıb udqunduğunu görmüşdüm.

Osman dayı ilə bağlı belə bir pıçı eşitmişdim: Deyirdilər ki, mayın ortasından düz sentyabrın axırına qədər bazar günləri kəhrizə kişi xeylağı getməzmiş, çünki qızlar-gəlinlər yay odunu canlarından çıxarmaq üçün lütlənib kəhrizdə çimməmişlər. İyirmi beş il qabaq - Osmanla Səməndər onbeşlərinin içində olanda ikisi də Qırımızısaqqal Hətəmin nəvəsi Bəsirəti istəyirmişlər. Bəsirətin meylə Səməndərə imiş. Bir gün Osman xəlvətcə Cin Süleymanın kəhrizin dibindəki bağında ağaca çıxıb Bəsirətin çimməsinə baxıbmiş. Ertəsi gün Osman Bəsirətlə qarşılaşanda belə deyibmiş: “Sağ döşündəki qoşa xala canım qurban, mələyim!”

Bəsirət məsələni başa düşər, Səməndərə deyər, Səməndər də əmisi uşaqları ilə Osmanı təklidə tutub dartıb kəhrizə aparar, başını kəhrizin nəm daşlarına döyərlər. Ovaxtdan Osmanın başı pozular. Qız-gəlin də elə o vaxtdan kəhrizdə çimməyi tərgidər.

He would hook up a trailer to the jeep and sell sugar, sweets, perfume, pots and pans, and children’s clothes in the mountain villages. He called the trailer a howdah. He would buy the food and clothes on tick from Bakir’s shop.

Few people in the mountain villages had cash, only the teachers and medical workers, so many of the goods he had bought on tick Osman sold on tick too. On his way home he would stop the jeep at the big spring above the village, wash his hands and feet, pour himself some tea from the rose red Chinese thermos and make a clean copy of the loans in his credit book.

He hid the book from everyone. Once, he left it open on the seat of the jeep. I had a look but couldn’t understand anything: a triangle, a square with two lines drawn through it, horns, small circles that looked like ladybirds.

Uncle Osman hadn’t gone to school. Rather than writing in the letters that everyone knew, he created his own writing system.

Once I saw him looking hungrily through the window as a reception class learnt their ABC.

I heard a rumour about Uncle Osman. The story was that on Sundays from the middle of May to the end of September the men and boys didn’t go to the spring, because the girls and young women would bathe nude there to cool off from the summer heat. Twenty-five years earlier—when Osman and Samandar were fifteen, they had both liked Red-Bearded Hatam’s granddaughter Basirat. Basirat’s preference was for Samandar. One day Osman climbed a tree in Hotheaded Suleyman’s garden below the spring and watched Basirat bathing. When he saw Basirat the next day, Osman said, ‘I’d die for that beauty spot on your left breast, my angel!’

Basirat realized what had happened and told Samandar. Samandar and his cousins caught Osman on his own, took him to the spring and beat his head against the wet stones. Osman was never quite right after that. The girls stopped bathing in the spring too.

Deyirlər, nə Bəsirətin, nə də Səməndərin taleyi gətirər. Bəsirəti kəndə biçinə gələn kombaynçı ilə saman tayasında eşdikləri kalafada çılpaq tutarlar. Səməndər kombaynçının qarnını yaba ilə deşər, gedib girər qazamata, vərəmləyib iki ildən sonra elə orda ölür. Bəsirət dədəsi evinə qapanar, evdən çölə yarasa kimi ancaq gecələr çıxar.

Osman da o hədsədən sonra evlənməyəcəyinə and içər. (Bəsirət dədəsi evinə qapananda Osmanın niyə gedib onu qaranlıqdan çıxarmamasını anlamaq üçün hələ kal idim).

Hə, yalan-gerçək, bunu da xıslınlaşdırdılar ki, o əhvalatın üstündən illər keçəndən sonra, guya, Osman alverə getdiyi dağ kəndlərinin birindəki zirvədə sal daşları üst-üstə qalaqlayıb qız düzəldib, daşları xımlayıb-gülxətmişləyib, başdakı daşa Bəsirətin yaylığına oxşar yaylıq bağlayıb daş sevgilisinin başına dolana-dolana üz-gözündən öpürmüş.

Beşinci sinifə keçmişdim. Yay tətilinə müəllim evə çoxlu kitab tapşırırmışdı. Kitablari özümlə hərləyirdim.

--- Onların hamısını oxumusan? – Osman dayı dolu səhənglərimi qatırın üstünə aşırıb başı ilə dəri heybəyə yığdığım kitablari göstərdi.

--- Yox, oxumalıyam.

--- Nağıldı?

--- Nağıl da var, şeir də, əfsanə də.

--- Əfsanə nədi?

--- Yalançı nağıl.

Osman dayı çənəsini aşağı əyib gözlərini iri açdı, təəccüblə mənə baxdı:

--- Yalançı nağıl?! - Birini danışa bilərsən?

Evə getməliydim. Nənəm tapşırırmışdı ki, Soltanlıdan qohumlar gələcək, samovara tökməyə su yoxdu, yolda-rizdə avaralanmayım, amma Osman dayı səhənglərimə kömək eləmişdi, sözünü yerə salmaq ayıbıma gəldi. Həm də, düzü, hərdən öz-özünə nə dildəsə mahnı oxuyurdu, səsi çatmayanda üzünə şillə vurub “düz oxu,

They say that things didn't work out for Basirat or Samandar. Basirat and a combine driver visiting for the harvest were caught naked in a haystack. Samandar ran the combine driver through with a pitchfork. He went to prison, caught TB and died there two years later. Basirat shut herself away in her father's house, only going outdoors at night like a bat.

After this Osman vowed never to marry. (I was too callow to understand why Osman didn't try to take Basirat from her father's house in the dead of night.)

True or not, the gossips also said that years later, up near one of the villages where he sold his wares, Osman built a pile of large flat stones in the shape of a girl. He coloured the stones with henna and mallow and tied a shawl like Basirat's around the top stone. Osman would fuss over his stone beloved, kissing her eyes and lips.

I had entered year five and would lug about with me a pile of books our teacher had assigned us for the summer holidays.

Uncle Osman hung my copper pitchers of water on the mule and nodded at the leather saddlebag of books. “Have you read all those?”

“No, I've got to read them.”

“Are they stories?”

“There are stories, poems and legends.”

“What are legends?”

“Stories that aren't true.”

Uncle Osman's jaw dropped and he stared at me, round-eyed.

“Stories that aren't true? Can you tell me one?”

I had to go home. Grandma had sent me to fetch water for the samovar as our relatives were coming from Soltanli. I wasn't to dawdle on the way, but Uncle Osman had helped me with the water pitchers and I was embarrassed not to return the favour. And to be honest I was rather scared of him, as he would sing to himself all the time in a language I didn't know and when he hit a wrong note, he would slap

Osman!” qışqırırdı deyə, ondan bir az üşənirdim.

Kitabı açıb qoca dərviş əfsanəsini oxudum. “Kəndə bir dərviş gəlir...” Osman dayı tez-tez məni saxlayır, sual verirdi: “Saçı uzun idi?” Kitabda yazılmasa da, “hə, uzun idi, dabanına çatırdı” deyib əfsanədəki dərvişi Osman dayının xəyalındakı dərvişə oxşadırdım.

Suallar artırdı. “Dərvişin uşaqlara danışdığı nağıl haqda da yazılıb orda?” “Yox, yazılmayıb” “Dərviş uşaqlara niyə sınağan oyuncaqlar bağışlayırmış?” “Osman dayı, dayan, oxuyum, axırda hamısı yazılıb”

Əfsanənin sonluğunu – camaatın dərvişi döydüyü yeri oxuyanda Osman dayının gözü doldu. Abzası mənə bir neçə dəfə oxutdurdu, tam yadında qalana qədər dilinin altında təkrarladı: “Dərviş hər qapıya bir gil lövhə qoyub yoxa çıxmışdı. Lövhədə bunlar yazılmışdı: Vaxt gələcək, sizin uşaqlarınıza kimisə ürəyini bağışlayacaq. Balalarınızı indidən vərmiş elətdirirəm ki, o vaxt ehtiyatlı davranınlar, dünyanın ən sınağan, həssas oyuncağını – ürəyi sındırmasınlar”.

Osman dayı əlini cibinə atdı, bir ovuc konfet çıxarıb mənə uzatdı. Konfetləri qapıb cibimə doldurdum. Tez kağızını soyub birini ağzıma atdım. Nənəli konfet! Necə də dadlı idi!

Beləcə, Osman dayı ilə dostlaşdıq.

Bir neçə gün sonra Malyatan təpəsinin ətəyindəki yovşanlıqda çəyirtkə tutub hinduşkalara yedirdiyim yerdə Osman dayı “Villis”ini düz yanımda saxladı.

--- Kitabların hamısını oxudun?

--- Yox hələ, Osman dayı, birini bitirmişəm, indi o birini oxuyuram.

--- O nədəndi?

--- Şeirdi. Yaman uzundu, - şikayətləndim, - amma asan yadda qalır.

himself across the face shouting “Sing properly, Osman!”

I opened a book and read the legend of the old dervish. “A dervish came to the village...” Uncle Osman kept stopping me with his questions: “Did he have long hair?” Though it wasn’t mentioned in the book, I said, “Yes, long, down to his ankles.” I painted the dervish that Uncle Osman imagined.

The questions came thick and fast. “Does it talk about the story that the dervish told the children?”

“No, it doesn’t.”

“Why did the dervish give the children such delicate toys?”

“Hold on, Uncle Osman, I’m reading the story. It’s all written here.”

When I came to the end of the legend and read about the people beating up the dervish, Uncle Osman’s eyes welled with tears. He made me read this paragraph several times until he knew it off by heart: “The dervish placed a clay tablet at every door, then disappeared. Each tablet bore the words: One day someone will give their heart to your child. I have taught them to behave with care when that day comes, lest they break the most fragile, vulnerable plaything in the world—the heart.”

Uncle Osman pulled a fistful of sweets from his pocket and offered them to me. Grabbing the sweets, I stuffed them into my pocket. I quickly unwrapped one and popped it in my mouth. It was a mint! And it was so good!

That’s how Uncle Osman and I became friends.

A few days later I caught some crickets in the wormwood patch at the bottom of Malyatan hill and was feeding them to the turkeys when Uncle Osman pulled up right next to me in his Willys.

“Have you read all the books?”

“Not yet, Uncle Osman. I’ve finished one of them and am on the next now.”

“What’s it about?”

“It’s a really long poem,” I complained, “but easy to remember.”

Osman dayının xahişini gözləməyib əzbərlədiyim parçanı oxudum: “Keçmiş zamanda, Yunanıstanda, İskəndər adlı..” “Bir şah yaşarmış, Buynuzu varmış” yerində içini çəkdi. Maşından düşdü. Həmişə bərk təəccüblənəndə etdiyi kimi, çənəsini sinəsinə yapışdırıb gözlərini bərəltdi:

--- Nə təhər!? Buynuzu varmış?! Adamın?
--- Adam deyil, Osman dayı, İskəndərdir, -
özümü çoxbilmiş göstərdim.

“İskəndərin buynuzu var, buynuzu” misrasını deyəndə, Osman dayı qeyri-ixtiyari hər iki əlinin şəhadət barmağını başına qaldırıb özünə buynuz qoydu və ləzzətli güldü. Cibindən bir neçə nanəli konfet çıxarıb ovcuma qoydu.

On gün sonra Osman dayını Suray xalanın qızı Gülsabahın toyunda gördüm. Həyətdəki tut ağacına söykənmişdi. Əl-qolunu oynadıb nə haqdasə vərəvurd eləyirdi. Yaxınlaşıb salam verdim. Məni görəndə kimi üzü güldü. Əlimi sıxıb özünə tərəf çəkdi. Araq iyi burnumu çimçəşdirdi.

-- O şeir nə təhər idi? Onu bir də de, başam.

Əlimi əlindən qoparıb bir az aralandım. Şeiri astadan, eləcə, Osman dayının eşidəcəyi səslə dedim. “İskəndərin buynuzu var, buynuzu” yerində məni saxladı, yanbızları ilə təkən verib tutdan aralandı, çovustanın ağzındakı kətli gətirib qabağıma qoydu.

--- Başam, mən ölüm, çıx bu stulun üstünə, o yerin bir də bərkəndə de.

Kətilin üstünə çıxsaydım, camaatın diqqətini çəkəcəkdim. Qorxurdum ki, luğaz eləyib şəbədə qoşalar. Osman dayı tərəddüd elədiyimi görüb, arıq boğazının dərisini hulqumundan çənəsinin ucuna qədər çəkdi, elə boğazı çəkili, başını göyərçin udan qutan quşu kimi yeyin-yeyin sağa-sola döndərib məni kətilə çıxartmaq üçün hansı tanrıya and

Without waiting to be asked, I recited an excerpt I'd memorized.

There was a king who lived in Greece.
Alexander was his name,
And on his head grew horns, horns,
And on his head grew horns.²

Uncle Osman breathed in sharply and jumped down from his jeep. As always when he was surprised, his jaw dropped to his chest and his eyes grew round.

“How come? On his head grew horns? Wasn't he a man?”

“No, he wasn't, Uncle Osman. He was Alexander,” I said, pretending to be knowledgeable.

“And on Alexander's head grew horns, horns.” As he repeated the line, Uncle Osman automatically put his index fingers to his head to make horns, and laughed in delight. He took a few mints from his pocket and put them in my hand.

Ten days later I saw Uncle Osman at my cousin Gulsabah's wedding. He was leaning against the mulberry tree in Aunt Suray's yard, waving his hands in the air as he talked to himself. I went up and said hello. He laughed when he saw me, pressed my hand and pulled me towards him. I screwed up my nose at the smell of vodka.

“How did that poem go? Tell me again, my dear friend.”

I snatched my hand away and stepped back. I recited the poem softly but enough for Uncle Osman to hear. He stopped me when I got to “And on Alexander's head grew horns, horns”. He pushed himself away from the mulberry tree with his bottom and took a stool from the doorway of the bread oven hut.

Putting the stool in front of me, he said, “My dear friend, I beg you, get onto this and speak up.”

If I climbed onto the stool, I would attract attention, and I was afraid of being mocked and sneered at. Seeing my hesitation, Uncle Osman quickly looked left and right, stretching the skin of his thin throat to the point

² These lines are from 12th century poet Nizami Ganjavi's epic poem in Persian about Alexander the Great, *The Book of Alexander (Eskandar-Nameh)*.

verəcəyini dalaq kələfində aradı və dizlərini azacıq qatlayıb, çöməli yalvardı:

--- Səni Bəsirətin canı, çıx.

Bəsirəti heç vaxt görməmişdim; o, mən doğulmazdan qabaq qaranlığa gömülmüşdü, amma indi - sərxoş Osman dayı dilinin qaytanını açıb canının gözündə öldürdüyü Bəsirətin adını çəkməklə mənə xırxalamışdı. Yan-yörəyə boylandım. Xurşud toy mağarında yaşlı balabana dəm vermişdi. Camaat əlində işini yarımçıq qoyub onun təzə qoşduğu yanıqlı “Qarabörə” havasını yaxından dinləməyə axışırdı.

Kətilin üstünə çıxdım. “İskəndərin buynuzu var, buynuzu...”

Ləzzətdən gözləri parıldayan, ağız qulağının dibinə getmiş Osman dayı əllərini əvvəl başına aparıb qoşa buynuz göstərdi, sonra da cibindən bir ovuc nənəli konfet çıxarıb mənə uzatdı.

