

The background is a solid orange color. In the top-left corner, there is a white shape consisting of a square and a quarter-circle. A large white circle is partially visible on the left side of the page, overlapping the orange background. The text is positioned in the upper right area.

**Emerging
Literary
Translators
— 2019**

The Emerging Literary Translator Mentorships are curated and run by the National Centre for Writing. Each year we support a new cohort of emerging translators into English, with a particular focus on languages whose literature is under-represented in English translation. We have also pioneered the development of translation skills via non-language specific mentorships, in which the mentor need not necessarily translate from the mentee's source language. This year, thanks to the generosity of Tilted Axis Press, we have been able to offer a non-language specific mentorship for a BAME translator based in the UK.

The Emerging Literary Translator Mentorships were founded in 2010 by writer, editor and translator Daniel Hahn.

With our warmest thanks to all this year's mentors: Pam Allen, Don Bartlett, Sarah Death, Daniel Hahn, Antonia Lloyd-Jones, Arunava Sinha, Deborah Smith and Jeremy Tiang. Sincere thanks to the organisations who have helped to fund the programme: Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation, Arts Council England, the Harvill Secker Young Translators' Prize, the Literary Translation Institute of Korea, the Lithuanian Culture Institute, Norwegian Literature Abroad (NORLA), the Norwegian Embassy, the Polish Cultural Institute, ReImagine India (British Council and Arts Council England) and Tilted Axis Press.

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“The same thinking that strangles diversity in UK publishing stops us finding new work in other languages; readers are not scared of foreign settings – the industry just fears they are, readers don’t care if a work is in translation, the industry just fears they do. Readers are starting to suspect the industry does not reflect their diversity or their hunger for new books – from wherever they may emerge.”

– Chris Gribble, Chief Executive, National Centre for Writing

Essential Services

We live in interesting times.

In opening this anthology you are opening the door to a rich and varied world of new work all translated into English for the first time by the participants in our mentorship scheme in partnership with professional literary translators.

It is an anthology of work that bears witness: in a children's book from Poland, a plum tree observes the destruction of Warsaw's Jewish community by the Nazis. A contemporary Bengali short story gives a powerful insight, in short passages of disrupted text, into the mind of a torture victim. An Indonesian poem expresses the politicisation of the body. But bearing witness doesn't always mean treading the main stage. You will also find here meticulously observed accounts of village politics in rural Korea and of solitary urban living in Norway and the partial understanding of children which compels us to find our own patterns in the spaces they leave in their narratives.

These extracts illustrate not only the compelling stories told by the original texts, but also the creative writing skills of the translators, whom we must recognise as artists in their own right. Their work is not merely a

technical tour de force but a welcome addition to the canon of contemporary writing in English. They are not merely, as ironically put by Edith Grossman in her 2010 book *Why Translation Matters*, 'the humble, anonymous handmaids-and-men of literature,' but work in creative dialogue with the texts they translate.

If the old democracies seem to be in retreat in the face of a new nationalism and the balance of cultural and economic power shifting along a new axis, then the role of literary translators, in opening us up to languages and cultures neglected in our Anglophone world, in overcoming the fear of the other, the unknown, is more important than ever. Literary translators make our times more interesting, and it is a blessing rather than a curse.

Sarah Bower
National Centre for Writing

Emerging Translator Mentorships 2019

- 06 Kavita Bhanot (Hindi to English)
Mentor: Jeremy Tiang
- 10 Kotryna Garanasvili (Lithuanian to English)
Mentor: Daniel Hahn
- 15 Mikael Johani (Indonesian to English)
Mentor: Pam Allen
- 20 Mattho Mandersloot (Korean to English)
Mentor: Deborah Smith
- 24 Rachel Rankin (Norwegian to English)
Mentor: Don Bartlett
- 28 Subha Prasad Sanyal (Bengali to English)
Mentor: Arunava Sinha
- 32 Andy Turner (Swedish to English)
Mentor: Sarah Death
- 38 Kate Webster (Polish to English)
Mentor: Antonia Lloyd-Jones

Hindi to English

Kavita Bhanot

Mentor

Jeremy Tiang

Kavita Bhanot's fiction, non-fiction, and reviews have been published and broadcast widely. She is editor of *Too Asian, Not Asian Enough* (Tindal Street Press 2011), *Book of Birmingham* (Comma Press, 2018) and co-editor of the *Bare Lit* anthology (Brain Mill Press, 2017). With a PhD from Manchester University, she is currently a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Leicester University. She received third prize in the SI Leeds Literary Prize 2018 for her novel 'Baba ji on Boulton Road'. She has been a reader and mentor with The Literary Consultancy for the last eight years.

Introduction

Kavita Bhanot

Ma is Scared and Other Stories is a collection of short stories translated from Hindi, by Anjali Kajal. This is Kajal's long-overdue debut in English, representing the best of her short fiction, written and published over the last twenty years.

I have been drawn for many years to Kajal's stories – finding them nuanced, politically astute, wise and compassionate. She writes, as in the extract below from 'The Flood', about what it is to grow up as a female in a small town; the yearnings, restrictions and possibilities. Her first story 'Itehaas', (History) published in 1999 in the Hindi literary magazine 'Hans' and translated across Indian languages, was about a girl who faces caste discrimination in her college. From an anti-caste and feminist perspective, entrenched in justice, freedom and above all love for her sharply-observed characters, Kajal writes about desire, abuse, silence, love and oppression in nuanced ways; how these are negotiated in the world; through relationships, family, marriage, motherhood, school, university, jobs. Her writing is immersed in the specificities of daily life, in a way that Indian-English language literature rarely is.

