Emerging Literary Translators — 2023

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 underrepresented 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. For the past four years this has enabled us to develop our commitment to underrepresented writers by offering a specific mentorship for a UK-resident BAED translator, or a translator working in a heritage, community or diaspora language, supported by the Visible Communities programme. 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: Sarah Ardizzone, Khairani Barokka, Howard Curtis, Sean Gasper Bye, Rosie Hedger, Anton Hur, Sawad Hussain, Meena Kandasamy, Nina Murray, Daisy Rockwell, Paul Russell Garrett, Nichola Smalley and Juliet Winters Carpenter. Sincere thanks also to the organisations which have helped to fund the programme: Arts Council England, British Centre for Literary Translation, British Council, Danish Arts Foundation, Harvill Secker Young Translators' Prize, Italian Cultural Institute, Literary Translation Institute of Korea (LTI Korea), Polish Cultural Institute London, Québec Government Office in London, Royal Norwegian Embassy, the Saroj Lal mentorship, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, Swedish Arts Council, the Tadashi Yanai Initiative for Globalizing Japanese Humanities at UCLA and Waseda University and the Visible Communities programme.

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‘Having access to stories from a multitude of voices, cultures and perspectives is vital for nurturing and growing our international community of readers and writers. Perhaps now more than ever, widespread exchange helps us to learn, share, broaden our horizons and break down barriers. It is with great pride and excitement that we support the talented translators in this anthology, whose careers will see them continue to make this exchange possible, opening up new worlds and narratives.’

Holly Ainley
Head of Programmes & Creative Engagement

Foreword

In one of his essays about translation, the great Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges writes (in Andrew Hurley's translation): "No problem is as consubstantial with literature and its modest mystery as the one posed by translation." Literature in translation seems to encapsulate the themes and topics, the genres and styles, that move readers today, and the great pleasure of being able to compile a sampler of translated literature, as chosen by our mentees, is that it provides a snapshot of the zeitgeist of contemporary literature.

It should come as no surprise that in a year, where we were lucky enough to support 14 mentees through the Emerging Translator Mentorships Programme, we would be gifted with literature of different forms, shapes and colours. Yet, quite how wide-ranging and diverse these works of international literature are was startling and a sheer joy to discover: this sampler features extracts from novels and short story collections, a great number of speculative fiction, surreal accounts and horror stories, the full breadth of non-fiction – from memoirs to diaries and travel accounts – and often very personal stories relating to gender, identity and grief.

We learn about the struggles of the lower and middle classes in Seoul through a subtly poetic novel about grief and female friendship, and about the exploitation of so-called Korean "comfort women" by the Japanese Imperial army, told through the eyes of a Quebec writer of Korean descent. The theme of cultural displacement also features in a Japanese travel memoir, as its author, who has moved from the city to the rural mountain regions, questions whether her children will benefit or be disadvantaged by this change. Forced displacement, and

its accompanying trauma, is the subject of a Ukrainian short story collection, that is "both timeless and all too timely". In both senses, the featured story focuses on gender as a social construct, when a family chooses to raise their daughter as a son.

Gender and sexuality are core to a number of excerpts, ranging from the memoir of a Danish trans woman, written "in the meantime", while waiting for her first appointment at the gender dysphoria clinic, and in the lightly fictionalized diary of a Jewish and openly gay writer and zookeeper in socially conservative Poland, who joyfully blends social commentary with cute animals.

While some extracts are characterized by their realist depiction of a place and country, such as short stories set in Italy in the 80s, 90s and 00s, whose oral history-inspired structure follows the meanders of the river Po, others blur these lines, and yet others lean into the downright surreal, or horror. A woman in her early 20s struggles with anxiety, when rational and irrational fears following the terror attacks of Oslo and Utøya in 2011 blur into one another. A narrator, who has been ill for months, recounts their threatening experience of hearing the rain outside, an oppressive swallowing and gurgling pressing against the pane.

Many of the speculative and surreal contributions to this anthology nevertheless provide a very realist and punching commentary on society. In a world that is half dream, half photograph, the camera lens is set on modern-day sex workers in the ancient holy city of Varanasi. A novel, in which a steel prison door is the protagonist, was inspired by the many locked doors during covid, and is also allegorical of recent Indonesian politics. A Mauritanian sci-fi novel that blends traditional music, minority Hassaaniya Arabic and AI, contrasts two worlds: one that is reliant on the internet, and another that is oblivious to it. In turn, a Welsh cult novel in the same genre has inspired a contemporary Mercury-shortlisted musician and posits suppressed languages as an act of resistance.