Yenə arzuma çatmışdım. Nənəli konfetləri sümürdükcə özümü dünyanın ən xoşbəxt adamı sanırdım.

O nənəli konfetin eşqinə harda Osman dayını görürdüm, özümü gözünə soxurdum.

Osman dayı da mənə harda görürdü, tələsirdisə, əlini başına aparıb buynuz göstərirdi, tələsməyəndə, maşını saxlayır, alnımdan öpür, daş olsun, kötük olsun, hündür bir yerə çıxmağı xahiş eləyib o şeiri bir də dedirtdirir, nənəli konfet payımı verib yola salırdı.

Aradan uzun illər keçdi. Biz şəhərə köçdük. Kəndə yolum az-az düşdü. Gedəndə də elə atüstü gedib qayıdırdım, Osman dayı əksərən kəcavə qoşduğu “Villis”i ilə dağ kəndlərində alverdə olduğundan, görüşə bilmirdim.

of his chin, like a pelican swallowing a dove. He was wondering which deity he should call upon to get me onto the stool. Almost crouching before me, he begged, “Get up on it, for the sake of Basirat’s soul.”

I’d never seen Basirat; she had been lost in darkness before I was born. But now drink had loosened Uncle Osman’s tongue. It was as though he had grabbed me by the throat by swearing on the life of his beloved Basirat. I looked around. In the wedding marquee Khurshud was playing the mourning balaban³ with passion. The guests were stopping what they were doing and flocking to listen to him play the plaintive air Qarabora.

I climbed onto the stool. “On Alexander’s head grew horns, horns...”

Eyes shining with pleasure, his smile stretching from ear to ear, Uncle Osman put his hands to the side of his head in the shape of horns, then took a handful of mints from his pocket and gave them to me.

I had achieved my heart’s desire again. As I sucked the mints, I thought myself the happiest person in the world.

Whenever I saw Uncle Osman, I would make sure he saw me.

And whenever Uncle Osman saw me, if he was in a hurry he would make the shape of horns on the side of his head, and if he wasn’t in a hurry, he would stop his jeep, kiss me on the forehead, ask me to stand on something—a rock or a tree stump—and recite the poem again. He would give me my portion of mints and be on his way.

Many years had passed since then. We had moved to the city and I didn’t often find myself in the village. When I did go, I would make a flying visit just for a day. I didn’t see Uncle Osman as he would be up in the mountain villages plying his wares from the Willys howdah.

³ The *balaban* is a traditional wind instrument, similar to a clarinet. It became known as the “mourning balaban” as it was played at burials.

İndi budur, əlini gözünə günlükləyib mənə baxan səksən yaşlı Osman dayı qarşımdaydı; sümükləri quruyub boyunu kiçiltmişdi. Mənə altdan yuxarı baxırdı. Eynəyinin şüşəsini kirli dəsmalıyla silib gözünə taxır, yenidən çıxarır, şüşələrə hovxurub bir də silir, təzədən gözünə taxır, əli ilə eynəyi irəli-geri aparır, mənə kim olduğumu anlamağa çalışırdı.

İki addımlıqda – Osman dayının komasının arxasında xeyli hörgü daşı qalaqlanmışdı. Qalaqdan iki daş götürüb Osman dayının qarşısında yerə atdım, hər ayağımı bir daşın üstünə qoydum, yaxşı eşitsin deyə hündür səslə bizim dostluq himnimizi aram-aram deməyə başladım: “Keçmiş zamanda, Yunanıstanda...”

Osman dayının sifəti dəyişdi: qırıq yanaqları qarmon körüyü kimi qulaqlarına tərəf dartıldı, gözləri irilənib eynəyinin şüşələri boyda oldu, ağız yavaş-yavaş aralandı, aşağı damağında səksən ilə sinə gərmiş sonuncu iki dişi göründü.

“İskəndərin buynuzu var, buynuzu” yerində dodaqlarını tərpedib mənəmlə birlikdə misranı bir neçə dəfə təkrarladı.

Sükan əlindən düşdü.

Əlini hövlnak cibinə apardı.

Şalvarının, köynəyinin cibini eşələdi, eşələdi..., heç nə tapmayıb yerə çökdü. Sükanı yerdən götürüb sinəsinə sıxdı. Çiyinləri əsə-əsə dayanmadan “İskəndərin buynuzu var, buynuzu...” təkrarladı.

And now here was an eighty-year-old Uncle Osman, shrunken with age, shading his eyes from the sun and gazing at me. He wiped his spectacles with the grubby handkerchief and put them on. He took them off again, blew on the glass and wiped them again, put them back on, and moved them back and forth, trying to work out who I was.

A couple of feet behind Uncle Osman's hut was a sizeable pile of building stones. I took two stones from the heap and put them before Uncle Osman. With one foot on each stone, I started to declaim loudly the anthem of our friendship: “There was a king who lived in Greece...”

Uncle Osman's face changed; his furrowed cheeks stretched up to his ears like the bellows of an accordion, his eyes widened to the size of his spectacle lenses, his lips slowly parted so I could see his two remaining lower teeth.

He moved his lips when I got to “On Alexander's head grew horns, horns” and together we repeated the lines several times.

He let the steering wheel fall, and quickly rooted around in his trouser and shirt pockets. Finding nothing, he sank to the ground. He picked up the steering wheel and clutched it to his chest. Shoulders trembling, he repeated “On Alexander's head grew horns, horns.”

İyun 1999

June 1999

Early in 2021, I translated a fifty-page extract from the novel *Vlatka* by Aleksandar Bečanović. The translation was funded by the European Union Prize for Literature as part of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. Bečanović was one of the winners in 2017. This commented translation looks at some of the challenges I faced.

Born in 1971, Aleksandar Bečanović is a Montenegrin film critic, screen- and prose writer. Although Montenegrin has been recognized as a discrete language through international adoption of new ISO codes and standards, Bečanović writes in the polycentric South Slavic language formerly known as Serbo-Croat(ian). Today, this is often referred to with the acronym BCS or BCMS, i.e., Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian.¹ Like most Montenegrin authors, he does not employ the new letters *ś* and *ź* introduced to represent the phonemes of local dialects.

Vlatka is written in the lesbian vampire trope, one of the many sub-genres of vampire literature (Weiss). It revisits the 1872 Gothic novella *Carmilla*, which predated Bram Stoker's *Dracula* by over a quarter of a century and is thought to have influenced it significantly. Since Stoker's seminal work was shaped by perceptions of the Balkans, a Balkan writer addressing these themes on his own ground in a new millennium makes it feel things are coming full circle. Bečanović is aware that he is moving within a trope and allows himself a degree of tongue-in-cheek as he plays with established stereotypes.

As I was finishing the translation in March 2021, the controversy surrounding Amanda Gorman's Dutch translator erupted (Flood). I asked myself if it is legitimate for a heterosexual male to translate supposedly lesbian perceptions. My personal answer is yes, it is legitimate, at least with a work of fiction. A high degree of empathy is always required of a literary translator, and I think I have a right to do my sensitive best with almost any subject matter.

The translation involved dealing with a range of normal structural issues, such as BCMS's propensity to use the narrative present more than we do in English, or to not always mark reported speech. The language has no articles, so these had to be inserted as required into the target text. Also, since BCMS is a highly inflected, pro-drop language, the relationships between parts of speech are reflected in the declensions (seven cases) and the complex verb system. This is standard fare for a translator, but the original was not edited to anywhere near the standards one would expect of a novel in the Anglosphere (a common phenomenon in ex-Yugoslav countries!). Several spelling mistakes with crucial endings impeded comprehension and left me with no choice but to ask the author.

My sample translation consists largely of the novel's climactic chapter: a thirty-page stream-of-consciousness passage where the eponymous heroine returns to her childhood home in Montenegro to renew her line with fresh blood. Conveying this long sentence was a major syntactical challenge for two reasons. Firstly, although the default word order in the source language is Subject–Verb–Object as in English, it is much more flexible, e.g., for emphasis or special effect. Secondly, it is much more acceptable in BCMS to use parataxis (two complete sentences connected by a comma without a conjunction), whereas in English this can easily

¹ This is my opinion on the linguistic situation, and many Slavic scholars throughout the world take a similar stance. However, official language policy in the four BCMS-speaking states of ex-Yugoslavia (and some overseas countries, notably Australia) insists that these are separate, albeit closely related languages. Here we see the influence of political expediency and identity issues more than genuine linguistic considerations. It would be beyond the scope of this piece to discuss these issues any further.

make the text feel disorienting. My approach was to sparingly add conjunctions and relative pronouns to help the flow. I also added semicolons (over fifty in the extract reproduced below) to create a “soft break” whenever I felt other means were not working. This is a daunting text, replete with complex ideas and associations, and I felt readability was the prime criterion. Apart from this almost unavoidable structural adaptation, I do not feel I have submitted to the tendency towards standardization and “fluency” at all costs – the stark, associative style of the original, with flowery and hyperbolic excesses, remains intact.

I had a helpful exchange on this issue in the online forum of the Translators Association.² The range of informed opinions was broad, with some colleagues urging me to cast readability to the wind and others strengthening my resolve to use semicolons wherever I felt the need. I am still ambivalent about this. If the translation is published for a broader audience, I will discuss the issue with the editor and might revise this aspect of the translation. There were also various lexical challenges, but these were less contentious and more fun to deal with. They are numbered in the text excerpt below.

1. The novel’s title, *Vlatka*, is an allusion to Vlad the Impaler. The voiced D in the root form “Vlad” is assimilated to a voiceless T before the feminine ending *-ka*. In order to maintain the link to the infamous figure despite the consonant alternation, I changed the T back to a D. And to make it perfectly clear, I introduced some flippant wordplay in the spirit of the author by adding “the Pale”.
2. This complex passage, which incidentally contains an intertextual play on Lacan’s *Seminar* and a monologue in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, essentially begins with the notion “spuštam se”, literally “I descend” or “I go down”. I was unsure initially in what sense this is meant, because Vladka often goes down from her family mansion to the seashore, but it turned out that it is meant sexually—she “goes down on” her lover. This is the beginning of a stream of consciousness during cunnilingus.
3. Vladka is referred to in several places as the “gospodarica”, which can mean “ruler”, “lady”, “mistress” or “domina”. I discussed this with Bečanović and settled on “domina”. The sadomasochist associations are appropriate.
4. While playing with synonyms to translate the expression “reskoj hladnoći” – literally “the cutting cold” in the dative case – it struck me that “biting” cold might be better than “trenchant” or “bitter” cold in the context of vampires. Very much in the author’s vein!
5. Finally, the noun “jezik” in BCMS can mean both “language” and “tongue” (the organ in our mouth). In one instance it wasn’t clear which the author means. I told him about the ambiguity of “tongue” in English and he loved the innuendo. So I used “elegance of tongue” to render “elegancija jezika”.

My translation has not been edited, so it still contains the strengths and weaknesses of my own interpretation of the original.

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² A message board on the .io platform for members of the Translators Association, a subgroup of the Society of Authors (UK).

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Vladka the Pale (1) (extract)³

Translated by Will Firth

IV

SINTHOME:
Autumn 2019

Étendue à ses pieds, calme et pleine de joie,
Delphine la couvait avec des yeux ardents,
Comme un animal fort qui surveille une proie,
Après l'avoir d'abord marquée avec les dents.
— Charles Baudelaire, *Femmes damnées* (*Delphine et Hippolyte*)

... and I bend over and **go down** (2), to where the black sea repels your gaze, where your eye is obsessed by the warm darkness, where you have to be lost and captivated every time, at least for an instant, and the invisible threshold has grown into an immeasurable cleft, I go down as if immersing myself in tepid water, whose surface will never be calm enough to take the light, a space without reflection, as if you always remain without a trace on this path, an encounter that denies retrospection but cannot prevent a new kind of fantasy that grows in the darkness, as a flower demands twilight before it opens its leaves, and I crouch down swiftly as if I have been prepared for this alone, returning again and again to the source that looks different every time, that changes every time and adapts to the erotic intruder who premeditates every assault; there is a rhythm again and again that cannot be restrained, that is evoked and desired, movements that are repeated and discover the law of spreading, a perpetuum mobile that is simple yet inscrutable, because immersion means surrender to the depth of the call, the call of the deep, the eternal cave whose entrance lies in shadow, shadows that will wave and spread when the performance is joined by remembrance, and if the configuration moves it is because craving is united with memory, and as I now go down desire is a subterranean river, Lethe, which is hidden and suddenly emerges, its water sweeping over its stony banks, and preparation is everything in this impulse that cannot run dry, excitement grows in spite of your versedness because nothing compares with the pleasure of the page that is read a second time, that is read again, that retains all that was and yet compares what could have been discovered if only the action was repeated, if the meaning was accepted resolutely, as when your mouth opens after a long dive to inhale life-giving air, and so too my lips separate to impress their seal, to win everything for themselves, and the kiss seizes the foreign essence in the vast darkness; going down is an act of worship, a ritual of consecration for this moment alone, performed with humility on this occasion alone, with its short duration merely confirming its sincerity, but detachment, distance and irony follow, a transcription that will move things the right distance apart, but now I go down with complete conviction that the centre of the world has been compressed into this point or a future colon, into this cleft, where you do not think what the journey back will be like, or if there will be any journey back to the security of avoidance and meditation, which is why the focus has been clearly set although the light is suppressed and an instant of crystallization is possible although everything is

³ Editorial note: Due to the nature of the text (such as lacking sentence endings), the layout of the source and target texts is different to the other Translation & Commentary pieces in order to ensure readability.