While living and working as a literary agent in India I was struck by the similarities and limitations of the English language literature I was reading – in terms of experience, subject matter, social class. Yet this literature, written by a small slice of society – upper class and upper caste – is seen to represent Indian literature internationally. Kajal's writing forms a powerful alternative tapestry of urban life in North India – her language, imagery and concerns are thoroughly contemporary.

The book has benefitted from the support and mentorship of Jeremy Tiang; his sensitivity, understanding of craft and decolonial approach to translation, which questions the centring of the western reader within the translated text; taking literature forward on its own terms.

From *The Flood*

Anjali Kajal, translated by Kavita Bhanot

Naina and Pammi remember the day all those years ago, when they both decided to skip college and spend the afternoon roaming around the city instead. Naina planned the day. For a day of fun, they needed freedom more than money; all the pizzas and burgers in the world, so popular these days, can't compare to a delicious five-rupee chickpea kulcha full of green-red chilli, coriander, onion and lemon, or to gol-gappas.

They decided not to watch a film; they didn't want to waste three hours sitting in a cinema hall. All they wanted was to wander around together without any purpose at all. Girls never got permission from their families just to hang around, for no particular reason. That day they didn't make any specific plans, they were just excited for their new-found freedom. Mixed into this excitement was also fear, that an acquaintance might spot them; they would get into big trouble at home. In the end, they decided to go to a market some distance away from their homes, where there was the least chance of bumping into someone from their mohalla.

They made a plan to go there in one of those autos that you get in small towns, which pack in as many people as possible. A Punjabi song was playing very loudly in the auto; 'sit and think quietly about everything I did for you,' were the lyrics, being sung by the male singer. Naina kept speaking continuously, while Pammi was silent. She felt uncomfortable, sitting amongst so many people, all listening to what they were saying. But without caring, Naina continued to speak. In the seat in front, two boys kept looking at them. As soon as the auto arrived at the bazaar, Pammi and Naina both got off.

That day, Pammi saw Naina behaving like a mischievous child. They both laughed so much – Pammi felt as if she had never laughed so much in her life. Hearing their laughter, some boys in the street started to follow them. Pammi grew scared, but Naina only made fun of the boys. When the boys continued to follow them, Naina

approached two policemen who were ahead of them. In a low voice, she started asking about some route. All of a sudden, as if they had never been there at all, following them, the boys disappeared.

There was a small park at the edge of the market – they both decided to sit there. All of a sudden Naina said, ‘baba, let’s go to Farid’s dargah. It’s Thursday, Guruvaar, there will be a mela today.’

Pammi wasn’t very excited about this. ‘I don’t like noisy, crowded spaces,’ she said. ‘I went to the dargah for Guruvaar once. Just as we were about to go inside for darshan, a big crowd suddenly gathered. There wasn’t space to put your feet anywhere. You could get crushed in a crowd like that. People started reaching out with their hands, scratching like mad dogs. In those situations, it seems like humans become knives in the form of human flesh.’

Naina just looked into Pammi’s eyes. Then she said, ‘go die.’

Rachna Samay, Issue:

April-May 2016 (Bhopal), pp.24-35

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Lithuanian to English

Kotryna Garanasvili

Mentor

Daniel Hahn

Kotryna Garanasvili is an award-winning fiction writer, translator and interpreter of English, Lithuanian and German. Supported by CHASE Arts and Humanities Research Council, she is currently a PhD Candidate in literary translation at the University of East Anglia. Her professional experience consists of literary as well as legal translation, including a traineeship at the EU Council in Brussels.

Introduction

Kotryna Garanasvili

A memoir by renowned Lithuanian film director and actress Galina Dauguvietytė (1926-2015), *Perpetuum Mobile* (2002) became a bestseller in Lithuania immediately after its publication and due to great demand was subsequently followed by two more volumes, *Post Scriptum* (2006) and *Dialogai su savimi* (2010), all written in collaboration with journalist and editor Inga Liutkevičienė.

The memoir provides a detailed historical account that encompasses the period from the pre-war years right up to the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence. It is written in a distinctive voice which combines artistic and journalistic styles. Dauguvietytė describes her rich experience, focusing on the vibrant cultural life in Lithuania and the community of artists that she and her family belonged to, her international experience in Switzerland, the U.S. and Paris, the terrors of war and the changes brought by the Soviet occupation of Lithuania.

She also paints arresting portraits of notable political and cultural figures, among them her legendary parents – theatre director Borisas Dauguvietis and actress Nelė Vosyliūtė-Dauguvietienė.

The chosen extract offers a glimpse of Dauguvietytė's distinct voice that leads the reader throughout the story, as well as her ability to capture arrestingly even the most quotidian details of life and the people around her. Her memoir not only reveals this vibrant period, but also brings to light her own charismatic personality through her unique style – her every experience becomes exceptional under the influence of her witty sense of humour, her fearless self-confidence and her adventurous view of life.

The book has been praised for dealing with significant issues, as well as for its down-to-earth and dynamic style that verges on comedy at times. Humour is found even in the dramatic events of war, thus turning the memoir into a light and exciting read, while simultaneously retaining

authenticity, for example through the inclusion of photographs. It is universal in nature and should appeal to readers of every nation, in addition to helping them discover Lithuanian history and culture in particular.