Upon reading this selection, it was exciting to

discover parallels among the most diverse of works of fiction and non-fiction: who would have thought that a Welsh cult classic from the 1970s shared elements with a contemporary Mauritanian sci-fi novel? That there are similarities between a Danish memoir about transitioning and the diary of a Polish zookeeper? Only through their translation into English do these parallels come to light, and it is these unsuspected treasures, these "modest mysteries", that make reading literature in translation so exciting, opening doors onto worlds you did not yet know existed.

Rebecca DeWald
Emerging Translator Mentorships Programme Manager

Emerging Literary Translators 2023

Ibrahim Fawzy – Arabic
Mentor: Sawad Hussain

Hazel Evans – Danish
Mentor: Paul Russell Garrett

Vaibhav Sharma – Hindi
Mentor: Daisy Rockwell

Anandita 'Didiet' Budiman & Sekar Larasati Sulistya – Indonesian
Mentor: Khairani Barokka

Antonella Lettieri - Italian
Mentor: Howard Curtis

Cat Anderson – Japanese
Mentor: Juliet Winters Carpenter

Gene Png – Korean
Mentor: Anton Hur

Olivia Blyth – Norwegian
Mentor: Rosie Hedger

Dawid Mobolaji – Polish
Mentor: Sean Gasper Bye

Claire Gullander-Drolet – Québec French
Mentor: Sarah Ardizzone

Megan Evans – Swedish
Mentor: Nichola Smalley

Tetiana Savchynska – Ukrainian
Mentor: Nina Murray

Emyr Wallace Humphreys – Welsh
Mentor: Meena Kandasamy

Arabic to English

Ibrahim Fawzy

Mentor

Sawad Hussain

Ibrahim Fawzy is an Egyptian translator. He holds an MA in Comparative Literature (2021). His translations, reviews and interviews have appeared in *ArabLit Quarterly, Words Without Borders, The Markaz Review, Modern Poetry in Translation, Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal*, and elsewhere. He is currently an editorial assistant at *Rowayat*, and podcasts at *New Books Network.*

Introduction

Ibrahim Fawzy

"Time is the God of our era, the sacred arbiter we worship today, and the true revolution that offers justice to all classes of society."

Mauritanian writer and journalist Ahmed Isselmou was born in Nema in east Mauritania. His published works include the short story collection *Awaiting the Past* (Arab Scientific Publishers, Beirut, 2015), the novel *Perforated Life* (Dar El-Shorouk, Cairo, 2020), and his second novel البراني (roughly translated as *The Outsider*, here translated as *FutCity*) (Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, 2021). His short story 'Floating Paper' won the Stories on Air competition organised by the Kuwaiti magazine *Al-Arabi* and BBC Arabic in 2009. Formerly a news producer for both Al-Arabiya and Al-Aan television and the deputy chief editor at Russia Today, he now works as an assistant program editor at Al-Jazeera in Qatar.

Isselmou's sci-fi novel, *FutCity*, takes place between two totally different realms: One that can't do without the internet, yet the other has never heard such a word. It tackles timely, problematic topics of immigration and digital specificity, weaving a fantastical relationship between the primitive Mauritanian music, and the Artificial Intelligence (AI) which is considered superior to the human mind's abilities. Furthermore, it imagines a new currency that links value directly to an individual's productivity, regardless of their nation's exchange rate. Invented by a resident of FutCity and adopted around the world, the T-coin becomes a global economic driving force that surprisingly finds its strength challenged by a devastating cyberattack.

The novel takes its readers on a journey where there's no room to take their breaths, hearts beat fast and the different levels of narration intersect. Estranged from time and space, the protagonist of *FutCity* is haunted by anonymous death threat messages in this excerpt of the novel.

From *FutCity*

Ahmed Isselmou, translated by Ibrahim Fawzy

Fritz Bergundthal, 09:55

YOU ARE GOING TO DIE.

This four-word message in English popped up on his old-fashioned mobile phone with an irritating ringtone that pulled him out of his thoughts. He wouldn't have taken it seriously, but it had been sent anonymously. On the right lane of Welfare Highway cutting through FutCity's high glass towers and concrete blocks, he was driving sixty kilometres per hour — the minimum speed in a street where the law would punish anyone delaying the commuters who were chasing their foggy dreams. The buzzing of automatically set alarms on their smartphones would awaken them at dawn, but they would enjoy the nine-minute snooze between the two alarms much more than the six hours of sleep they managed to steal from a jam-packed schedule.

DO YOU THINK FUTCITY CAN HIDE YOU?

In less than two minutes after the first message, a second one arrived. He felt a slight tingling that began from the right part of his head, and travelled down to his knees. A sudden mirage appeared between his car and the one ahead. He turned right into the side street, known as ServStreet. There were only a few cars, some of which were parked so their owners could sip some coffee to kick-start their long day.