diluted; now as I go down to initiate the heady ceremony where I am the high priestess who offers and accepts the sacrifice, without whom no ritual is conceivable, a gift of taking and giving, a sacrifice of apotheosis and desacralization, and in that closeness, just before the entrance, you can already sense the blissful aroma of burnt offerings that engulfs your face at the encounter with what has always beggared description, a living nature that cannot be tamed, cannot be mastered, cannot be reduced to a sign while it stands like this, with a minimum of illumination, in the enchanting close-up just before I close my eyes and the darkness embraces me, a pleasant darkness of warm manifestation, where every time I go down is a return to the old place, to the origin, since recollection is always a homecoming, a return to an intimate place that was lost, only to be spectrally gained later, because the body is a figure of recognition and demeanour, and touch is a materialization of the past – both as lived and as constructed – the body before me is a gate through which I enter with attentive delay and enthusiastic closeness, as when you knock on an open door; the sitting room is a living space and the cobwebs in its corners will then be dispersed by my warm breath together with the papers left on the table because here everything shifts to memory, which has its own laws, its refuge; memory after all is a fluid substance that rounds off the mind at the climax of rapture, a highly excited fluid that fills all the bulges and grooves, abstract arabesques that turn into receptive signs, memory is the diversion of attention from the particular moment, the wish for the separated lines of fate to show a binding combination, a net that covers all of life; the past resonates in the present like a joyful call and a solemnly tolling bell as I crouch down to perform the act that will reveal my craving and establish my control over a body, like a cruel **domina (3)** who shows compassion in the end as part of a choreographed performance, part of a binding procedure that must be respected with diligence and devotion, sometimes even a goddess has to kneel down for her power to take effect, to draw things into her domain, to arrange delight without detachment, and crouching down to the source of craving means to respect the power that comes later, that will climax when what has been invested is returned a hundredfold, because desire is always returned with interest, its nature is constant enlargement, constant progression and determination to reach the goal, although the goal is not the main point since there is no ultimate destination in desire, only extreme exertion, with the ever-present danger of the bubble bursting, of it vanishing with a soft withdrawal, disintegrating before your eyes like a wave that strikes the rocks and leaves only white foam behind in their damp recesses, like beauty fading in the pitiless sun, which is now comfortingly far away as I make the movement that contains the imminence of fate and the cruelty of the decision; she who brings satisfaction as the final gift has to be pitiless and ruthless because fate and the decision approximate each other in the moment before the intention is achieved, before the initiation of pleasure that forgives nothing, and a small emptiness always remains after pleasure, a *petite mort* and a small emptiness at the time that will beat melodramatically in all the clocks on the wall when their Gothic hands align at a ghostly angle; no bird has to call, like the owl that comes at twilight or the eagle that hovers above chasms, for destiny to attest its shadowy power because kneeling down before the source of invigoration is an indispensable rite of procrastination, a last semblance before the particular action, before the opening of the constricted passage, like a dramatic pause, a deep breath before the long-expected monologue where I will take the stage and establish my dominion over the story, which will be accepted in all its retroactive variants, the one I tell and the one that will be told about me, the one I initiated and the one it seems will finish me, because a story always changes direction when it is crossed with pleasure, enveloped in pleasure, inseparable from pleasure, however different the destinations are, because diversion is a form of seduction, but I can no longer be led astray now when

intention is in equilibrium with auguring, however deep the darkness down there was; the chanting is performed with a devotion that astonishes me because nothing escapes without the signature of my lips, which are impatient like a bat taking off when the shadows indite the last augury, nothing that is embraced will remain unconquered, so she who gives the kiss controls the entire situation, like an appropriated frame to which every scene is now adapted, and is all the more powerful if it is a reprise, because reprising means re-enacting the plot for a gaze that arrives with providential delay to establish the supremacy of the second attack, the one that takes place not only as an imbibition but as a sumptuous feast for the eye, in the darkness that thickens, and with it comes a headiness from the darkness, from pleasure and from the inscription whose contours I will forever be able to discern, as one feels motion over a suture that protected a wound but also marked a trail through which blood might appear again, a crimson calligraphy that comes afterwards, letters that will line up later, because the reading comes at the end, reading is the terminus, although the road can stretch through strange and ever stranger landscapes, mountain peaks and valleys, gorges that water will rage through and raze all dams, and when it retreats the horizon will shine even if the sun be imprisoned in fog, because when you crouch down you penetrate the mist, warm air intercepts you like a paramour, and when you inhale you realize every departure was an absence, and so the violent approach is always also a kind of reproach, like underlined sentences of long poems that come alive again inside you, where you have to wait for the build-up, however much has been said before, until the stream of images ends, images where the quatrain and the tercet are condensed, and in a flash memory takes the form of a sonnet never spoken aloud; but now is not the time for incantations as my body flexes to find the best position, a bow whose target will not escape because it is always reachable from the right angle, and it bends to take up the vantage point from where there is no retreat; a snake darts its tongue in front of its prey that has no notion of its own purpose, a rustle articulates the order that will be obeyed, a brief murmur, and then the tension gives way to delectation that finds every crack to bare itself, however profound the darkness is, because a metaphor always finds a way through to the surface, it extricates itself from the crush of reality as a steady stream erodes a wooden dam or the waves craft a rock, the foam gives birth to female apparitions, spectres of the past that await us even beyond the associations we have painstakingly gathered, like now when I crouch down to begin an adventure that will only be of value if included in the existing documentation, so what now has to be listed instinctively returns the book to the very beginning, to the pages where my personal history starts, to the moment when my eyes opened, when the first date was entered in the diary, when the black sea pounded the virgin shore, and the sand tricked onto my hand, the salty fluid poured over the sweet wound, the tremor spread as a message goes out from a ship lost on the horizon that cannot be seen even from the highest cliff, like Morse code for a torn-up telegram; that night was a watershed between what ebbs and what flows, as a plot can go in two ways at the same time, or on two pages, bordered by old ink, a black line that will perhaps fade, only to later convey a mark of surprise, and if there is a *petite mort* there also has to be a little resurrection because what is lost in one moment can later be found, as a bottle floats in the sea regardless of a shipwreck nearby; that night fell slowly just so the embrace would be firmer, because nothing is lighter than the pall of darkness when it touches the body for the first time and disturbs the eye; that night I went down the stairs of the hotel, convinced I knew where the sandy path led, while grains obediently followed my feet, and a cloudbank obscured the moon that commands the prodigal tides, rays sent out towards a water castle, but there was no longer any island to shelter on as the waves shone despite it being midnight; first the stage had to be set for her to appear, a sanctuary for a ghost, whose

contours would ever tremble before my mind's eye because each of her returns was a new temptation, and the shape in front of me would change even though I had the same sensation before, instead of expectation there was only surrender, my faith that I was capable of this, and my fear lest I fail to remember, because pleasure and pain compress everything in themselves, so afterwards it is difficult to leaf through all the layers, even in the peace of the archive room, even in the lonely cell of deliberation and transcription; the text is a salutary delay, as the moon provides light after the profane sun has finally fallen without a trace, I was able to count my steps then, but the final number to the hillock would always vary if I glanced back at the hotel where I tricked my parents by feigning sleep, the hotel where I left my past, as a disconsolate heroine leaves her memory to haunt the empty halls and stone stairs of the building once the tragedy has occurred, the hotel that now looked like the abandoned chamber of a life that no longer belonged to me, however close it still was, and suddenly it became clear to me that my steps in the sand of Bar indited this story, to which I would be returned again and again, just as an echo returns to one who prays on her knees, like me, now, here, as I bury my face in the dark centre, and my thoughts fly back to that moonlit evening, to the beach where I braved the **biting cold** (4) because I felt a different kind of shiver that could melt the ice that formed in the corners of my white lips, and my shudders were in time with my steps as evening assumed its darkest form, which I would enter as a voluntary prisoner and leave as a gracious executioner because blood must be renewed both ardently and heartlessly; I walked like a somnambulist who knows her way, despite all the chasms that threatened to take their toll, and I felt a wind rise above me to add a deathly nuance to the atmosphere, bending the grass on the troubled grave, and the world stretched out like a path from which there is no deflection once your foot has touched the cold yet kindly earth; I walked as if I was ascending to heaven, I walked as if I was plunging in, towards the hilltop from where the horizon of fate extends, towards the sea from where the line of destiny runs, and looking back was now just a waste of time, I closed my eyes to feel the currents above the shore more fully, the veins on my breasts would turn even bluer – I could sense it under the gossamer of my white nightgown – and I wondered if I could hide anything any more because if the black water touched me now I would shudder as if I was on my deathbed that smelled of dried, semi-wilted lilies, and again that would just be a pleasant indication that I was heading for where she was surely waiting for me, I just could not tell if I was going to her or she was coming for me once more to embrace me before she withdrew into the night together with the waves that now lessened on the open sea, and the moonlight on my palm was like scattered drops of blood, forgotten but still fresh; I walked as if the proximity of night did not justify the proximity of the dream that could effortlessly accommodate my anaemic body, all of which now seems to have been the effect of spells, but my step led me on, even though I had been daydreaming upright for too long and its call could not be refused, the invocation could not be postponed as long as the candle flickered to the voice of command and control, the voice that creeps under your skin like a river entering a sinkhole, both rough and gentle; the candlestick left my shadow on the sand, only for the sea to efface it again, it would vanish in the sand and seemed to spill in all directions, but I went on, a sleepwalker who would submit to a force stronger and deeper than nightmare and fantasy, however intimate they were, however much I confessed to them, because we are sincerest in imagination and fear, but this seemed even more powerful, now when desire joined my body that had only just learned what aggression and relaxation are, force and withdrawal, that had only just learned the laws of swelling and withdrawal, and therefore that time it fell short in craving but continued in memory, like a letter written in the heat of the moment later lacks a postscript; the wax from the candles I

carried could later serve to seal a document with a mute address, and my blond hair no longer obeyed the caprice of the wind but only its own inner command, an electricity in the almost cloudless night, in which no storm would come, but the baroness would arrange her last and essential presence, that of the ultimate transmutation, there on the hilltop where the moonlight provided a space for just the two of us; she had said “I’ll be waiting for you”, and all I could do was to repeat those words inside, like a powerful command, an order that would draw me out of the hotel where I was a captive from the best of intentions, an order that changed my foreboding into a bold descent into the night while my parents slept, departure is when you leave all things behind you, therefore my exhaustion was now infinitely selfless and pervasive, and my anaemia was just an emptiness that would soon be filled because nothing is more ravenous than a vacuum, veins that have their own pulse that does not coincide with the beating of the heart, but what is spilled will be gathered up like reddish autumn rain; my lips became moist as the hilltop emerged in the gloom, the place of the final meeting, where everything would be decided, everything would be engraved so as to come alive later in the special atmosphere where the images coincide with words, as memory is in equilibrium with gentle imagination, and one slightly stronger gust of wind was enough to blow out the candles, but that would not happen due to the balance of delight and unease, only later would the morning disturb the equilibrium, but what had to happen was bound to happen, like the last pages read too quickly or the last painting seen out of chronological order; I climbed up, while the sea was deceitful with a scarcely discernible gleam, I cast off my coat, the cold was now a salutary omen, and she had fulfilled her promise, she was always there to meet me after her nightly visits, a figure who has imbibed the patience of castaways and hermits but can also be impetuous in her delectation, and I tried in my mind to resurrect our little scenes before I fell into the embrace from which there would be no rescue, from which I did not wish to be rescued, because that was the moment when the moon’s rays went from yellow to white; only the ideal frame could immortalize the scene where the light turned our bodies to seemly wax apparitions, perfection is as cold as a dying breath, and the moon that lit up the performance froze all movement just before the climax, as ice stops a river on the surface but the depths below are untouched, so our embrace remains as a witness that I will carry with me like a picture and impel like a story; the baroness bent over me like autumn over the ripe fruits on a tree, fate was in free fall, and I felt my body numb and submissive as the cold turned living flesh into a sculpture facing the horizon; away in the distance the night became dark matter travelling like a weary wave that would certainly come to carry me away, but now I was yet in the vice of her embrace, the affection of the domina who cast the candlestick away into the nearest bush since the moonlight was more than sufficient, because the moon’s light is artificial as opposed to the insufferable ubiquity and banal warmth of the sun; the moon’s gentle energy is an embalmer so that memory might be more distinct, the moon is that high call, an icy invocation, an ancient cult celebrated with fear and trembling, because fear is the precursor of love, and touch was now like the smoothing of a statue, its pallor was the perfection of concentration and dedication, a bloodless wax into which one’s name would be impressed, no longer a family blazon but a personal signature, and the breaking of the seal was a small apocalypse on the hilltop where every step looks like it leads to the end of the world; the baroness no longer drew me with her hands but with her eyes, and her pupils grew like bats descending on their helpless prey; she who survived the *fin de siècle* but remained in it, like a sign that determines every ornament, and that sign is the **elegance of tongue** (5) because a symbol is always more perverse than the thing itself, hearsay is always more scandalous than the event it describes, a picture on the wall of a sterile gallery is more blasphemous than the real scene,

the tide does not ravish the shore but preserves it, especially now when the moon laid claim to us, chains that cannot be broken because satisfaction actually circulates, departing and returning to the anaemic heart, which is why pleasure does not vanish but simply ebbs away, recedes; the baroness who escaped the *fin de siècle* but decided to remain in it arranged for me the end of the century that had only just begun, she ushered me into a heritage whose beauty is beyond its purpose, her touch conveyed that message and her mouth bore witness, and exhaustion came on again like the pall that caresses a weary body, but that is the only way lines can be exact, shapes be discernible although the curtain has fallen, traces of ornamental order be preserved; the baroness was now a phantasm that I found wherever I turned, wherever I went, her eyes filled the darkness to which I consigned myself, and the icy, solemn pale of my face was a mask indispensable for this ritual on the hill of fate, where my nightgown rose as my eyelids fell, her icy breath was on my breasts, cold evoked cold, alabaster demanded alabaster, and the surface would crack as when the golden bowl breaks, an indispensable mistake so that its true value and authenticity later be recognized, although the object of one's desires would never be displayed at an auction, and that cracking was only a phantom pain, a penetration of the border; the baroness's face came down as I go down in this other night before a similar goal, the centres are different but the trajectory of satisfaction is the same, the imitation of the pleasure that has transfigured us, that shifts us from one time to another with minimal transition, and however visible the seam may be the textile will not tear, however great the diversion of the structures may be it will survive, because the story is a dark chamber where every voice receives a reply, an echo that holds things together, like the baroness holding my body in the tenderest pose; affection is the virtue of accepting the inevitable, and her face came down onto my breasts to leave two dots, blue dots, red dots, dots still too fine for fangs to penetrate, my hair began to flutter in the wind, blond was black in this midnight performance, and for a moment I felt nothing belonged to me any more, as when the fountain in the courtyard runs dry, or the crimson drops that collect on the open hands of the statues of ancient goddesses, marble and liquid, and the pain always stays like a colon, after which there follows a point; the bite can be a sign more valuable than a fingerprint on the last object placed on the shelf of a private museum, which we closely inspect in the evening as the light brings a sophisticated shiver that seizes the body but leaves the mind sufficiently lucid, a signature achieved by different means, though its significance is undisclosed, reduced to codes and symbols, because reality is only a reminder and pain takes the colour crimson, a sinuous line that moves with our breath; I asked myself if I dared to raise my eyes, but my pupils were disobedient, a blissful inertia threw back my head, and again the baroness put her arms around me, I could hear the water at the foot of the cliff, the rhythm that would later embrace me and carry me away, circles that swiftly moved away from the centre, where the wound was inflicted, and now our blood would mingle like two coats of paint on a picture in the furthest corner of an old castle, and the cobweb on its edges is just an illusion since the has brush brought freshness to the framed family tree; blood dripped like the sand in an hourglass in the night of transformation and the moonlight no longer spilled, it pulsated, and nature followed the red trail, scarlet that has lost its smell and changed to mysterious lettering, we only lose what we have to lose; the baroness detached herself gradually from my breasts – every umbilical cord is cut in the end – and I felt I would stagger, but I managed to stay upright, supported perhaps by the wind, perhaps by an overly long squeeze, and the nightgown now concealed that a dissolute intruder had been there; now one last act and darkness would be my companion for all future episodes, because my story is nothing but a sequence of pasted images that create the illusion of movement, life is simply no longer the right word, I felt that even