My aim as a translator is to retain Dauguvietytė's informal and conversational manner of writing, and the idiosyncrasies of her individual style (such as her habit of switching from the past tense to the present when including a spontaneous memory in a consecutive narrative, the incorporation of other languages into the text, mainly Polish, Russian, and French, the references to specific elements of Lithuanian culture and Lithuanian interwar period slang). At the same time, I seek to achieve a natural English-language flow for the translation, making it understandable and accessible to the English audience.

From Perpetuum Mobile

Galina Dauguvietytė, translated by Kotryna Garanasvili

Father was light-hearted and careless. He was constantly getting himself into all sorts of romances. Mother, of course, would be the last person to find out. She never said anything, but gave him to understand that she already knew. From that day on, all affairs came to an end. Father liked to say, 'A wife is prose, and I need poetry. She criticises me, and all those girls want to be artists, they all worship me.'

I understood him as well as he understood me. Here's an example. I returned from France (this is after the war already) with a very fine checked skirt. One day, I'm looking for the skirt, but can't find it anywhere. Mother is looking for it, the housekeeper is looking for it. Then father beckons me over with his finger to his room, and he says quietly: 'Think carefully, perhaps you ran away from somewhere wearing just your petticoat?' I widened

my eyes, realizing that there had been incidents like this in his life.

Father wouldn't think of tomorrow, it was all the same to him how things were going to work out. Mother would often say: 'I suffered a great deal with him.' If truth be told, only she with her iron patience could have put up with his mischief.

There was this one time, I'm taking a walk with the man who would be my husband by the Neris River. Dawn is breaking. Suddenly, I see father walking by, carrying flowers. We passed each other like strangers. In the morning, we're sitting at the table. Not a word about the encounter – as if we hadn't seen each other at all. That's how I supported him.

I know now: if mother had been so careless, nothing good would have come of father. He held on to her. But he gave himself complete freedom, and none to her, jealous even of the attentions that other men paid her.

The following episode from our family's life is stuck in my memory. I must have been about ten. As far as I know, mother was having a serious affair with a well-known pre-war figure, a diplomat. I remember I used to ride in a car with this gentleman. I'd always sit in the middle between mother and him. Around that time, father started telling me: 'We're poor souls, you and I. When mother comes back from the performance, you fall at her feet and beg her not to leave us.'

As I was very plump as a child, overfed by mother and inclined to eat all day, father would add: 'They'll take you away and beat you three times a day, and they'll only give you one meal.' Next to my mother's portrait, he'd place a vase of flowers with a black ribbon tied around it.

That other man, I know, was desperate to marry mother. He wanted to take her away from Lithuania. Mother would joke: 'Leave my daughter a million Swiss francs, and I'll leave my husband.' The admirer might have done just that, but the truth was that mother was too dignified. To her, the most important things in life were theatre, family, dignity. And I, trained by father, really did fall at her feet and beg her not to leave us, although

I wasn't quite sure who nor why anyone should leave anyone. Finally the President's wife Sofija Smetonienė and other society women became very displeased with the affair, and it was decided to send mother away from Kaunas. Father followed her to the Šiauliai theatre. And so the affair came to an end. All I know is that upon our return to Lithuania after the war, mother discovered the other man's fate: he had been exiled to Vorkuta and died there.

Dauguvietytė, Galina (2002) Perpetuum Mobile. Vilnius:

Tyto Alba, pp. 32-33

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Indonesian to English

Mikael Johani

Mentor

Pam Allen

Mikael Johani is a poet, critic, and translator from Jakarta, Indonesia. His works have been published in *Asymptote*, *The Johannesburg Review of Books*, *Ajar* (Hanoi), *Vice Indonesia*, *Kerja Tangan* (Kuala Lumpur), *Murmur*, and *Selatan*. His English translation of Gratiagusti Chananya Rompas's 'one by one the bodies died' won an Honourable Mention from the 2018 Hawker Prize for Southeast Asian Poetry.

Introduction

Mikael Johani

Gratiagusti Chananya Rompas (Anya) is a poet who, until the last few years, has been mainly active in Jakarta's underground literary scene. She is a literary activist who started one of the first online poetry communities in Indonesia (on Yahoo! Groups) called BungaMatahari, set up an independent publishing company before the scene exploded and published an independent online literary journal. Her poetry is confessional, more Sexton than Plath, and deals openly with issues of mental illness, memory, and motherhood, and how place – spiritual, geographical, economical – foregrounds all of them. One of the most challenging aspects in translating Non-Specific is trying to find ways to replicate the book's subtle rebellion – or as Eka Kurniawan says on the cover, its 'anarchism' – against 'Good and Proper Indonesian' ('Bahasa Indonesia Yang Baik dan Benar') in its 'Perfected Spelling' ('Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan' or EYD). Both were genius inventions of the New Order regime to stifle dissent – apart from censoring content, it also censored *language*, turning mestizo Indonesian made up of a rich hybrid of market Malay, local slang, Dutch, English, sometimes a little French, into a highly technical, bureaucratic language. In Non-Specific, Anya codeswitches – never italicizing the foreign words and Jakarta slang, avoids capital letters even for proper names, deliberately loses articles, particles and punctuations, and modifies EYD (eg, losing the hyphen in 'ondel-ondel') to move the language closer to natural speech. It has become necessary in translating some of these poems to put English – the imperial language of our time – in place of Bahasa Indonesia Yang Baik dan Benar and subvert it, destabilize it – by codeswitching, retaining Indonesian words especially proper names, and using creole English spoken by many Jakartans – to mimic the linguistic tensions within the originals.