He parked his car at a paid parking lot, and sent a text message to withdraw enough money to pay for ten hours. He then walked up the glass bridge crossing over the torrential river of vehicles. For three minutes, he stopped and grasped the metal handrail fixed to the breakproof glass of the bridge. His mind wandered for a few seconds while he was following the movement of metros: two of which cross the railway along the city, arrive at a specific time, and stop where they're meant to. The metros don't care about the shouts of the late

man shouldering a heavy bag, the carriage doors closing a fraction of a second before he reaches. This split second will force him to wait for four more minutes until the next metro arrives, and this, for him, would mean losing money.

For a second, it came to his mind to make sure whether the glass was really breakproof. Out of nowhere, he banged on it with his strong fist — this drew the attention of the hurried passers-by, and hurt his hand, although the glass wasn't affected.

His past wasn't a source of pride, but during the last ten years, he had attempted to get rid of everything related to that past. He might even assert that none of his former acquaintances can recognize him now.

Receiving an anonymous message with a death threat and locating him was, however, an issue that couldn't be ignored.

It was seven forty-three when he gave a sheepish smile to the scanner equipped with face-recognition technology. It registered his arrival seventeen minutes earlier than the start of official working hours. He used to dedicate these extra minutes to greet the gatekeepers and cleaners before he would take the fast elevator to the ninety-eighth floor where 360 News Network channel was located.

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Danish to English

Hazel Evans

Mentor

Paul Russell Garrett

Hazel Evans is a writer and translator based in Aarhus, Denmark. She has a soft spot for literature that's not afraid to break the rules, and an interest in what other languages can do that English can't, or hasn't yet thought of doing. Previous projects include *Mad About Copenhagen, Talk Danish To Me* and *Vanilla.*

Introduction

Hazel Evans

Now I'll begin to speak, these words can find a way by Gry Stokkendahl Dalgas is a memoir set in the meantime between man and woman, as Gry waits for her first appointment at the gender dysphoria clinic. It's a time of turmoil, hope and reflection, and, in keeping with this, the narrative shifts seamlessly between past, future and present.

We meet Gry when she's first finding her voice as a woman, via an Instagram post on the very first page. The rest of the book weaves in and out of notes, poetry and letters — all written in a concise prose that leaves plenty of awe-processing space for what Rachel Cusk might call "iconic utterances". Utterances like, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree unless you throw it," "When I shave, my face becomes me," "You know best, just as we all know best who we really are," "My pussy is buried deep inside my soul" and "I'm a matter of time."

The book is about gender dysphoria and the healthcare system that makes transition both possible and unbearable, but it's also about womanhood. And just as Sheila Heiti's *Motherhood* — written from the perspective of not yet being a mother — has been described as capturing the essence of motherhood better than a mother could, it seems to me that Gry, having never taken womanhood for granted, is able to capture the essence of womanhood better than a cisgender woman could.

N.B. In the following sample there are several references to Hans Christian Andersen's *The Wild Swans* — a tale in which Princess Elisa must weave eleven shirts of stinging nettles with her bare hands in order to release her brothers from the curse (they were turned into swans by their evil stepmother).

From *Now I'll begin to speak, these words can find a way* (alt title: *In the meantime*)

Gry Stokkendahl Dalgas, translated by Hazel Evans

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My phone lights up the ceiling. Things are happening on the internet and I don't want to check them. Some likes, some comments, I'm disgusting, I'm loved. I really went and wrote it, broke through the mask. Now I'll begin to speak, these words can find a way.

Awake again, the night cut short, and I don't feel at home. I can't quite put my finger on it, it's like the feeling I had when I was 10 years old and I dropped the porcelain dog. I'm 26 now and my upstairs neighbour is taking a shower. I have a girlfriend orchid on my windowsill. In a room that really is my room, everything still in its place. What had happened, I watched the music video. There's

mould between the wall and the bed. I scrub away at it with bleach and open the window. I take a break from scrubbing and open a new window on my computer.

.

The video begins at night-time. Small, shooting stars, then a blanket of clouds rolling in behind her. Sophie, alone in the sky. I've fangirled her for so long. Before she was anonymous, faceless. I, was that a teardrop in my eye? Now she's really showing her face, her budding breasts. Red sky in the morning, rainbow is coming. And I'm crysmiling down into my iPhone. Sophie tosses her head to one side and blinks playfully as she sings I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but I think your inside is your best side. Brain freeze, the good kind. I can tell her face is a face that has been through masculinity, jaw, brow and all. But how beautiful she is, all red hair and lips. Then it's raining and purple lightning strikes in time to the music.

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My feet grew quickly out of the shoes I wanted to borrow. The covers of the books I love the most are frayed and tatty. My tristesse is immortalised in the photo from my confirmation — perhaps that's when I ought to have begun weaving the nettle shirts. Our Danish teacher and the school gave us the complete fairy tales.