before the ceremony ended, before I looked directly from the cliff into the abyss that awaited me, my lips showed silent gratitude as the baroness reached me her hand so that we might enter the final phase of twilight together once more; the closer we moved to our fate, the slower our pace became, the body is heavy when the soul is light, and gravity answered the prayer of the fall on this sheer harbourside cliff, where shipwrecks are the best observation points, yet I followed the baroness more resolutely than ever before, her back in deep shadow was a mystical monument, her blond hair a choppy wave the colour of serenity and whirlpool, a passion laid to rest and then aroused; at the climax the baroness' aureole took on a last tinge, dark blue outlines, she stopped to gaze on me one more time and her eyes grew like a snake's when it swallows its prey, and I was ready to register that face as an unreachable icon beside a tall stained-glass window; I did not wish to turn around lest I suddenly hear my mother's voice or lest my weary father call me, they did not suspect anything there at the hotel and the morning would bring insufferable punishment for them, but I would continue on my way, through ever shadowy landscapes, where darkness is the decisive value, now that the baroness was delivering me to a different destiny, and she took me in her arms for the last time, I leaned my head against her breasts, which had enlarged, swollen from the new blood, and I heard her heart like a drawn-out signal, a listless and majestic luxury, yet the greatest wealth is never shared; now she was overcome by sleep while she let me fall into the Gothic sea, and for a second I felt I was floating in mid-air, with the world gradually falling away, and I stubbornly subsisted in that void as the baroness's face, from my angle, became the infinitely beautiful visage of a stranger, as it was at the beginning when I first saw her beneath my window, features I will always recognize though I will never meet them again, for beauty endures and survives; the sense of impending death did not betray me, I was almost swaying until the fall finally took hold of surrounding nature, then the darkness and the wind and the sand fell with me, and the only thing still plumb was my hair, which fear and pity made vertical in that moment of full consciousness because the feeling of terror hones the senses like a knife that stabs a limp body; the fall would never erase those memories, and my origin will echo in every pore, in the beat of the carotid artery, in the look that will glaze the blue eye; the sea enveloped me like a shroud and the foam immediately dissipated, and when I opened my eyes I was in the deep, in the different darkness of the underwater expanses, but the current carried me back to the surface, and when I opened my mouth to truly breathe in air I tasted a saltiness not of the water that had entered my lungs but of the blood that was not lost, that will never be lost, and the water bore my body as if it was devotedly steering an elegant black coffin that would not sink, even in the wildest of storms, and the safest coffin is made to withstand the onslaught of furious waves in a deluge; I had been floating for some time, hovering and holding out on the surface, and the sky above was a dark mirror that reflected the calm of the open sea as when a polluted spring clears up, and I would be in the same position for a while longer, but then, as implausible as it seemed, I would rise as Millais's Ophelia rose from her watery grave in the end, although it seemed so implausible; we share a common goal beyond death, we reconcile the act of unimagined rising, and only later did her eyes discover the true plan, the dismayed face in the green picture frame was actually preparing for a decisive step in life, she only needed to wait and see what happened the moment after the picture, the moment after the almighty weariness, just as the baroness also knew why she consigned me to a different plane of existence, putrefaction and the wormhole belong to the doom of others, a deathly timepiece that remained as a sign we pass on the motorway, and I arose unburdened and stepped ashore not as a traveller saved by coincidence but as a noblewoman who has found a cove of her own, separate from the world of people, whose

ships would sail past ominously seeking the next port; my clinging nightgown meant I did not feel the cold because now I had the cold on my lips and in my smile, now my teeth would leave a cold mark on silvery skin, a lascivious bite that does not ignite a fire but dictates rest, an ice that gleams dazzlingly and then begins to crackle and burst along the most painful edges; that night I returned, with my new gift, by the same path I came, bending down from time to time to watch the sea obliterate my footprints in the paling night, as I crouch down now to break the resistance of my latest lover, who tries to restrain her thrill by gritting her teeth – first comes breath and then the deed, first comes memory, then the act of repetition and sanctification – and however lost she is in thought it will not disturb the concentration of the body because it knows all the paths and shortcuts, the terrain explored to the utmost boundaries, the length and breadth of which have been marked, however total the darkness of the centre is, because the gravitations of desire are always sensed most strongly there; memory is a transposition that enables you to remain in the same space but for time to expire, a hideaway that is already moist, an ever-slippery ridge that marks the concurrence of life and death, my tongue will bridge the distance that lessens with every breath, waters carry everything out into the open, and there is no more holding back because satisfaction has overtaken procrastination, because choosing this delectation consciously includes the moment that comes afterwards, which will mark every action of beginning and every contemplation of the end, and pleasure in its deepest moments is a blessing, a mellow benediction, a wealth of words that have told stories, a mellow coalescence, as when you fling caution to the wind and your veins fill with unfamiliar blood for the first time, a brief romance-river will flow in a familiar bed, in a direction also determined by the whirls and pools of fascination along the way, and nothing will be lost in this deviation because there is no such thing as a unidirectional story, although my tongue darts like the tail of a sidewinder and I can almost hear the sssssssssssssss as it slithers into the chamber where every sound grows like an echo and a sobbing, a sssssssssssssssssssss that can increase infinitely in the enclosed space; every love encounter both liberates and subdues, every love sheds its skin, and the vestiges are later probed by the sun and moon, so let the moon do its work this time in irritated enthusiasm, while I break through in the scant darkness to touch the point of highest inner elevation, one merely needs to be merciless in delectation, and craving is always a dictate that must be recorded irreproachably so as then to be pronounced with the dedication of the reprise because desire never ceases, but is repeated, just like a verse that has been learned; I go on like a well-versed reciter, deeper and deeper, until her body turns to a spasm in the very centre, and until her red hair, which was tied in a ponytail until a moment ago, comes undone, as if a scirocco suddenly began to blow from the shores of my childhood, from the very shores I walked pompously in the night the baroness left me, the dark mirror that always awaits me, the dark mirror that now allows me, in erotic speculation, to see the hair that tumbles over her shoulders, and then even further, which I will later gather up and return to its strict form when passion rises into her calm figure, when I run my seductive hand over her and tremble with the absolute bliss of this last touch of tenderness before the finale of another episode, but amidst the tempest you have to conceive the final moves and find delectation within their scope because obsession does not end when the goal has been achieved, it remains even after the goal has been attained (...)

Vlatka (1) (izvod)

IV

SINTHOME:
jesen 2019.

Étendue à ses pieds, calme et pleine de joie,
Delphine la couvait avec des yeux ardents,
Comme un animal fort qui surveille une proie,
Après l'avoir d'abord marquée avec les dents.
— Charles Baudelaire, *Femmes damnées (Delphine et Hippolyte)*

... i saginjem se, **spuštam se (2)** dolje, tu gdje crno more odbija pogled, gdje oko opsjeda toplu tama, tu gdje svaki put morate biti, makar na tren, zagubljeni i zarobljeni, nevidljivi prag urastao u besprizorni procjep, spuštam se kao da uranjam u mlaku vodu čija površina nikada neće biti dovoljno mirna da preuzme svjetlost, prostor bez odsjaja, kao da na ovom putu uvijek ostajete bez tragova, susret koji poriče osvrtnje ali ne može da spriječi novu vrstu fantazije koja izrasta u mraku, kao što cvijet zahtijeva sumrak prije nego što otvori listove, saginjem se brzo kao da sam samo za ovo i bila spremna, vraćajući se iznova i iznova na izvor koji svaki sljedeći put izgleda drugačije, svaki sljedeći put se mijenja prilagođavajući se najdražem uljezu koji osmišljava svaki prepad, iznova i iznova je ritam koji se ne može obuzdati, koji se priziva i priželjkuje, pokreti koji u ponavljanju pronalaze zakon rasprostiranja, perpetuum mobile jednostavan a nedokučiv, uranjanje znači prepuštanje dubini zova, zovu dubine, vječnoj pećini gdje sjenke leže ispred, sjenke koje će se razmahati kada se predstavi pridruži sjećanje, ako se konfiguracija pomjera to je zato što se žudnja udružuje sa memorijom, upravo sada dok se spuštam želja je rijeka ponornica, Lethe koje se sakriva pa najednom iskrasne, voda zapljuskuje kamenite obale, sve je priprema u ovom nagonu koji se ne može rastočiti, uzbuđenje raste uprkos uvježbanosti, jer ništa se ne može porediti sa užitkom stranice koja je pročitana drugi put, koja je pročitana opet, koja zadržava sve prethodno a upodobljuje ono što se moglo otkriti samo ako se radnja ponovila, ako se značenje usvojilo na odlučan način, kao kad se nakon dugog ronjenja usta otvore da udahnu spasonosni vazduh, tako se i moje usne razdvajaju da utisnu svoj pečat, da pridobiju sve za sebe, poljubac otima tuđu esenciju u nepreglednom mraku, spuštanje je čin poklonjenja, ritual osveštenja samo za ovaj trenutak, on se izvodi sa poniznošću samo za ovu priliku, njegovo kratko trajanje je samo potvrda njegove iskrenosti, poslije dolazi odmak, distanca i ironija, poslije dolazi prepis koji će razmaknuti stvari na pravo odstojanje, ali sada se spuštam sa potpunom uvjerenošću da se centar svijeta sabio u ovu tačku, ili buduću dvotačku, u ovaj procijep gdje se ne razmišlja o tome kakav će biti put nazad, hoće li biti puta nazad u sigurnost izmicanja i sigurnost meditacije, zato sada iako je svjetlost zatomljena fokus se jasno postavio, u magnovenju je moguć trenutak kristalizacije iako je sve razvodnjeno, sada dok se vrtoglavo spuštam da otpočnem ceremoniju u kojoj sam prvosveštenica koja poklanja i prima žrtvu bez koje se ne može zamisliti niti jedna svečanost, dar uzimanja i davanja, žrtva apoteoze i desakralizacije, u toj blizini, tik pred ulaz, već se može osjetiti blaženi miris paljenice što preplavljuje lice u susretu sa onim što je uvijek izbjegavalo opis, živa priroda koja se ne može pripitomiti, koja se ne može savladati, koja se ne može svesti na znak dok ovako stoji, sa minimalnim osvjetljenjem, u krupnom planu koji općinjava taman prije nego ću zatvoriti oči dok me

tmina bude obgrlila, prijatna tmina usrdnog ukazivanja, svaki silazak je povratak na staro mjesto, na mjesto početka, prisjećanje je uvijek povratak kući, domu koji je izgubljen samo da bi kasnije bio spektralno pridobijen, jer tijelo je figura prepoznavanja i ophođenja, dodir je materijalizacija prošlosti, one proživljene i one izmišljene, tijelo preda mnom je kapija kroz koju se ulazi sa pažljivom zadržkom i oduševljenom prisnošću, kao kad se pokuca na otvorena vrata, dnevni boravak je životni prostor, u uglovima je paučina koju će onda raspršiti topli dah zajedno sa papirima ostavljenim na stolu, ovdje je sve prebačeno sjećanju koje ima svoje zakonitosti, svoje utočište, sjećanje je, nakon svega, tečna supstanca koja zaokružuje um na vrhuncu zanosa, prenadraženi fluid koji ispunjava sve vijuge i sve ureze, apstrakne arabeske koje se pretvaraju u prijemčljive znakove, sjećanje je skretanje pažnje sa konkretnog trenutka, želja da razdvojene linije sudbine pokažu obavezujući splet, mrežu koja prekriva cijeli život, prošlost odzvanja u sadašnjem trenutku kao radosni zov i predsmrtno zvono, dok se saginjem da obavim akt koji će razotkriti žudnju i nad jednim tijelom uspostaviti prevlast, poput okrutne **gospodarice (3)** koja na kraju pokazuje samilost kao dio koreografisanog nastupa, kao dio obavezujuće procedure koja se mora poštovati sa marljivom predanošću, neki put i božica mora kleknuti da bi se obistinila njena moć, da bi stvari privukla u svoj domen, da bi organizovala užitak bez odmaka, sagnuti se ka izvoru žudnje znači poštovati moć koja će doći kasnije, koja će vrhuniti onda kada uloženo bude stotruko vraćeno, jer želja se uvijek vraća sa kamatom, njena priroda je u stalnom uvećavanju, u stalnom napredovanju, u odlučnosti da se dođe do cilja, iako taj cilj nije i poenta, u želji nema krajnje destinacije već samo krajnjeg napregnuća, uz zauvijek prisutnu opasnost da će taj mjehur prsnuti, da će nestati sa nježnim povlačenjem, da će se pred očima rastvoriti kao val koji udara u stijene i tek ostavlja bijelu pjenu u vlažnim udubljenjima, ljepota u nestajanju pred nemilosrdnim suncem koje je sada utješno daleko dok pravim taj pokret koji u sebi sadrži neminovnost sudbine i okrutnost odluke, ona koja donosi zadovoljstvo kao krajnji dar mora biti nemilosrdna i bezobzirna, jer sudbina i odluka su na najmanjem rastojanju u trenutku tik pred ostvarenje nauma, pred iniciranje užitka koji ništa ne prašta, poslije užitka uvijek ostane mala pustoš, mala smrt i mala pustoš u času koji će melodramatično otkucati na svim satovima na zidu dok se gotske kazaljke poklapaju pod sablasnim uglom, ptičica i ne mora da se oglasi, kao sova koja doleće u sumrak, kao orao koji lebdi nad ponorima, eda bi usud potvrdio sjenovitu snagu, kleknuti pred izvorom osvježanja je neophodni obred odugovlačenja, posljednji privid pred konkretnu akciju, pred otvaranje stiješnjenog prolaza, nešto kao dramska pauza, duboko udisanje pred dugoočekivani monolog kojim ću zavladata scenom, uspostaviti dominaciju nad pričom koja će važiti u svim njenim retroaktivnim varijantama, onu koju pričam i ona koja će biti ispričana o meni, onu koja sam započela i ona koja će me prividno dovršiti, priča uvijek zaokreće kad je ukrštena sa užitkom, kada je premrežena užitkom, kada se ne odvaja od užitka ma kako destinacije bile različite, skretanje je forma zavođenja ali se više ne mogu zavesti na krivi put, sada kada je naum izjednačen sa proricanjem, ma kako mrak bio gust dolje, sricanje se obavlja sa posvećenošću koja i mene iznenađuje, jer ništa ne promiče na što neće biti stavljen potpis usana što su nestrpljive poput slijepog miša u uzletanju dok sjenke ispisuju posljednje proročanstvo, ništa što je obuhvaćeno neće ostati neosvojeno, onoj koja zadaje poljubac pripada cijela situacija, kao preuzeti kadar kome se prilagođava svaka scena, tim snažnija ako je reprizirana, jer reprizirati znači ponovo odigrati zaplet za pogled koji stiže sa blagoslovljenim zakašnjenjem da utvrdi prevlast drugog napada, onog koji se odvija ne samo kao upijanje, nego i raskošno nadziranje, mada tmine postaju sve jače, vrtoglavica pred tminama, vrtoglavica pred užitkom, vrtoglavica pred zapisom čije ću konture zauvijek moći da razaznam, kao što se osjeća prelaz preko šava koji je zaštitio ranu, ali i obilježio trag kroz koji bi krv mogla opet da se pojavi,