‘one by one the bodies died’, from *Non-Specific*

Gratiagusti Chananya Rompas,
translated by Mikael Johani

one by one the bodies died. taking the history of their lives into a long sleep inside a box under strips of fine linen. sad stories happy stories dreams that turn into reality crumble into pieces frozen into stiff bodies. the body prays for the rain never to come and god grants the request. the body pretends to understand the words in english books. the body climbs to the top of a tree and watches kids playing football under its canopy. the body blows bubbles in a playground. the body rides a becak with mother and the becak flips over on a kerb. the body makes love in an attic there's a hole on the roof where mosquitoes swarm in. the body endures rude calls from debt collectors. the body is bored with life. the body has given birth to so many children. the body loves and hates them in equal measure. the body spends hours and hours in a coffee shop writing poems that never end that nobody ever reads. the body endures insults for not lending people money. the body does secret work for the government. the body does not-so-secret work against the government. the body has never had a father or a mother. a child tries to give the body a full body massage and they laugh so hard. the body sways silently to the rhythm of a song in a half-filled bar. the body cries when she watches a detective series on television. the body earns fifteen minutes of fame from winning a national singing contest. the body watches a little girl as she stares at the window displays in a mall from inside a toy train. the body knows the girl is thinking i will never have everything i want from those shops. the body plants a starfruit tree. the body rides a commuter train and watches a beggar wipes the floor with his bare hands. the body feels useless. the body feels guilty because it is useless. the body feels guilty out of a sense of guilt since there are clearly other people with bigger problems. the

body gets angry about little things when it is really angry about bigger things. the body's parents left her. the body has become soft earth to be dug up again no one knows when. the body has become a pile of ashes kept in an earthen jar. the body is thrown into the sea and becomes one with the foam on top of the waves. the body rises up from a chimney and disappears below a cloud.

Note:

— becak: rickshaw

'untitled (ondel ondel walks on pavement)', from *Non-Specific*

Gratiagusti Chananya Rompas,
translated by Mikael Johani

ondel ondel walks on pavement
ondel ondel tiptoes across a zebra crossing
ondel ondel hangs a used paint can on her wrist
ondel ondel sits in an angkot
lifts her eyes to the heavens
her ondel ondel boyfriend
lying like a corpse on the roof of a blue bajaj
ondel ondel stops and sits on pavement
ejects a thin man in blue sandals out of her bottom
two men ride slowly on an rx king
a broom tied to the pillion's waist
its bristles bloom
like the head of ondel ondel

Notes:

- ondel ondel: giant street puppets
- angkot: public minibus
- bajaj: three-wheeled auto rickshaw
- rx king: 2-stroke motorbike

Translated from:

Non-Spesifik – *Non-Specific* (2017)

Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama

‘one by one the bodies died’ was

also published in AJAR (Issue 5, Fall 2017)

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Korean to English

Mattho Mandersloot

Mentor

Deborah Smith

Mattho Mandersloot is a translator from Amsterdam. After his BA Classics (KCL) he went on to study an MA Translation (SOAS) and, as a Prins Bernhard Fellow, an MSt Korean Studies (Oxford). In 2018 he won the inaugural World Literature Today Translation Prize and the Oxford Korean Poetry Translation Prize.

Introduction

Mattho Mandersloot

Kang Hwagil is a young Korean writer best known for her 2017 novel *Dareun Saram* ('Others') which won her the Hankyoreh Literature Award as well as a Young Authors' Prize. She was heralded by the Hankyoreh panel as a 'new voice' and received much praise for her fearlessly honest portrayal of Korean society, carrying a confrontational message. A champion of feminist writing in her own right, Kang is often mentioned in one breath with Cho Namjoo, whose *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* brought gender equality and #MeToo to the forefront of South Korea's national debate, following its publication in 2016. Kang's hit novel, like Cho's, seems to have struck a chord also by way of its unembellished style. She excels in sparse, almost understated prose, leaving the reader to appreciate, in its purest form, the gravity of what is being said.

Demons was published in Korea as part of the 2018 *Kim Youjeong Collection*, having been nominated for the eponymous award along with entries by Man Booker International Prize winner Han Kang and other well-established Korean authors such as Lee Seung-u and Jung Ihyun. Set in a small rural village, where everyday life is supposedly simple, a seemingly insignificant event sets in motion a wave of imminent danger. We follow a relatively new villager, the local primary school teacher, as she is slowly overtaken by worry, with her daughter at the vulnerable young age of three, a difficult group of schoolboys under her wing and her mother-in-law wanting to drag her into house-of-cards village politics. To top it all, she finds herself plagued by the idea of *son*: folklore spirits out to make people's lives miserable. Masterfully blending the suspense of a crime novel with dazzlingly keen descriptions of the Korean countryside, *Demons* goes to show Kang's ability to enthrall the reader and keep them spellbound.

From *Demons*

Kang Hwagil, translated by Mattho Mandersloot

Tok. A noise. I turned to look behind me. Nothing. Misheard, maybe. I faced forward and took another step to reach the front gate. *Tok.* Again. It sounded like a massive rock thudding against a wall. I turned around, fast as I could. There was something there, something small and short. It disappeared in a flash, slipping back into the alleyway. An eerie sensation washed over me, burying itself into my chest. I hurried to open the gate and entered the garden. Just then, an almost painfully sharp voice pierced my eardrums.

'*Ya!* What kept you so long?'

Ah, mother-in-law. Without answering her, I walked up to the deck. She'd told me to come home early, I remembered now. All morning, she'd kept nagging about today's town meeting. They were going to decide when the village would gather and cook meju. She annoyed me a little. I was going to try and explain myself – I had work to do and couldn't come anyway – but dropped it. Too tired, really. It had been another one of those days today: a group of kids had dumped a load of snowballs into Daejin's pants, to the point where his underwear got completely drenched. I made the whole class stay after school and gave them the third degree as to who had started off. While I rested my gaze on each of them individually, trying them out one after the other, it was Yongkwon who stared straight back. Easily the most charming boy in school, and a bear of a fifth grader at that, he was clever too. And so, popular with pretty much everyone. But I knew better. Whenever something went down, he was behind it. As always, he wore his look of utter innocence, which, as our eyes met, slowly turned into a sneaky grin.

I'd never caught him red-handed yet. I had no evidence to prove anything. But it was crystal clear that the kids were all bullying Daejin, with Yongkwon taking the lead. As a teacher, if there's only seven kids per class, you just know these things. Only once, I happened to

witness Yongkwon downright bulldozing Daejin to the ground. Before I could even open my mouth to tell him off, Yongkwon beat me to it: 'I'm sorry, madam. It was an accident.' And then to Daejin: 'Hey, I'm sorry, Daejin. I really didn't see you.'

I didn't buy any of it. I put Yongkwon in detention and had him do a bit of self-reflection. A few days later, the mirror in the girls' toilet was covered in graffiti. *KIM MIYOUNG = CRAZY CUNT.*

(...)

'Mama, where's Mina?'

'Sleeping, in her room. She basically dropped off the minute I picked her up from nursery.'

'Come again?'

What was that all about? I definitely spoke to her about changing Mina's sleeping pattern only a few days ago. Come nightfall, the one, without fail, having to hush and lull a wide-awake little girl, with her sparkling little eyes, was me. The reason why I'd moved to this remote part of the country, was because I believed her when she'd offered to help look after Mina. Clearly those words meant nothing, then? I tried to get through to her and she said she understood.

And yet here she was, putting Mina to bed in broad daylight. I was about to ask for an explanation – why would she break her freshly-made promise? – when she said: 'Did Yongkwon do well today? Isn't he a goody?'

With that, I had had enough of our conversation. 'Enjoy the meeting,' I said, and went to my room.

Translated from:

Kang Hwagil

'Son', from Han Kang, Lee Seung-u and others, *Jakbyeol*, Eunhaeng Namu (2018). The complete translation will be published in April 2019 as part of Strangers' Press *Yeoyu* series

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Norwegian to English

Rachel Rankin

Mentor

Don Bartlett

Rachel Rankin is a poet and translator based in Edinburgh, Scotland. She holds an MA(Hons) in Scandinavian Studies and English Literature and an MSc in Creative Writing, both from the University of Edinburgh. She works as a tour guide and as a tutor in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Introduction

Rachel Rankin

Often referred to as the 'Norwegian Queen of Crime Fiction', Karin Fossum is one of Norway's most successful crime writers. Her books have been published in thirty-five countries, and many of them have been adapted for film and television. Fossum began her writing career as a poet, and both her poetry and her fiction have won numerous awards over a forty-year period, including the *Tarjei Vesaas debutantpris* (1974), *Bokhandlerprisen* (1997), the Los Angeles Book Award (2008) and the Riverton prize (2014). *The Whisperer* is the latest of Fossum's successful series of crime novels about Inspector Konrad Sejer, which have been translated into twenty-five languages.

Ragna Riegel is a quiet, ordinary, unassuming creature of habit. She works in a supermarket, always sits in the same seat on the bus, always visits the same local shop. She still lives in her childhood home and is completely alone in the world – her parents are dead, and her son lives in Berlin and rarely makes contact with her. One day, her routine is interrupted and her life is thrown into chaos when she receives a threatening letter in the post, causing her to do everything and anything she can to try and defend herself. When the unspeakable happens, Inspector Konrad Sejer is called in to investigate. Will he get to the bottom of this case quickly? Or is Ragna Riegel not what she seems?

Owing to the monumental success of Nordic crime fiction in the UK and beyond, I found translating *The Whisperer* to be an interesting and thoroughly enjoyable experience. I chose this excerpt not only because the delivery of the letter is the inciting incident, but also because I believe it shows the reasoned, methodical approach Ragna adopts in life – an approach which makes the events of the novel even more shocking.

From *The Whisperer*

Karin Fossum, translated by Rachel Rankin

She never turned the lights off when she left the house. She wanted it to be illuminated, warmly welcoming her when she got home from work, especially in the autumn darkness, like now. It was a modest house: one floor, a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a basement where she kept the washing machine. There was also some space down there for all the clutter that had accumulated over the years. Some her own, some left behind by her parents. The basement was cold and damp – if it rained a lot, wet patches would appear on the floor. She had always lived in this house, even after her son was born. She had no money when she got pregnant and had needed help, so the family of three became a family of four. There was a little garden in front of the house, but since she didn't have green fingers, she didn't do much with it. There was also a small veranda where she rarely sat – she didn't like the fact that people could see her from the road. And, anyway, with her pale skin and dull red hair, she couldn't handle the sun. Her bins were down by the road, her post-box sat on a stand and, last but not least, a tall streetlamp stood right next to her driveway, lighting the path all the way up to the house. Whenever she walked home from the bus stop, she always liked to imagine that the streetlamp had been installed just for her, to make sure she found her way home. Fantasising never hurt anyone, thought Ragna Riegel. Children do it all the time.