grimizna kaligrafija koja će doći poslije, slova koja će se kasnije poređati, čitanje dolazi na kraju, čitanje je krajnja stanica, mada se put može pružiti duž sve nepoznatijih pejzaža, planinski vrhovi i udoline, tijesnaci kroz koje će voda razrušiti sve brane, a kada se povuče horizont će zasijati, čak iako sunce bude zarobljeno u magli, saginjanje je proboj kroz maglu, vrući vazduh koji te presreće kao tajni prijatelj, kada udahneš shvataš da je svaki odlazak bio izbjavanje, zato je nasilni prepad uvijek i vrsta prebacivanja, kao što se u sebi obnavljaju potcrtane rečenice iz dužih pjesama gdje na eskalaciju moraš da čekaš, ma koliko toga bilo prethodno rečeno, sve dok se ne okonča protok slikâ, slikâ u kojima se zgušnjavaju katren i tercet, u magnovenju sjećanje ima formu soneta koji se ne nikad ne izgovara naglas, uostalom sada nije vrijeme za glasnu inkantaciju dok se moje tijelo savija da odredi najbolji položaj, luk kojem cilj neće umaći, jer cilj je uvijek dostižan pod odgovarajućim uglom, savija se da zauzme kotu odakle nema odstupnice, zmija palaca jezikom pred plijenom koji ne sluti svoju svrhu, šuštanje artikuliše bespogovornu zapovijest, šum prije nego će zategnutost ustupiti mjesto nasladi što pronalazi svaku pukotinu da se obznani ma kako mrak bio čvrsto začet, jer metafora uvijek pronade način da izbije na površinu, uvijek se iskobelja iz stiska realnosti, poput vode koja samotno dubi drvenu branu i vala koji uporno mijenja oblik stijene, kroz pjenu se rađaju ženske utvare, utvare prošlosti koji nas sačekuju čak i izvan asocijacija koje smo mukotrпно prikupili, kao sada dok se saginjem kako bih otpočela sa još jednom pustolovinom koja će imati vrijednost samo ako se uvrsti u postojeću dokumentaciju, ono što sada treba popisati instiktivno vraća knjigu na sami početak, na stranice sa kojima kreće personalna istorija, trenutak kada se otvaraju oči, trenutak kada se unosi prvi datum u dnevniku, trenutak kada crno more zapljuskuje djevičansku obalu, pijesak koji se rasipa na šaci, slana tečnost koja se preliva po slatkastoj rani, drhtavica koja se širi kao što se rasprostire posljednja poruka sa broda koji se izgubio na horizontu i ne može se vidjeti čak ni sa najviše litice, morzeova abeceda za rascijepani telegram, ta noć je bila razdjelnica, ono što utiče i ono što otiče, kao što fabula u isto vrijeme ide na dvije strane, ili na dvije stranice, opervažene starim mastilom, crni redak koji će možda izbljediti samo da bi kasnije prenio znak iznenađenja, ako postoji mala smrt, onda mora da postoji i malo vaskrsenje, ono što se zagubi u jednom trenutku se može pronaći, kao što boca u moru pliva bez obzira na brodolom u blizini, ta noć koja je padala sporo samo da bi zagrljaj bio jači, jer ništa nije lakše od pokrova tame kad prvi put dodiruje tijelo i uznemirava zjenicu, ta noć dok silazim stepenicama hotela unaprijed ubijedena da ću znati gdje vodi pješčani put, zrnca koja poslušno slijede stopala, iza oblaka spušta se mjesec koji komanduje razmetnim plimama, zraci koji su usmjereni ka vodenom zamku, nema više ostrva gdje se možeš skloniti dok valovi bljeskaju uprkos ponoći, da bi se ona pojavila prvo je morala da se sastavi pozornica, sveto boravište za prikazu čije će konture uvijek titrati pred zamišljenim okom, jer svaki je njen povratak novo iskušenje, čak iako sam ranije osjetila istu senzaciju oblik preda mnom će se promijeniti, umjesto očekivanja postoji samo prepuštanje, moja vjera da sam sposobna za to, moj strah da ću propustiti da upamtim, jer užitek i bol sažimaju sve u sebe, pa je poslije teško razlistati sve slojeve, čak i u miru arhivske sobe, čak i u samotnoj ćeliji vaganja i prepisivanja, tekst je spasonosno kašnjenje, kao što mjesec obezbjeđuje svjetlo nakon što je prostačko sunce napokon palo bez odjeka, mogla sam tada da brojim korake, ali krajnja cifra do brežuljka bi neprestano varirala ako bih pogledala unazad, ka hotelu gdje sam prepustila roditelje lažnom snu, ka hotelu gdje sam ostavljala svoju prošlost kao što nesretna heroina ostavlja svoje sjećanje da progoni prazne holove i kamene stepenice zdanja jednom kada se tragedija odigrala, ka hotelu koji je sada izgledao kao napuštena odaja jednog života koji mi više nije pripadao, ma koliko još uvijek bio blizak, odjedanput mi je bilo jasno da koraci u pristanskom pijesku ispisuju priču kojoj ću biti vraćena kao što

se eho vraća onoj koja moli na koljenima, poput mene, sada, ovdje, dok zaranjam glavu u tamno središte, a misli bježe unazad u mjesečinom obliveno veče, na plažu gdje prkosim **reskoj hladnoći** (4) jer osjećam drugu vrstu jeze koja može da otopi led što se nahvatao u uglu bijelih usana, trnci su usklađeni sa koracima, dok veče poprira svoj najtamniji oblik u koji ću ući kao dobrovoljna zatvorenica a izaći kao blagonakloni dželat, jer krv se mora obnavljati i usrdno i nemilosrdno, hodam kao kad bi somnabulist znao svoj cilj, uprkos svim provalijama koje prijete da uzmu svoj danak, osjećam da se iznad mene vjetar podiže da bi atmosferi dao mrtvački obol, trava koja se povija na uznemirenom grobu, odavde se svijet pruža kao staza sa koje nema skretanja jednom kada je stopalo dodirnulo hladnu, ali ljubaznu zemlju, hodam kao da se uznosim, hodam kao da zaranjam, tamo prema uzvišici odakle se pruža horizont sudbine, tamo prema moru odakle seže linija usuda, sada je svako osvrtnje samo gubljenje vremena, zatvaram oči da bih jače opipala strujanje nad obalom, vene na grudima još će više pomodriti, to mogu da osjetim ispod najfinije tkanine bijele spavačice, pitam se može li ona više išta da sakrije, ako me sada dotakne crna voda zadržtaću kao da sam na samrti u postelji što miriše na sasušene, poluuvenule ljiljane, pa opet će to biti samo prijatna najava da sam se uputila tamo gdje me sigurno ona čeka, samo ne znam da li ja idem ka njoj ili ona dolazi po mene još jednom da me obgrli prije nego se povuče u noć zajedno sa valovima što slabe na pučini, na dlanu mjesečina je kao zaboravljene, ali još uvijek svježe kapi rasprskane krvi, hodam kao da blizina noći ne opravdava blizinu sna u kome se moje anemično tijelo može smjestiti bez pò muke, sve što mi se sada čini je posljedica čini, mogla bih tako da kažem, ali korak me odvodi dalje, čak iako predugo uspravna sanjarim i zov se ne može odbiti, priziv se ne može odložiti, dok svijećnjak podrhtava na glas zapovjedanja i vladanja, glas koji se uvlači u kožu kao što se rijeka uliva, grubo i nježno, svijećnjak ostavlja moju sjenku na pijesku samo da bi je, nazad, more izbrisalo, ona će nestati između pijeska, ona kao da se razliva na sve strane, ali ja nastavljam, mjesečarka koja će se povinovati sili jačoj i dubljoj nego što su košmar i fantazija ma kako bili prisni, ma koliko im se ispovijedala, jer najiskreniji smo u imaginaciji i strahu, ali je li ovo još i nešto više, sada kada se priključuje i želja u tijelu koje tek što je naučilo što je agresija i popuštanje, što je sila i povlačenje, koje tek što je naučilo zakone bubrenja i povlačenja, zato se ovaj put skraćuje u žudnji a produžava u pamćenju, kao što pismu napisanom u vrućici kasnije manjka post skriptum, vosak sa svijeća koje nosim poslije bi mogao da zapečati papir sa nemuštom adresom, moja plava kosa više ne sluša hirovitost vjetra već samo unutrašnju komandu, elektricitet u noći koja nije previše oblačna, u kojoj oluja neće doći, ali će baronica upriličiti svoje posljednje i najbitnije prisustvo, prisustvo konačnog preobražaja, tamo na uzvišici gdje je mjesečina priskrbila prostor samo za nas dvije, rekla je 'Čekam te', i ja samo mogu da ponavljam te riječi u sebi kao krepku komandu, naredbu koja će me izvući iz jednog hotela u kome sam bila zarobljenica iz najboljih namjera, naredba koja je slutnju pretvorila u hrabri silazak ravno u noć dok su spavali moji roditelji, odlazak je kada sve stvari ostanu iza tebe, zato je sada malaksalost beskrajno nesebična i prožimajuća, a malokrvnost je tek praznina koja će uskoro biti ispunjena, jer ništa nije proždrljivije od vakuuma, vene koje imaju sopstveni puls koji se ne poklapa sa otkucajima srca, ono što je bilo proliveno sakupiće se kao jesenja crvenkasta kišnica, ovlažile su mi usne dok iz tmine izranja uzvišica koja je mjesto završnog susreta, sve će biti određeno, sve će biti urezano da bi kasnije oživljelo u posebnoj atmosferi u kojoj se slike poklapaju sa riječima, kao što se memorija izjednačava sa tihom imaginacijom, dovoljno je da vjetar samo malo bude snažniji pa da ugasi svijeće, ali to se neće dogoditi zbog balansa uzbuđenja i uznemirenja, tek kasnije će jutro pokvariti ravnotežu, ali što treba da se desi već će se desiti, kao prebrzo pročitane posljednje stranice, posljednje platno viđeno van hronološkog reda, uspinjem se dok je more

pretvornije u odsjaju koji se jedva može nazrijeti, sa sebe skidam kaputić, studen je sada blagotvorni predznak, i ona je ispunila obećanje, ona je oduvijek bila tu da me sačeka nakon noćnih posjeta, figura koja je upila u sebe strpljenje brodolomnika i pustinjaka, a može i da požuri sa svojom nasladom, pokušavam da u glavi vaskrsnem naše male scene prije nego padnem u zagrljaj iz koga se neću izbaviti, iz koga ne želim da se izbacim, to je trenutak kada mjesečevi zraci iz žutog prelaze u bijelo, samo idealni ram može da ovjekovječi prizor kada svjetlost pretvara tijela u dolične voštane sablazni, perfekcija je hladna kao predsmrtni dah, mjesec koji obasjava predstavu zamrzava pokret tik pred vrhunac, kao što led zaustavlja rijeku na površini a ispod je netaknuta dubina, tako naš zagrljaj ostaje kao svjedočanstvo koje ću ponijeti kao sliku a pokrenuti kao priču, baronica se nadnosi nada mnom kao jesen nad dozrele plodove na drvetu, sudbina se nalazi u padu, osjećam da mi je tijelo umrtvljeno i pokorno, hladnoća koja živo meso pretvara u skulpturu okrenutu ka horizontu, tamo u daljini noć postaje tmasta materija, pomjera se kao umorni val koji će sigurno doći po mene da me odvede, ali sada sam još u čvrstom stisku, to je nježnost gospodarice koja odbacuje svijećnjak u najbliži žbun budući da je mjesečina i više nego dovoljna, jer je mjesečeva svjetlost vještačka, za raziku od nepodnošljive sveprisutnosti i banalne toplote sunca, njena energija balsamuje stvari i događaje da bi sjećanje bilo upečatljivije, mjesec je visoki priziv, studena invocacija, davnašnji kult koji se proslavlja strahom i drhtanjem, jer strah je preteča ljubavi, dodir je sada kao glačanje statue, bljedilo je savršenstvo koncentracije i posvećenosti, beskrvni vosak u koji se utiskuje vlastito ime, ne više porodični grb već svojeručni potpis, a lomljenje pečata je mala apokalipsa na jednoj uzvišici gdje svaki korak izgleda kao da vodi na kraj svijeta, baronica me vuče ne više rukama nego pogledom dok njene zjenice rastu kao slijepi miševi dok slijecu na bespomoćni plijen, ona koja je preživjela fin de siècle a ostala u njemu, kao znak koji određuje svaki ornament, znak je **elegancija jezika (5)** jer simbol je uvijek perverziji od same stvari, prepričavanje je uvijek skandaloznije od samog događaja, slika okačena na zidu sterilno čiste galerije je uvijek blasfemičnija od realnog prizora, plima ne narušava nego čuva dostojanstvo obale, posebno sada dok nas mjesec prisvaja, lanci koji se ne mogu pokidati jer zadovoljstvo zapravo cirkuliše, odlazeći i vraćajući se u anemično srce, zato užitak ne nestaje nego otiče ili ističe, baronica koja je pretekla fin de siècle odlučila da ostane u njemu za mene upriličava okončanje vijeka koji tek što je počeo, predaje mi nasljeđe čija će ljepota biti iznad svrhe, dodir prenosi tu poruku a usta će je posvjedočiti, opet malaksalost što dolazi kao pokrov koji mazi umorno tijelo, ali samo tako linije mogu biti precizne, oblici koji se razaznaju iako je pala zavjesa, očuvani tragovi ukrasnog rasporeda, baronica je sada fantazam koji se nalazi gdje god da se okrenem, gdje god da krenem, njene oči ispunjavaju mrak kojem se predajem, ledeno, svečano bljedilo mog lica je maska neophodna za ovaj ritual na brijegu sudbine, spavaćica se podiže dok se kapci spuštaju, njen ledeni dah je na mojim grudima, hladno prizivahladno, alabaster zahtijeva alabaster, površina će napuknuti kao kad popuca zlatni pehar, neophodna greška da bi se kasnije prepoznala prava vrijednost i autentičnost mada obožavani predmet nikada neće biti izložen na aukciji, to napuknuće je samo varljivi bol, probijanje granice, baroničina glava se spušta kao što se u ovoj drugoj noći ja spuštam pred sličnim ciljem, različitasu središta ali je ista putanja zadovoljstva, oponašanje užitka koje nas je preobrazilo, koje nas premješta iz jednog u drugo vrijeme sa najmanjim prelazom, ma kako šav bio vidljiv tekstil se neće rasparati, ma koliko bilo veliko skretanje struktura će se održati, priča je mračna komora u kojoj svaki glas dobija svoj odziv, eho drži stvari na okupi, kao što baronica drži moje tijelo u najnježnijem stavu, nježnost je vrlina da se primi ono što je neizbježno, njena glava se spušta na grudi da bi ostavila dvije tačke, modre tačke, crvene tačke, tačke i dalje uske za prodiruće ocnjake, moja kosa počinje da leprša na

vjetru, plavo je crno u ponoćnom igrokazu, za trenutak osjećam da mi više ništa ne pripada, kao kad presuši česma u dvorištu, grimizne kapi koje se skupljaju na otvorenim dlanovima kipova davnašnjih boginja, mermer i tečnost, bol se uvijek zadržava kao dvotačka nakon koje slijedi poenta, ugriz može biti signatura vrijednija od otiska prsta na objektu koji se posljednji stavlja na policu privatnog muzeja, koga u predvečerje pažljivo razgledamo dok svjetlo unosi profinjenu jezu što obuzima tijelo a um ostavlja dovoljno razbistrenim, potpis ostvaren drugačijim sredstvima, ali njegovo značenje je neraskriveno, svedeno na šifre i simbole, realnost je samo podsjetnik a bol ima boju grimiza, vijugava linija koja se pomjera sa dahom, pitam se da li smijem da podignem pogled dok su zjenice neposlušne, blažena inercija koja mi zabacuje glavu unazad i opet će me baronica obuhvatiti, mogu da čujem vodu u podnožju, ritam koji će me kasnije prihvatiti i odnijeti, krugovi što se hitro udaljavaju od središta tamo gdje je bila nanijeta rana, sada će nam se krv pomiješati, kao dva premaza na slici u najdaljem uglu starog dvorca, paučina na rubovima je samo varka, kičica donosi svježinu na uokvirenom rodoslovu, krv kaplje kao pijesak u klepsidri u noći transformacije, mjesečina se više ne razliva, ona pulsira, i priroda slijedi crveni trag, skarlet koji je izgubio miris i prešao u misteriozni krasnopis, gubimo samo ono što smo morali da izgubimo, baronica se odvaja od mojih grudi postepeno, svaka pupčana vrpca se na kraju pokida, čini mi se da ću se zateturati, ali i dalje stojim uspravno, podržana možda vjetrom, možda jednim predugim stiskom, spavačica sada prikriva da je tu bio razvratni uljez, još posljednji čin i tmine će biti moj pratilac u budućim epizodama, jer priča inije ništa drugo do niz zalijepljenih sličica koje pružaju iluziju kretanja, život jednostavno više nije adekvatna riječ, to osjećam i prije nego što se ceremonija okonča, prije nego što sa litice direktno osmotrim ambis koji me čeka, na mojim usnama počiva zahvalnost dok baronica pruža ruku da još jednom zajedno uđemo u završnu fazu sumraka, što se više približavamo sudbini to korak postaje sporiji, tijelo je teško kada je duša laka, gravitacija uslišava molbu pada na ovoj strmoj pristanskoj litici, brodolomi su najbolje osmatračnice, pratim baronicu odlučnije nego ikad prije, njena crna leđa su tajnovit monument, njena plava kosa uzburkani val, boje spokoja i vrtloga, upokojena pa razbuđena strast, na vrhu baronica dobija posljednju nijansu na njenom oreolu, tamnoplavi obrisi, ona zastaje da me još jednom pogleda, oči joj rastu kao kad zmija proguta plijen, spremna sam da to lice zabilježim kao nedostupnu ikonu kraj visokog vitraža, ne bih se okrenula ni da iznenada čujem majčinski glas, ni da me pozove umorni otac, oni ništa i ne slute u hotelu, jutro će za njih biti nepodnošljiva kazna, ali ja ću nastaviti svojim putem, uvijek između sjenovitih pejzaža, tamo gdje je tmina odlučujući valer, sada kada me baronica predaje drugačijem usudu, posljednji put me uzima u naručje, prislanjam glavu na njene grudi koje su se uvećale, natekle od nove krvi, čujem njeno srce kao spori signal, troma i veličanstvena raskoš, najveće bogatstvo se nikada ne dijeli, nju već obuzima san dok me pušta da padnem u gotsko more, za trenutak mi se čini da zaustavljena lebdim u vazduhu, da se svijet spušta a da ja tvrdoglavo opstajem u tom ništavilu, iz mog ugla baroničino lice postaje beskrajno lijepo lice strankinje, kao što je bilo i na početku kada sam je ugledala ispod prozora, crte koje ću uvijek moći da prepoznam mada ih više neću sresti, ljepota i traje i opstaje, predsmrtni osjećaj ne vara, gotovo da lelujam dok konačno pad ne preuzme kontrolu nad prirodom koja me okružuje, sa mnom padaju i mrak i vjetar i pijesak, jedino uspravna je kosa koju podižu strah i saosjećanje, moment pune svijesti jer jeza oštri čula kao nož koji se zabada u omlitavljelo tijelo, pad nikada neće izbrisati sjećanja, porijeklo će odzvanjati u svakoj pori, u udaru vene u vratu, u pogledu koji će zastakliti plavo oko, more me obavija kao tkanina za čuvanje pokojnika, pjena će se odmah raspršiti, kada otvorim oči biću u dubini, drugačija je tama podvodnog prostranstva, struja me tjera na površinu, kada otvorim usta da istinski udahnem vazduh, u njima osjećam slanoću ne vode koja je prodrla

figuru, kad pređem preko nje zavodljivom rukom i zadrhtim od apsolutnog blaženstva posljednjeg dodira nježnosti pred finale još jedne epizode, usred bure već morate zamišljati završne poteze i naslađivati se njihovim dometima, opsjednutost ne prestaje ni kada se ostvari cilj, opsjednutost ostaje i nakon što je postignut cilj (...)

In the Casemate

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My first experiment with modern translation of the poetry of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko (1814–1861) was conducted mid-2021, six months before Russia invaded Ukraine, the country of birth Shevchenko and I share. I am an Early Career Researcher experimenting with translating older works into the language of today. Can contemporary translations make the similarities between Shevchenko’s time and ours more obvious? My initial translations were influenced by my apprehension in presenting a work that alludes to ongoing Russification of Ukraine, but Ukraine’s continued fight for cultural autonomy is now a global conversation and I find myself feeling freer to be political in my translation work.

Ukrainian national poet Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko was born into serfdom in the small town Moryntsi, Cherkasy Oblast, at the time under imperial Russian rule. He died in exile in St Petersburg. Despite the attempts to phase out Ukrainian culture, Shevchenko wrote his poetry in Ukrainian. His activism for Ukraine’s cultural autonomy led to his exile in 1845. Nevertheless, Shevchenko continued to advocate for Ukrainian culture by adding his unique mark on it, a mark that is still revered today. Shevchenko’s legacy lives on, with statues in his honour standing in most major cities in Ukraine.

The poems in his suite titled *In the Casemate* (1847) speak of his exile and describe scenes of peasant Ukrainian life. The poems are about the trauma of watching one’s country torn apart from afar, and the emotional connection one has to their homeland; such a connection cannot be severed by distance. *In the Casemate* continues to feel relevant to the Ukrainian identity, particularly in a time of active war.

In *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, Edwin Gentzler advocates for a shift in translation studies to allow more creative approaches: “The goals of translation [have] shifted The aim of a new generation of translators is less to achieve linguistic accuracy and more to facilitate communication” (19). My experiment in modern translation is influenced by Gentzler’s work in post-translation.

My work is also inspired by Maria Davhana Headley’s 2019 modernized translation of *Beowulf*, particularly her use of colloquial language to give the classical text a modern relevance. Furthermore, I am inspired by Tracy K. Smith’s translations of Yi Lei’s poetry, which take certain liberties to allow the feminist poetry from 1980s communist China to be relevant to a contemporary American woman. Both poets aim to give their contemporary readers the opportunity to experience the older source text as though it were written for them today, thus exploring the original’s ongoing relevance.

Shevchenko’s oeuvre is a masterful example of nineteenth-century verse poetry, and has previously been translated into English by John Weir, Vera Rich and others, as well as into other languages, such as Eugène Guillevic’s translations into French. Many previous translations have dutifully followed the rhyme, scansion and tetrameter of the originals. I take a different approach, using free verse and contemporary English language to give the poems a new, contemporary identity. Translating the poetry into a contemporary poetic sensibility exposes that the source text’s imagery and key themes are still as relevant to the modern Ukrainian experience as they were to Shevchenko and his peers. As I digressed from some of the nineteenth-century stylistic choices, such as rhyme and tetrameter, it was important to stay as close as possible to the original flows of words and ideas; my translations stay as close, line-

by-line, to the original as possible. I believe the alterations I have made during this experiment are respectful to the originals.

In Poem III I focus on replicating Shevchenko's nuanced punctuation choices and avoid changing the sentence structures. Faithful punctuation and line-by-line translation has allowed some of the ambiguities of the original to remain. For example, for lines 14–16 of the original, some translators have interpreted these as father asking son to pray for the country, while for others it is father asking son to pray for Shevchenko. My interpretation lands on the father asking the son to pray for Shevchenko, however I hope that both interpretations can be read into my translation.

Furthermore, in free verse, Poem III has come to resemble spoken word poetry, which is often associated with political activism through poetic expression. Spoken word poems traditionally “linger on personal and political themes, the most common of them being the expression of marginalized identity” (Somers-Willett 7). This new poetic identity feels appropriate to the original, as Shevchenko is grieving his exile, and the marginalization of both himself and Ukrainian culture.

Poem XII was chosen for the translation experiment for being particularly pertinent to the immigrant identity, which I find an intriguing theme to explore in the process of modernising the poetry. The source text is about enforced exile; Shevchenko is probably speaking to his fellow Ukrainian activists and artists. In a modern context, we can allow Shevchenko to speak to us instead. Translating Poem XII into contemporary, conversational language allows it to be read as the immigrant experience. Particularly lines 6–7, which evoke the internalized need to respect the land where one has ended up though it will never truly be home, something immigrants often feel we must do in our adoptive countries.

Poem VIII is a description of peaceful Ukrainian peasant life. Perhaps it is a memory, perhaps it is Shevchenko's imagining. For this translation, I have kept rhyme as a device in order to juxtapose it to the other two poems, which use the first person, making them feel more intimate for the reader. Poem VIII feels like a painting, like a hazy memory for a Ukrainian reader, and a new scene for a non-Ukrainian person. Far away, we are not invited in but to observe it. By keeping the rhyme scheme, these elements of separation and wonder are kept.

My life as a Ukrainian immigrant influences my reading of Shevchenko, and my subsequent translation of his work. While I have not experienced political exile, I relate to the distance, longing and love that are key themes in the poems of *In the Casemate*, and find his work agonisingly relevant to the Ukrainian experience today, especially in a time of active war with Russia. This relevance is what I sought to highlight through my modern translations. The liberties taken in this translation experiment were done with the utmost care and respect for the original and the significance they hold for Ukrainians. I hope reframing Shevchenko's poetry for a contemporary English reader brings with it a new perspective on the contemporary Ukrainian experience.

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Translated by Iryna Byelyayeva

РОЕМ III

Мені однаково, чи буду
Я жить в Україні, чи ні.
Чи хто згадає, чи забуде
Мене в снігу на чужині –
Однаковісінько мені.
В неволі виріс меж чужими,
І, не оплаканий своїми,
В неволі, плачучи, умру,
І все з собою заберу,
Малого сліду не покину
На нашій славній Україні,
На нашій – не своїй землі.
І не пом'яне батько з сином,
Не скаже синові: “Молись,
Молися, сину: за Вкраїну
Його замучили колись”.
Мені однаково, чи буде
Той син молитися, чи ні...
Та не однаково мені,
Як Україну злії люде
Присплять, лукаві, і в огні
Її, окраденую, збудять...
Ох, не однаково мені.

РОЕМ VIII

Садок вишневий коло хати,
Хрущі над вишнями гудуть,
Плугатарі з плугами йдуть,
Співають ідучи дівчата,
А матері вечерять ждуть.

Сем'я вечеря коло хати,
Вечірня зіронька встає.
Дочка вечерять подає,
А мати хоче научати,
Так соловейко не дає.

Поклала мати коло хати
Маленьких діточок своїх;

POEM III

It doesn't bother me, if I
live in Ukraine, or not.
If anyone remembers, or forgets
me in the snow of a foreign place –
all that doesn't bother me.
Imprisoned among strangers grew
and, not cried for by my own,
among strangers, amidst tears, will die,
and take it all with me,
leave not a trace behind
in our glorious Ukraine,
on land that is not theirs.
Father and son won't pay respects,
he won't say: “pray,
pray, my boy: for his country
he has been brutalized before”.
It doesn't bother me, if that
son prays, or not ...
What bothers me,
is to see vile people hypnotize Ukraine
with cunning, and set ablaze
robbed, wake her once again...
Ah, that bothers me.

POEM VIII

Cherry orchard by the hut,
chafers buzz around the fruit,
ploughmen trudge their faithful route,
as children skip and sing,
and mothers wait for supper to begin.

Family gathers for their evening meal
up above, a bright star rises
daughter serves as mother criticizes
her harsh words swiftly chilled
by a nightingale's sweet trill.

By the house a mother puts
her babies down to rest

Сама заснула коло їх.
Затихло все, тільки дівчата
Та соловейко не затих.

ПОЕМ XII

Чи ми ще зійдемося знову?
Чи вже навіки розійшлись?
І слово правди і любові
В степи і дебрі рознесли!
Нехай і так. Не наша мати,
А довелося поважати.
То воля Господа. Годіть!
Смиріться, моліться Богу
І згадуйте один другого.
Свою Україну любіть,
Любіть її... Во время люте,
В остатню тяжкую минуту
За неї Господа моліть.

sleeps with them in a loving nest.
All grows calm, just the children
and the nightingale sing on.

ПОЕМ XII

Do you think we'll meet again?
Or is this farewell for good?
The word of truth and love
we've sowed over steppes and wilds!
Well, that's that way it is then.
Not our Mother but we abide.
You can't fight fate. Godspeed!
Resign yourselves, and pray
think of one another often.
Love your dear Ukraine,
love her ... even in the angry times,
in the final miseries
pray for her to God above.

Fireside Chat:
Mihaela Cristescu in conversation with three Romanian literary translators

MIHAELA CRISTESCU

Mihaela Cristescu (Mihaela): I recently had the privilege of talking to three accomplished literary translators about promoting and celebrating Romanian literature into other languages, most notably English. Adrian George Săhlean, Daniela Andronache and Marius Chelaru shared their experiences as translators and writers. I'd like to start with you, Adrian, and ask about your expertise in translating poetry, short stories, memoirs, plays and children's literature. You are well known in Romania and the United States of America. We would be interested to hear your perspective on translating Romanian literature into other languages. Can you share your thoughts with us?

Adrian George Săhlean (Adrian): I believe my notoriety as a literary translator in the US is somewhat exaggerated, even if I get more recognition of late in Romania for my renditions of Eminescu's works. When we consider the exposure of literary translations in the US from all languages, not just Romanian, the picture is not encouraging. Only 3% of all published books are translations (even worse for poetry, 3% of that 3%) – the market only follows economic supply and demand. Moreover, the sheer volume of what is being published makes it hard for the reader to choose: *l'embarras du choix* as the French say.

A look at the process of translation may put everything into a better perspective. Since identities of vocabulary, metaphors and idiomatic expressions between any two languages are *de facto* impossible, literary translations attempt to find equivalents for them in the target language. It is said that in translating prose, you are the writer's slave, in translating poetry you are the poet's rival. I find this to be true even for blank verse poetry, while the translation of prose is somewhat more approachable. However, meter-and-rhyme poetry rendition is by far the most challenging, because poetic creativity depends on the ability to associate within the extensive vocabulary inventory of that language while observing the mentality of its cultural tradition. Which is perhaps why the best literary translations have been accomplished by poets and writers into their native tongue.

It is encouraging that adequate renditions from Romanian contemporary literature into English – especially of blank verse – are being made by translators who have become proficient in a second language. A growing number of these translations get published now in international journals or appear in cyberspace. Unfortunately, the reality of translating meter-and-rhyme poetry from Romanian, classic or modern, is rather daunting. Romanian and English have diverging mentalities concerning form, style and structure, and the well-meaning attempts to translate Romanian prosody into English have been uniformly awkward. They stand out like sore thumbs, mostly because of the limited linguistic ability in the adopted English idiom. Stringing words together and forcing them to rhyme in artificial meter does not rise to a level that could impress a native speaker as “poetry” and so, ultimately, these attempts do a disservice to the Romanian literary heritage.

Mihaela: Daniela, what are your thoughts on the publication of Romanian literature translated in other languages? Are there any magazines or publishing houses in Romania targeted for translations?

Daniela Andronache (Daniela): When it comes to Romanian literature translated in other languages, I am very much in favour of it. I also think that the well-known Romanian writers deserve to be known in as many countries as possible. Obviously, this depends on the publishing politics and the translation possibilities that the Romanian publishing houses have. If I were to generalize, I would say that the Romanian Ministry of Culture should treat this matter as a cultural priority. As regards your second question, yes, there are several dedicated Romanian literary magazines that publish translations of classical and contemporary Romanian authors into other languages. An example is *Poezia*, a prestigious literary magazine published under the aegis of The Romanian Writers Union. The Romanian Cultural Institute developed a programme of literary translations and compiled a list of Romanian writers whose works are proposed for translation (<https://www.romania-insider.com/icr-translations-2021-dec-2020>).