She crossed the road, holding her carrier bag in her left hand, and opened the post box. She grabbed a local newspaper and a parish magazine, a furniture brochure, and an unassuming white envelope. She didn't often receive letters. Only her surname, Riegel, was written on the envelope in capital letters. No address. She placed the bag on the ground. There were no stamps on the envelope; there was no sender's address on the back either. Standing in the light of the streetlamp, she turned it over and over again in her hands. The paper

was rough, perhaps recycled, thinner and greyer than other types. What? A letter without a sender? It could be a message from Olaf, her neighbour on one side, or from Teigan on the other. Or maybe this was also an advertisement, slipped into every post box along Kirkelina, an area stretching from the old spinning mill right up to the church. The foreign workers here were known to offer their services in this way. They washed and painted and tidied and repaired and did woodwork, and it struck her that she should probably contact one of them to help with the picket fence. It needed painting. Or it could be a message from the local council, sent to each and every household. No, it couldn't be that – her name was handwritten. She followed the gravel pathway up to the house, let herself in, and put the post on the kitchen table. She dropped her handbag on the floor and kicked off her shoes before emptying the carrier bag from Irfan's shop. She decided she would make risotto. That is, if the two sausages in the fridge hadn't passed their use-by date. They hadn't. She slumped down at the table and stared at the white envelope. She turned it over in her hands several times, as though imagining that something would appear on the back, a company name or a logo, if only she gave it time. But nothing happened. She opened it and found a folded sheet of paper. There was a short message:

YOU ARE GOING TO DIE.

The Whisperer

Karin Fossum

Harvill Secker 2018

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Bengali to English

Subha Prasad Sanyal

Mentor

Arunava Sinha

Subha Prasad Sanyal is a Bengali translator born in West Bengal, India. He was schooled at Modern English Academy, Barrackpore and is currently studying English at Jadavpur University. He is very interested in far too many things, and hopes to get as much of Bengali literature as possible across to the world.

Introduction

Subha Prasad Sanyal

As winner of the Harvill Secker Young Translator's prize, I am under the mentorship of celebrated Bengali translator, Arunava Sinha.

I must say, despite being trapped between a daunting project on one side and my college courses on the other, the experience has been enlightening and exhilarating: Arunava is an amazing mentor with a very open mind and very willing to discuss and debate the nitty-gritties with even a fledgling translator. I've already finished the basic work on almost 80% of my project, thanks to him.

I have also found that regular translation is not as easy as it seems at first glance. Especially considering the kind of prose Nabarun uses, it is very important to not just get the meaning across, but also, often, the distinctive cadence of his sentences without which it can seem hollow. Arunava guides me on how to straddle the line between literal translations and more interpretive ones.

I have my eyes set on completing the translation of the entire collection in due time, although the initial objective is for six short stories. I am indebted to Arunava for introducing me to Nabarun. When I read him, it was like I was reading my own repressed anger and sorrow.

This particular excerpt is an especially interesting piece because it has several elements in it, beyond the language itself, which require translation. It has a very peculiar rhythm and tone dynamic between paragraphs. It has a very wide gamut of emotions: desperation, anger, fear, love. And all of it is conveyed very semiotically, through a stream of consciousness. This means that it requires little context to understand the emotions here, which I think are more universal than culture specific. However, it also makes translation especially tricky, but then again, that's Nabarun for you.

From Long Live the Counter-revolution (Protibiplob Dirghojibi Hok),

Nabarun Bhattacharyya, translated by Subha Prasad Sanyal

The first spike of pain when the needle is forced under your fingernails feels like your nerves are snapping and rapidly coiling up into your shoulders. The person inserting the needle is leaning forward in his chair and making disgusting noises with his mouth. The fan is rotating. My hands are strapped. The needle has dug under my nails to the very end. The blood around the needle under my fingernail screams in fear. The needle scrapes the bone and tries to burrow through it, but stops. Looking at my hand, I see that veins and arteries whose existence I never knew of have swollen.

I've never seen anyone like you. No one can love me so selflessly, nor can anyone's love be so complete, so unquestionable. No eyes hold so much in agreement, no blood was born with so much support.

The Nazis killed one hundred and twenty thousand Jewish infants. The first Nuremberg trials revealed how sick and mentally challenged children were murdered.

I love you watch the train rushing through a dark field now
I love you in the midnight train I see standing at the door,
people far away gathering dry leaves under a tree and
lighting a fire in the darkness the sound of your breath
as if you've fallen asleep, so I stand up to leave, trying to
not awaken you when you tell me in your sleep-entwined
voice about the night's last kiss and I'm there to have your
taste.

Sick babies in the hospital were killed by machine guns,
by forced starvation, or were thrown out of windows.
Luminal and Veronal (0.1 to 0.6 gram) were used in Silesia's
Lubinyek Hospital on 235 eight to ten years olds, and
221 lost their lives. And Applefing Hire's Dr. Fanmueller

murdered children himself, and because it was the most cost-effective way, continued killing them by starvation.

I love you believe me I love you I swear by you.