Mihaela: Marius, you are the founder of *Kadō, Calea Poeziei / Kadō, the Poetry path: Review of Euro-East Poetry, Poetical Culture and Spirituality*; and co-founder of *Carmina Balcanica: Review of South-East European Spirituality and Culture*, and of *Doina, Revue de Littérature, Civilisation et Culture Universelle* (bilingual, French-Romanian, Paris). From your perspective, what are the focus and relevance of these publications in the literary translation landscape?

Marius Chelaru (Marius): First, for the pleasure of reading and understanding a culture, through its decision makers, these are not so close, more or less, to what is considered to be “mainstream”. Publications such as the ones you mentioned can fill a gap, by offering something that big publishers or perhaps “official channels” are not always able or willing to offer. Such publications may give readers from all walks of life a different representation of a cultural and literary space. Ask yourself for example how much you could learn about the literature of another country, through translations featured in publications such as these.

Mihaela: Daniela, you are a teacher, a poet, an essayist and a translator. Tell us about your first translation project.

Daniela: In 2000 I met Germain Droogenbroodt, a Flemish poet, who participated in an International Poetry Festival in the city of Iași, Romania. He had his own publishing house in Spain, his country of residence. At the time, he had already published his collections of poetry translated in different European languages and he asked me to translate his poems into Romanian, which I did. And so, in 2002, my first translation, a collection of poems titled *The Mirror Writing*, was published in Romania.

Mihaela: Marius, you are a writer, a literary critic, a translator and an editor. When did you consider becoming a literary translator, and what role did your professors play in this decision?

Marius: I do not consider myself, and in fact I am not a translator in the classic sense. I started translating because I was working for several literary journals, I was travelling to many places, and I was meeting poets little known in my country. I believe professors play a very important role in everyone’s formative years, and not just in relation to translation. But for me, as I said, becoming a literary translator was not necessarily a goal.

Mihaela: Adrian, you are known for your translations of Mihai Eminescu's poems. Eminescu (1850 – 1889) is recognized as the foremost Romanian lyric poet. Your translations earned several international awards, including the *UNESCO Gold Prize* (2000), the *LiterArt XXI*

Grand Prize (2002) and the *National Centre for Eminescu's Studies Award for Translation* (2016). How important are translation prizes for literary translators?

Adrian: Any recognition for the labour of love which is poetry translation keeps the flame going! The slow recognition at home in Romania detracted somewhat from my contentment. The *LiterArt XXI Grand Prize* (2002) happened in the US, while the *Centre for Eminescu Studies* (2016) granted me the award for the 2nd edition of a volume published in Boston 10 years before, overlooked at the time in Romania. Although I had had success with Eminescu recitals in both US and Canada during the previous 15 years, including the staging of *The Legend of the Evening Star* in Manhattan in 2005 and 2008, my first recital in Bucharest did not happen until 2018. This recital was the by-product of my award for *Migălosul Cronofag/The Painstaking Chronophage* (2014), a collection of essays on prosodic translation voted Book of the Year by my fellow literary translators at the Romanian Writers Union. The recognition from my peers was more rewarding to me than any other prize, alongside the validation of my translations by native speakers – since they were done for their benefit.

Mihaela: Daniela, you have received an important award for your latest collection of poetry. How important is it for a translator to receive such recognition of their work?

Daniela: Yes, I have been awarded the Debut Prize for my collection of poetry *Cireșe în pârg* [Ripe cherries] by the Municipality of Iași and the Iași Cultural Centre. This kind of recognition is undoubtedly important for any artist because it is testament to the artist's value and talent. As a translator, the prize I have been awarded entitles me to think that the more poetical sense I am endowed with, the more successful my translations will be.

Mihaela: Marius, you have been the recipient of many awards in the last few years, and I'd like to highlight two translation awards, the *Cultural Association Duiliu Zamfirescu Award*, Focșani, Romania (2005) and *Maison Naaman pour la Culture Award*, Beirut, Liban (2006). In what ways do such prizes support translators in their work?

Marius: Personally, I am not that much interested in translation prizes, because my main goal is not connected with strategies to win prizes, but I was happy to be awarded a prize for my translations, which include translations of Romanian poetry into English and translations of foreign poets into Romanian. I believe every translator feels inspired when their work is recognized. In Romania, as far as I know, there are some prizes for translation.

Mihaela: Adrian, you hold a Master's Degree in English and Spanish from the University of Bucharest. How did you discover your passion for translation? How did your professors inspire it?

Adrian: I'll get to my teachers in a moment. I believe I was always fascinated by how languages expressed familiar things and realities with other words. The attraction first came in the form of music – from an early age I could remember song lyrics almost automatically if the melody caught my ear. That was true at the time for Romanian and also for the Italian, French and English songs heard on the radio. When I joined the Radio TV children's choir, we also sang in Russian and German. What was being sung was first understood as separate words, gradually expanding to larger meaningful units. I have no doubt that songs were the key factor in my decision to study philology and languages. I could speculate that my attraction was first the music of languages and, subconsciously, the mentalities of languages as well.

My professors at the University of Bucharest, in the English department, were clearly role models, fanning smouldering embers. Some of them gained recognition for translating English literature into Romanian, ranging from Old English and Chaucer, to the complete works of Shakespeare, to the Romantic poets. Dan Duțescu and Leon Levițchi were my favourite translators. In fact, Levițchi became my academic supervisor when I did my doctoral research on *Pitfalls of literary translation from English to Romanian*. In retrospect, it looks almost like foreshadowing my later life. The other important Romanian Anglicists, Dumitru Chițoran, Andrei Bantaș, and Adrian Nicolescu, who were part of my dissertation committee, were supportive of my ideas on British euphemism versus American English overstatement, or my criticisms of questionable “solutions”, even from established translators, that I deemed inadequate. So, with seeds planted during my university studies, after immigrating to the US in 1985, I took the path less travelled of finding pitfalls of the literary “retroversion”, the term I prefer to describe translation from Romanian into English. Living among native speakers of English, I gradually fine-tuned my understanding of the limits of translatability. These were systematized in *Migălosul Cronofag/The Painstaking Chronophage*, in which I reflect on the enormous challenges for translators in tackling meter-and-rhyme in Eminescu’s poetry.

Mihaela: Daniela, how do you feel about the intersection between being a teacher and a translator?

Daniela: Personally speaking, on the one hand, the fact that I am an English teacher has been extremely relevant for my translation work in the sense that it has enabled me to have a profound and subtle understanding of the English words, phrases and idioms. I think I was able to render the meaning of the English poems into Romanian in the most accurate way possible. On the other hand, being a native Romanian speaker has enabled me to do fairly good translations into English – my target language.

Mihaela: I’d like to finish our virtual fireside chat by asking what your top three reasons would be to encourage young translators to study, read and translate Romanian literature into English.

Adrian: I would not use the word “study” because I believe the appeal to study Romanian literature is a matter of individual choice. I’m sure you have come across such self-motivated people, albeit limited in number. Personal recommendations of good translations to personal contacts might be more important than any argument. I would stick to good renditions of blank verse poems and contemporary short stories or novels, maybe even throw some movies in the mix. There is common practice on the internet by Romanians in the diaspora to extol each new attempt from classics in meter-and-rhyme. Driven by “patriotic” and nostalgic pride, no doubt in love with the original, people who post on the internet may have a limited understanding of the quality of the English rendition and their efforts become counterproductive. Mediocre samples actually discourage further explorations into a literature that might seem mediocre.

I am encouraged that the Romanian Cultural Institute, literary circles, magazines and local libraries have become more active in translating and promoting Romanian literature during the pandemic, through Zoom meetings. I believe they will remain standard reach-out modalities in the next few years. Various web sites are also trying to help promote Romanian literature in translation. Literary translators will continue with their labour of love. It should be only too obvious that without their work we wouldn’t understand the beauty of other cultures, and get to know their best writers. Who, among readers, have read the masterpieces of the world’s best authors in the original?

I brought with me to the States my love for Romanian culture and the melancholy for leaving it behind. I discovered here, with sadness, that Eminescu was, and continues to be, very little known in English. I've made it my mission to offer the English readership a glimpse into his original sound and depth of meaning, which rivals the world's best Romantic poets.

I believe that only a limited number of Eminescu's poems can be translated into English as meter-and-rhyme poetry, unfortunately. There are few convincing translations available, and I would confidently suggest to readers my collection *The Legend of the Evening Star & Other Poems and Prose*, now available in print-on-demand in Australia, as a good introduction to Eminescu's great work.

Daniela: I would tell young translators around the world that the study of Romanian literature would connect them with the genuine Romanian ethos, would offer them unexpected insights into a profound and original literary field, and would reveal the unique character of the people living in Dacia Felix (now Romania), the ancient name of the province Dacia during the reign of the Roman emperor Traian.

Marius: First, being appreciated, because translators need to see that somebody is really interested in their work. And support, of course. And this is a debate that is not only about translation, but about how magazines receive and publish translations, the type of translations. And it's also about how publishers in Romania and state-owned institutions are supporting this important creative work.

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Review of *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations*

MAGDALENA MULLEK

Chitnis, Rajendra, and Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Rhian Atkin, and Zoran Milutinović, editors. *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations*. Liverpool UP, 2020.

Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations is an edited volume that brings together a wide range of scholarship on the translation of literatures written in languages that are disadvantaged in contemporary literary flows. The majority of literary production flows from the Anglophone centre, [sometimes referred to as the “Greenwich Meridian of Literature” (1)], to the periphery, on which most non-English language literatures find themselves. In their introduction, the editors note a significant trade imbalance between the centre and the periphery with almost 50% of translations in the world being made from English, but only 6% going into English (2). The authors of the thirteen essays in this volume present a variety of strategies that translators and publishers of literatures on the periphery have employed in the past and are employing now to gain visibility (or reduce their invisibility) on the world literary scene.

Although these essays cover topics as diverse as the literatures and countries they represent, some recurrent motifs unite these underdogs in their struggle for visibility. Throughout the volume, the authors grapple with defining and labelling their respective literatures. In the introduction they are described as belonging to “nations in cultural, economic, and geographic peripheries” (2), elsewhere as literatures written in less commonly spoken languages, literatures from less familiar traditions, or underrepresented literatures. This dancing around a variety of terms captures the difficulty in discussing, let alone being, one of these literatures, and highlights the tension between being small yet striving for relevance, appeal, and serious consideration. Smaller literatures must always be discussed sensitively and aimed at striking a delicate balance that does not marginalize them and push them further to the periphery. Fortunately, this book does an excellent job of presenting these literatures not as victims, but as “active, imaginative, practical, and astute” (4).

A common thread throughout small-nation literatures is that translation has been and continues to be much more than a means of reaching a larger audience than their home audience. In his essay, Rajendra Chitnis points out that the favourable international reception of Jaroslav Hašek’s *The Good Soldier Švejk* forced a critical re-evaluation of the piece in the Czech Republic, and a subsequent acceptance and adoption of the national image presented in the book (80). Similarly, Paschalis Nikolaou argues that the Greek poet C.P. Cavafy’s international status and the imitations of his work spurred a re-evaluation of his poetry at home (180). In both cases, translation became a means of legitimizing a work or an author not only on the international literary scene, but also on the domestic one.

On the national level, the translation of literature has been used by small nations for over a century as part of a broader strategy of cultural diplomacy. Both Rajendra Chitnis and Ondřej Vimr talk about the Czechoslovak government’s attempts at creating a particular image of the country in the eyes of the UK, France, and USA during the interwar period. Irwin Wolters describes a similar attempt at national image projection by the Dutch government in the post-war period with the establishment of the Foundation for the Promotion and Translation of Dutch Literary Works and its *Bibliotheca Neerlandica* project.

Using cultural diplomacy through translation as a springboard, Ondřej Vimr challenges the generally accepted theory that most translation is demand-driven and produced upon request of a target culture which needs to fill some gap in its own literary production. Vimr makes a strong case for the importance of supply-driven translation for smaller literatures. While the demand-driven model assumes that the target culture is aware of other source cultures and can therefore pick and choose works for translation based on its own gaps, when it comes to small-nation literatures, this assumption falls short. Oftentimes, the countries themselves, let alone their literatures, are hardly known in the target culture, therefore the target culture does not even recognize that there is anything to be demanded. Supply-driven translation seeks to overcome this problem. A number of the essays in this volume highlight the role that various government institutions play in promoting their country's literature in translation and serving as suppliers of translations to target cultures. To name a few, there is The Foundation in the Netherlands, The Instituto Ramón Llull for the promotion of the Catalan language and culture abroad, and five different agencies in Slovenia, but some variant of this type of institution can be found in almost all European nations.

In the institution-supported supply-driven model, translators often serve as experts for selecting translations, and some well-connected translators can end up as gatekeepers of their source literature. Richard M. Mansell gives a great example of this type of translator as gatekeeper practice by describing the efforts of Peter Bush, who has served as a link between Catalan literature and the English language market by publishing 16 works in translation since 2007 (132-134). Zoran Milutinović goes even further and argues that a translator as gatekeeper can affect the socio-political agenda of a country by lending a voice, and therefore legitimacy, to one side of a conflict, or alternately, suppressing the other side by choosing not to translate the work of its supporters (28-30).

Besides the recurrent themes of the difficulty in labelling small-nation literatures, cultural diplomacy, supply-driven translation, and translators as gatekeepers, this book also introduces several niche strategies for the promotion of lesser-known literatures. These include: the long-tail approach, described by Richard M. Mansell, where the translator is a key promoter to target culture publishers as well as readers (142); media convergence described by Paulina Drewniak in her discussion of transmedia franchises, in which “stories unfold across multiple media platforms” (210) thus attracting non-traditional audiences to the text (211); and translanguaging, described by Josianne Mamo as writers producing heterolingual texts and attracting a multilingual readership (229).

As these various approaches demonstrate, *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations* makes a compelling argument that small-nation literatures are astute and imaginative not only in their content, but also in their ability to find ways of reaching audiences outside their own borders. The cultural hegemony of the centre may be difficult to overcome, but these small European nations are making inroads, and little by little, their voices are gaining prominence on the international literary scene. The very fact that a book such as this one can be written about them proves that their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

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Review of Momo Kapor's *The Magic of Belgrade* (translated by Ljiljana Bajić)

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Kapor, Momo. *The Magic of Belgrade*. Translated from Serbian by Ljiljana Bajić. Knjiga-komerc, 2008.

One of the symbols of Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, are the writers who devoted their works to depicting its life, culture and citizens, and among the most notable of them was Momo Kapor (1937-2010). He was not only a writer, but also a renowned painter, and he illustrated his books himself – which rendered them irresistible for all readers, especially Belgraders. My review will focus on the translation of Kapor's book *Magija Beograda* into English, as *The Magic of Belgrade* (both published in 2008). Kapor was famous for his works on Serbian culture and mentality, so it is obvious that this book abounds in culture-specific items which are always a challenge to translators. Due to the limited length of the review, the analysis will be reduced to commenting on strategies used for translating selected examples of words and phrases denoting food in the short chapter Pastries (Kolači), which range all the way from omission or reduction to amplification or explicitation, as well as from domestication to foreignization.

The fact that is of utmost importance in this regard, as will be demonstrated below, is that Belgrade is situated on the Balkan Peninsula, between the East and the West, and has thus been under both Oriental and Occidental cultural influences. In the chapter selected for analysis, Kapor himself emphasizes the significance of cultural differences reflected on the food canvas: "I see the pastry shops' windows as battlefields of historical struggles lost and won. *Baklava* next to a Parisian tartlet – you can see that only in Belgrade! What a clash between the East and the West, what a Waterloo!" (319). This duality is quite evident in the translated text. Namely, the translator, who by and large did a very good job, intentionally used mapping or transference for most of the Oriental pastries, which are all – regardless of the translation procedure – marked by italic, and cultural equivalence or even explicitation for those coming from the West, thus deftly balancing between foreignization and domestication, respectively.

The best example for foreignization – the procedure used for the translation of Oriental pastries – is the following sentence: "When we finally threw the Turks out, we kept their *baklava*, *tulumbe*, *kadaif*, *tufahije* and *ćeten-alva*" (319-320), whereas instances of domestication – used in the case of Western pastries – are easily found soon after: "After having expelled them, we turned to Europe, naturally. [...] Belgrade housewives used to make quince 'cheese', almond puffs, ladies' fingers, walnut rolls, vanilla cookies, 'princess-doughnuts'" (320). For the latter, the translator found cultural equivalence, so these terms have become amalgamated in the text and do not catch the eye of the reader. On the other hand, the former is not only transferred, but also denoted by italic letters, which makes them all the more noticeable and foreign-looking – maybe even exotic. Thus, pastries turn into genuine cultural references: names of the Western ones are symbolic of something refined and sophisticated, whereas the Oriental ones signify the centuries of Ottoman Empire's colonial rule in Serbia and their own 'otherness' within both the source and the target texts (TT).

Unlike Newmark, who defines transference as 'transcription' and reckons that it "includes transliteration, which relates to the conversion of different alphabets" (81), some other authors make a distinction between transcription and transliteration, on the one hand, and

transference proper, on the other. Namely, whereas the former includes certain modifications of the translated word, in the latter case the word is copied as is. Therefore, Hlebec has a separate chapter on "Integral loans" – which is how he names transferred words, and explains that such a word is "shifted from the source text completely unchanged, just the same as it is written or pronounced in the original, hence, with zero adaptation" (15); while Prčić calls this kind of neologisms 'raw' and purports that they are not only taken over from the source language (SL) "directly, without any modification of their written form" (122), but also "entirely unadjusted on the level of orthography (since they retain the source orthographic identification)" (123).

Furthermore, "Some authorities deny that this is a translation procedure, but no other term is appropriate if a translator decides to use an SL word for his text" (81), emphasizes Newmark, but he also adds that this item "in principle should be a SL cultural word whose referent is peculiar to the SL culture" (81). Similarly, Baker simply asserts transferred words and expressions within the chapter "Translation using a loan word", and stresses that "This strategy is particularly common in dealing with culture-specific items" (31).

Of course, there are certain exceptions in the selected chapter that prove the rule, but they are mostly found in the case of food items that have become an inseparable part of the Serbian daily menu, although they originated in the Orient. The best example for this is certainly the famous 'burek' (288), "without which no beginning of a new day can be imagined in Yugoslavia [i.e., Serbia]", specifies Novačić and states that: "Just as there is English, so there is Yugoslav breakfast. It is a burek" (82). In this instance, the translator opted for cultural equivalence and translated the word as 'cheese pies' (320), followed by literal translation in the case of 'pogačice sa čvarcima' (288) – which have become 'pastries with cracklings' (320) in the target text. In one sentence, although the Oriental gastronomic delight 'sutlijaš' could have been translated by its cultural equivalence 'rice pudding', it was simply omitted, and the phrase: "prete da podave ono malo slatke Evrope u centru, da je udave u užglom sutlijašu" (290) was translated as: "threaten to drown what little has remained of the sweet Europe in downtown Belgrade" (322). On the contrary, for the cake that is unavoidable at the most important feast in Serbian culture – the so-called 'slava' or a family's patron saint day – the translator even used amplification and translated 'slavski kolači' (291) as 'big round cakes for patron saints' days' (323), thus underlying the importance of this culture-specific word.

Nevertheless, most of the Oriental food items are both transferred, together with the Serbian diacritic signs (e.g., š, ć, ž), and italicized – besides those already mentioned above (*baklava*, *tulumbe*, *kadaif*, *tufahije*, *ćeten-alva*), the examples for this procedure are also: *sudžuk* (320), *urmašice* (322), *salep* (322), *boza* (322), and some of those are seen several times. All of this proves that the translator made an effort to abide by the principle set by the writer himself towards the end of the chapter: "I am all for a peaceful coexistence between *Turkish delight* and *Sachertorte*, and I would like to make it public by beating on a *drum layer cake* with forks, as I have always had certain misgivings about all reforms, including the *reform layer cake*!" (322-323) In this chapter, at least, the translator successfully managed to implement 'a peaceful coexistence' between the East and the West, translating for the foreign reader not only the names of food items, but also their cultural references and the wealth of historic influences Serbia has been exposed to – both from the Orient and the Occident.

Moreover, the translator deftly applied a foreignizing strategy, as Hatim and Munday put it, "through lexical borrowings that preserve SL items in the TT" (230), by using foreign – in this case Serbian – terms "in order to introduce the flavour of the SL culture into [the] translation" (149), and borrowing Serbian cultural items "to give a foreign character to the TT" (335). In such a way, the translated text remained "tied in a specific manner to the source

linguaculture" (House 89), as proof that – in order to produce a successful translation, contrary to Venuti's opinion – at times the translator cannot and should not remain invisible.

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Review of “Translating Slovak Literature into Foreign Languages”

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Pánisová, Ľudmila, editor. “Translating Slovak Literature into Foreign Languages: Achievements, Problems, Perspectives.” *Bridge*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2021.
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This special issue of the *Bridge* journal is dedicated to the translation of Slovak literature into foreign languages from various perspectives. The issue suggests that, on a global scale, the significance of national literatures depends more on outward than inward translation.

The aim of the introductory article, “The Shadow Heroes of Translation: On Translators of Slovak Literature into English” by Ľudmila Pánisová is to describe the history and current situation in the field of English translations of Slovak literature. Pánisová reveals that more than two hundred books containing English translations of Slovak literature were published between 1832 to 2020. These were translated by almost a hundred translators. Pánisová also discusses the role that translators play in promoting Slovak literature and touches on the quality of the translations. The author equally delves into the way that these translations have helped shape the image of Slovak literature in the English-speaking world.

Marián Andričík’s “Slovak Poetry in English Anthologies” is a survey of English translations of Slovak poetry ranging from the seminal John Bowring’s *Cheskian Anthology* (1832) to the latest selection from the work of six Slovak poets published in Great Britain in 2010. It attempts to list and briefly analyse each of the thirty anthologies, including those that were primarily focused on Czech poetry but also published poets of Slovak origin writing in Czech such as Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik.

As becomes clear from the books mentioned, the penetration of Slovak poetry into the English-speaking world has faced various difficulties ranging from the unsystematic approach of editors through to the limited dissemination of some of the anthologies published in compatriot communities to the varied skills of different translators.

The article by Ivana Hostová, “On Slipping Beauty and Gender Identity in Poetry Translation”, draws methodologically on the applications of psychoanalysis in Translation Studies. Hostová looks at James Sutherland-Smith’s translation of one of the leading Slovak poets, Mila Haugová. Since her writing deals with female identity, the translation undertaken by a male translator also provides fruitful ground for investigating the question of whether the gender of the author and translator has a bearing on the target text. According to the author’s results it turns out that, in this case, it does.

Gabriela Miššíková’s “Translating Cultural Capital in Michal Hvorecký’s novel *Dunaj v Amerike (Danube in America)*” aims to analyse the (authorized, but unpublished) translation of Hvorecký’s novel as a re-creation of a text promoting the culture and history of Slovakia, while retaining the literary-aesthetic qualities of the source text. The pragmatic translation analysis reveals that the target text may benefit from employing the techniques of pragmatic translation as an efficient alternative to semantic translation and may solve many of the translator’s problems. It would be possible, for example, to preserve the literary aesthetic qualities of the source text by reducing the number of footnotes.

Andrej Zahorák's article "The Problem of Precedentness in Contemporary Slovak Literature and its Translation – as Reflected in M. Hvorecký's Novel *Tahiti*" and its German translation deals with the issue of precedentness (precedent phenomena – intercultural peculiarities of literary texts) in translation communication. The article focuses on thematic and expressive specifics of the analysed novel and seeks to decode precedent phenomena in the source text through comparative analysis. The aim of the analysis is to explain their meaning and ethnocultural connotations in the Slovak sociocultural space and to evaluate potential problems of their transfer to the German sociocultural space.

The article "The Presence of Slovak Literature in Spain" by Mónica Sánchez Presa traces the history of the translation and reception of Slovak literature in Spain during the past hundred years placing a particular emphasis on the period since the creation of Slovak Republic in 1993 until present day. Translators, especially those educated at the Madrid Complutense University, have played a crucial role in the dissemination of Slovak literature in Spain, especially since the 1990s when Spanish translations of Slovak literary works, supported by Slovak institutions, most notably by the Centre for Literary Information, started being published regularly. More than forty titles have been published on paper and around a dozen on the internet. At least sixteen further (as yet unpublished) translations have been produced and several more are in the process of being published.

In the case study "Translating Contemporary Slovak Poetry into English", Jonathan Gresty talks about his experience of translating Ivan Štrpka's poetry. He discusses the difficulties with comprehension and adequate interpretation of the poem *Neviditeľná vlajka. Deti na úteku* [Invisible flag. Children on the run]. This leads to an account of how the poet himself and then the commissioner of the work both became involved in this process. Despite the apparent benefits of such collaboration, questions emerge about how effectively such a poem can be translated into English.

Charles Sabatos' article "Translating Ján Uličiansky's Modern Slovak Fairytale (and Musical) *Puss on Skates*" proposes the concept of "ephemeral translations" to refer to unpublished works that are usually invisible in the history of literary translation. It also focuses on the author's translations of *Puss on Skates* (*Kocúr na kolieskových korčuliach*) in both prose and dramatic form. It discusses cultural differences between English and Slovak, translation of puns and zoological nicknames. Most of these translations, the fruit of a five-year collaboration between author and translator, have not been published. Such ephemeral versions represent a significant lacuna in translation criticism, particularly in the landscape of less translated languages.

This issue edited by Ludmila Pánisová is an ambitious project that brings together pieces analysing translations from Slovak into various foreign languages. Despite difficulties associated with accessing foreign editors and limitations in funding, the key focus remains on the efforts to continue translating and promoting Slovak literature to the world.

Review of Matei Vişniec's *Mr. K Released* (translated by Jozefina Komporaly)

GEORGE STANICA

Vişniec, Matei. *Mr K Released*. Translated from Romanian by Jozefina Komporaly. Seagull Books, 2020.

Did Kafka's famous protagonist Joseph K die like a dog at the end of his novel *The Trial*? What if the death sentence had not been executed and he had been released? There is a well-known precedent. Hamlet contrived to outwit Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and have them sentenced to death instead of him. This apparently secondary event opened the door to one of the most performed and debated drama of the twentieth century, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The Romanian-born French author Matei Vişniec's personal experience as a poet and underground playwright under Romania's totalitarian regime inspired him, in a similar manner, to reopen the epilogue of Kafka's book and explore what happened in the aftermath of the bloody collapse of Communism in his native country.

Matei Vişniec's prolific dramatic work is steeped in Kafka's enigmatic, surreal and absurd universe. The author confessed in the preface that he wrote this novel as a tribute to Kafka. He disclosed to his readers that when he left Romania in 1987 and settled down in Paris, he felt like a prisoner released from jail who did not know what to make of his freedom. It occurred to him that the shock of suddenly gaining one's freedom could be as traumatic as the shock of losing it. Consequently, it is not surprising that the forty-two chapters of this book can be read as forty-two disturbing episodes in the life of a released prisoner who suffers from chronic post-traumatic stress disorder, agoraphobia, autism, memory loss and other neuroses.

Following his unexpected release, albeit not confirmed by the prison governor, Mr. K starts drifting around the squalid surroundings of the ever-expanding prison reminiscent of Kafka's claustrophobic atmosphere. During his encounters with a host of outlandish characters resembling the inmates of Forman's film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Mr. K's mind begins to doubt the practical value of his newly-found freedom. The reader will be baffled by Mr. K's ambivalent reluctance to dive into the new world of freedom granted to him by the prison authorities. There is a distinct mood of refusal on the part of Mr. K to leave the cosy life he had managed to carve out for himself in the penitentiary. He finds affinities with the prison's cook, Rozette, the 'fat but pretty woman' and spends long hours with the dumpy cheerful tailor who never finishes his suit, preferring to offer him lengthy guided tours of his collection of old rags. Besides post-traumatic stress disorder, Mr. K appears to be suffering from a type of masochistic Stockholm syndrome when he recounts with tolerant sympathy the torture he had suffered at the hands of the sadistic prison guard, Fabius.

Anybody reading this novel should not expect to simply find a sequel to Kafka's *The Trial* because the author has shifted the focus from the notion of glaring injustice to the ambiguity of freedom. 'The Fear of Freedom', a concept developed by the German philosopher Erich Fromm in the book with the same title, could offer the key to understanding Mr. K's reluctance to leave his confinement. Fromm believed that there are two types of freedom, 'freedom from' and 'freedom to'. However, Mr. K seems to be hovering in a limbo between his nostalgia for the safety of incarceration and his newly-granted release which he only dares to use by drifting in and out of prison. In his utter confusion, Mr. K risks a further prison sentence by providing food and boots to a prison escapee who was hiding near a pile of rubbish in one of the prison's sprawling courtyards. When he goes into his town with his old guards to

bring bread supplies for the prison inmates, Mr. K works out a complex strategy to make the townsfolk believe that he had not been released. Such increasingly irrational conduct is symptomatic of his fear of freedom gradually turning into chronic paranoia.

Mr. K is a classic case of what Jean-Paul Sartre called “mauvaise foi”, self-delusion. Sartre’s maxim, “man is condemned to be free” which the French philosopher altered substantially after he became more familiar with Stalin’s atrocities, takes on an ironic twist in Vişniec’s novel because Mr. K prefers the devil he knows and that leads to his split-personality. The catalogue of psychological disorders that Mr. K and the characters in this novel suffer from is not an arbitrary coincidence, their neurotic aberrant behaviour is mirrored in one of Vişniec’s most performed plays around the world, *How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients* which brings the author very close to surrealist directors like Luis Buñuel. The story of Mr. K’s release from prison unfolding as a film script with burlesque hallucinatory sequences is probably closer to Buñuel’s *The Phantom of Liberty*, than it is to Kafka. The theatrical-cinematic quality of the narrative comes as no surprise since Vişniec has established his name primarily as a dramatist and his plays follow in the tradition of playwrights like Artaud, Ionesco, Beckett, and cinema directors like Buñuel and Antonioni. Had he been alive, Orson Welles might have been tempted to make a film based on *Mr. K Released* as a sequel to his 1960 black-and-white movie starring Anthony Perkins, inspired by Kafka’s *The Trial*. In a manner similar to Matei Vişniec’s conceptual framework, Orson Welles had found a different angle from Kafka’s which allowed him to capture a different insight of the grotesque and nightmarish elusiveness of justice in a paranoid society. Vişniec has added his own personal dimension to Kafka’s work, the elusiveness of freedom in a society crippled by totalitarianism.

Translating Matei Vişniec’s work from Romanian into English is an extremely painstaking process because of the elliptical structure of the dialogues and the ambiguity of speech. The translator, Jozefina Komporaly, Senior Lecturer in drama, who also edited an anthology of Vişniec’s plays published by Seagull Books, explored the author’s vast literary output and has provided an excellent English version of the original story.

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