According to the German governmental report, 99922 shirts and pairs of underwear for children were sent from Auschwitz-Aseuwichem death camps to Germany in 47 days between 1944 and '45.

Switch off the darkness for I love you, switch off the darkness now for I love you.

...This is the diary found while searching my room...

5-3-73 (After midnight)

[Continued from last entry]

There is barely any anger. I feel scattered and one with myself. My second or third self will probably not let me do anything deviant. Because his cognizance is much greater, his endurance is greater, too. If I stay happy and still like this for some time then maybe I'll find myself close to fulfilling my potential—maybe this is who I'd been searching for through the restlessness. You cannot really know yourself until you dissociate yourself from all of your ego.

A sound, a moment, or a raindrop, can make something happen now. Death from the smallest illness. But I've seen so many stars tonight... I was lying on the ground, my hair wet with dew. My footsteps made no sound. My words turn to glass and my solitude to breath.

Translated from:

Nabarun Bhattacharyya

Protibiplob Dirghojibi Hok – Long Live the Counter-revolution

Pratikshan Publications Private Limited

Contact details:

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Swedish to English

Andy Turner

Mentor

Sarah Death

Andy Turner received an MA in Literary Translation from the University of East Anglia in 2017 after more than twenty years as a secondary school teacher. He reviews Swedish language literature for *Swedish Book Review* and is a member of the Swedish-English Literary Translators' Association. Andy is thrilled that the mentorship affords the opportunity to combine his love of Swedish writing with translation.

Introduction

Andy Turner

Born in 1979, Jonas Brun is a qualified clinical psychologist living in Stockholm. Previous works include collections of poetry and three novels.

This novel covers a history uniting past and present, secrets and truth, in a disquieting and engrossing tale of psychological suspense. Some twenty years after their paths first crossed, the main characters Stewe and John come face to face at Stewe's isolated house deep in the Swedish forest. Their previous clandestine relationship is opened up and a mystery they have shared about a catastrophic fire in the 1990s resurfaces.

In the passages of dialogue between them (without the conventions of direct speech), double-spaced among the historical narrative and some twenty years later, the reverberations, tensions and suspense play out centre stage. There are bruising pauses, point scoring and power struggles, but also, fleetingly, some tender words. Brun never assigns any utterance to either character, leaving us to deduce who is saying what to whom. Adding dramatic immediacy amid continuing repercussions from that summer, it becomes clear that unfinished business remains between them. These aspects pose a translation conundrum.

For a translator, keeping the characters' voices authentic, and establishing the correct tone and register to fit both their adult and younger selves, is particularly challenging. Under Sarah's mentorship, I was able to trial and explore various strategies. Like a stage play, their episodic dialogues could stand alone, but here, their utterances remain an inseparable part of a wider picture.

This is where Brun's prose becomes strongly evocative. Translating his exploration of pastoral landscapes through elemental themes – summer and autumn, fire and water and, symbolically, forces of nature and youth and adulthood – requires lyrical writing. Capturing Brun's depiction of the mercurial landscape of the human mind, however, is an exercise in exploring mental

spaces in writing, translating ideas and concepts beyond the individual word.

I am delighted that this Programme has allowed me to combine the translation of this unique and alternative book with Sarah's invaluable mentorship.

My review of Brun's novel appears on www.swedishbookreview.com

From Nobody Compared To You

Jonas Brun, translated by Andy Turner

By the time his dad returns from the station, mealtime has come around once again. Although nobody seems hungry, they always make time to eat. Stewe only wants sandwiches. Natural yoghurt maybe. He has had a belly full of meat and potatoes. Dad has brought a paper from the news kiosk with him, Stewe flicks through it while his parents do the cooking.

There is just one item on the killer girls. Yesterday it ran to several pages, for weeks there were several pages a day. The world is already getting tired of them. Blotting them out among other killers, other news. Everybody but Stewe. The girls are a few years younger than he is. There is a blurred picture of all three of them together. Two with blonde hair and one with dark hair, in quilted jackets in front of dirty snow, and with squares in front of their faces to make them unrecognisable. One blonde girl is dead now.

The next item is about the usual topic of the fire risk in the forest and fields after the unusually dry summer. Fires that have been raging to the south, however, are now out. Pictures show charred trees silhouetting towards the heavens and cars caught in the path of the flames, looking like the husks of dead wasps from last year; sheet metal corpses in the cinder landscape.

They play cards after dinner. He has to hold on a

little longer, paying attention to not seeming too sulky and distant. He is waiting for tomorrow. He hopes then that he can slip away and row off in the boat. The light is fading. The night is so short up here, this time of year, it is barely worth calling it night, the light just dims, making the shadows deeper. Especially a night such as this, where, low in the sky, a redundant moon shines down on them, big and bright.

Dad stands up first. Then Mum. Stewe is a is about to get up too when he sees something moving outside the window; a light flares suddenly, just where the grass ends and the forest begins. The flame gives way to a slowly pulsating glow, as someone takes concentrated drags on a cigarette. The hand holding the cigarette moves upwards and waves to him. This incandescent spot disappears when John turns his back to the house. He is a just dark smudge beneath the washing line, impossible to make out in the dark if you don't know what you are looking for.

Toothbrushing sounds. Mum is in the bathroom. Dad is upstairs, making no noise. Stewe gently eases the veranda door open, closing it just as gently behind him. The cool of the evening, the crickets. He slips his bare feet into his beach sandals. Hunches forward to make himself invisible too and hurries towards the edge of the forest.

John has a black hoodie on with the hood pulled up. The only parts of his face on show are the outline of his nose, his mouth, a faint light reflecting in his eye. He stubs his cigarette out and nods at Stewe to follow him in through the trees.

The ferns limply crumple, damp against his legs, as he brushes them easily aside. John's back directs the way ahead, deeper into the wooded darkness. Stewe hears something moving among the trees, the night is tucking all the birds and animals into its pocket. There is a little pushing and shoving in the thicket, beating of wings. There is no room for more.

They don't walk far, John stops at a clearing so close that the house remains in sight, shining faintly, a planet they have left behind. John sits on a fallen trunk, pulls

his hood down and props his arms on his knees without looking at him. Stewe sits cautiously beside him, a whisper away.

I took the ring.

What did you do with it?

Pawned it.

I'm not bothered.

Sure?

Just wanted to know if it was you.

Should've told you straight away.

Why did you take it?

Didn't have any money. Flat broke. I was even running out of food.

Couldn't you borrow some off your uncle, ask him for money?

...

Why not?

I'll tell you more another time.

...

Didn't think you'd want to see me again.

Translated from:

Brun, J.

Ingen jämfört med dig – Nobody Compared To You. (2018)

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pp. 120-123

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Polish to English

Kate Webster

Mentor

Antonia Lloyd-Jones

Kate grew up in Wales and graduated with a BA in linguistics from the University of Manchester, where she then worked in academic research. After teaching for three years in Poland, she completed an MA at SSEES, UCL. She has been working as a translator for seven years.

Introduction

Kate Webster

Best known as a screenwriter, and having written a number of books for adults, Cezary Harasimowicz has recently turned his attention towards children's books. *Mirabelle* is a middle-grade illustrated novel set in Warsaw between the 1930s and the present day. Unusually, the story is narrated by a plum tree called Mirabelle, who can converse with the children in the neighbourhood and who sees the world from their perspective. As the seasons change and the children become adults, they lose their ability to hear Mirabelle, but she continues to observe their lives. She encounters the thriving Jewish community of pre-WWII Warsaw, and witnesses both the construction and destruction of the ghetto and the 'disappearance' of her human friends. She survives the post-war rebuilding of the city, but struggles with the challenges of the 21st century.

Harasimowicz grew up in Warsaw on the street where this book is set. As a child, he played under the plum tree that grew in his neighbours' courtyard. Many of the characters in the book are based on real people, and the places described really exist – or used to exist – in the area where he lived. When we met with the author in December, he took us on a fascinating tour of his neighbourhood, pointing out the spots where the tree that inspired the story grew, and where its sapling offspring was planted in autumn 2018.

The book appeals on different levels to children and adults. It deals with many of the tragic events from our recent history, portraying them in a way that is accessible for children, and highlighting the importance of discussing these topics and learning from the past. There is also an emphasis on renewal, which is echoed in the many references to natural cycles and the seasons, and an underlying ecological message is conveyed by the survival of the tree against the odds. The following excerpt is taken from near the beginning of the book, where the young Mirabelle is describing the passage of time.

From *Mirabelle (Mirabelka)*

Cezary Harasimowicz, translated by Kate Webster

A little time passed. Well, a little for some, but for me an eternity. You must be wondering why for some, time seems to pass like a lightning flash, while for others, it's as if the days, nights, months and years stretch like a thread from the spool the Alfus brothers keep in their drawer. For my mother, time flies very quickly, because she's a grown-up and she's used to the fact that the years have four seasons. When one ends, another begins. There's the time when our buds swell and then hatch into leaves, then comes the time when our white petals blossom, then our fruits bulge with sweetness, and later there comes a time when our leaves turn yellow, while our sweet sap gets ready to drain downwards, to our roots, until finally our leaves fall, and we stand all naked and bare, waiting for the cold, frost and snow, and then we doze off, to awaken again in the spring. My mother has been through this cycle many, many times now and she's become used to the rhythm. Did you notice that I managed to tell you everything my mother experiences in her soul and memory in just one – extremely long – sentence? You see? But for me, the whole matter of time is still something new. It divides into important events, big things. And into lots of sentences. The year has its four seasons. And each of them is important, long and special. First there's the time when our buds swell. Next, our buds hatch into leaves. Then comes the time when our white petals blossom. And then our fruits grow and bulge on our branches. Next, our leaves turn yellow. Our sap drains down to our roots. Our leaves fall. The frost comes, snow falls. We go to sleep. And then spring comes again. That's ten whole sentences! And for me each one is something new! Time drags for you too when you can't wait for something to happen – when you're looking forward to your birthday present, for instance. Then you count the days and hours, until you finally find a box tied with coloured ribbon next to your pillow. Or when you're waiting for a tram at the tram stop. Many

times through my bark I've sensed the irritation of the ladies and gentlemen glancing at their watches, waiting for the tram that's meant to be coming from Muranów Square towards Castle Square. For them, time drags on and on. But if the tram weren't late, those ladies and gentlemen wouldn't even notice that something like time exists. So you see, the passing of seconds, minutes, hours and days is something everyone feels differently. And that's just how it is for me now. I am young, and time is dragging out endlessly, like a thread from the spool of the Alfus brothers' carnival costume factory. You're probably wondering why time drags quite so slowly for me. All will soon become clear.

Translated from:

From *Mirabelle (Mirabelka)*

Cezary Harasimowicz

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