My parents call and tell me about the swans and winter, about the watercress grazing along the banks of the stream. My body is my stepmother, the jealous queen. I want to take a break, to be able to read again, unwind.

I give my parents a daughter.

It feels like I'm taking a son away from them. They mustn't hate me. I'll visit them soon and it'll be as their son. I'm afraid of losing them.

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Please note: not currently seeking a publisher

Hindi to English

Vaibhav Sharma

Mentor

Daisy Rockwell

Vaibhav Sharma is a translator from India working between Hindi and English, with a particular interest in regional dialects of Hindi. He was selected as the 2023 Saroj Lal Hindi Translation mentee and is currently being mentored by award-winning translator Daisy Rockwell. His upcoming work includes books by Anil Yadav, Amit Dutta and others.

Introduction

Vaibhav Sharma

Anil Yadav's *Courtesans Don't Read Newspapers* is the book I proposed as part of my application to NCW's Emerging Translator Mentorship 2023. I came across this book while browsing the internet for new and underrated works of Hindi literature. The title and cover of this book immediately caught my attention. After reading a short blurb, I decided to give it a try. The titular novella opens with an exploration of the lives of the modern-day sex workers of Varanasi, an ancient holy city settled on the banks of the river Ganga, where grand ballrooms, luscious Urdu poetry, and beautiful dancers of Bollywood's brothels are replaced by dingy rooms with dusty floors, peeling walls, kerosene lamps, and plump women performing Punjabi dance numbers. In the beginning we meet Prakash, a photojournalist who is looking for the perfect photo, that one photograph which he knows is out there but can't seem to find. The city is changing fast, and the relatively peaceful coexistence of sex workers and civil society is no longer acceptable to a few powerful people with vested interests. It only takes propaganda, a failing media, prejudiced residents, a dysfunctional police force, and a greedy developer with a plan for the city to rid itself of the sex workers. After I was selected for the mentorship, my mentor Daisy and I decided to move forward with the book. Before the mentorship it was difficult to contact writers and acquire permission to translate their work. With Daisy's help and guidance I was able to acquire permission from Mr. Anil Yadav and honed my craft to produce a better translation. The mentorship provided me with the opportunity to get in touch with various publishers and editors and I'm optimistic the book will be published shortly.

From *Courtesans Don't Read Newspapers*

Anil Yadav, translated by Vaibhav Sharma

What Chavi thought was a photograph was actually a bad dream. As she walked alongside Prakash, she saw a face in his hands and, behind him, a headless girl, her hands folded over her chest, desperately trying to say something.

What Prakash believed to be a dream was actually a photograph. A photograph which occasionally shimmered in his dreams before disappearing into the whirlwinds of sleep: Ganga ghats still yawning in a stupor from last night's slumber, river water a faint red, and the clear sky of early morning. Under a high turret pockmarked with windows, a wooden platform balances atop a heap of naked, gaunt women, writhing and flailing, their ribs poking out of their skin. A strong man, wearing a yellow uttariya, his arms raised above his head, sits on the wobbly platform while a priest pours milk on his head from a huge copper pot. Standing near one of the corners of the platform is a moustachioed soldier holding a clothes hanger from which hangs a starched uniform fluttering in the wind. A group of happy young men stands at a distance, muttering chants and throwing grains of rice at the platform.

The photograph and the dream were bound to collide one day, perhaps destroying everything in their wake. That day was both far off and imminent. Death always lurks near life, ready to pounce, but the warmth of life makes death seem far away.

As a photojournalist, Prakash knew he'd never be able to capture the photograph from his dreams, but in those days, numerous photographs of a similar nature were strewn about the streets, on the ghats, on the roads, around the temples — everywhere — but he hadn't been able to capture a single one in a decent manner. Everything around him was changing fast; by the time he focused his camera, the scene before him had changed

to reveal the invisible. It seemed as if the whole city was swirling and drowning in a vortex.

The first winter of the century in Banaras, the city of dharma, culture, and trickery, was indeed a strange one. People shivered in the bone-chilling winds, but in the dark, narrow, winding lanes and on the roads sinking beneath the weight of the crowds blew a searing wind of morality, swiftly turning back the wheel of time.

The wind of morality started blowing when an old, desiccated leaf broke off, and fell swirling to the ground.

That day, a double-column black-and-white photograph of a house in C. Antaratma's locality, Manduadih, was printed on the eleventh page of the newspaper. On one side of the door of this hybrid half-brick, half-tile house, a long black arrow had been drawn using tar, below which was written the following: "This is not a brothel, desent people live here." The shape of the arrow was such that it looked hesitant to point at the open door, and the word "decent" was misspelt. A buffalo stood tethered outside the house, eagerly staring at the writing on the wall. Underneath the photograph was a caption in italics and boldface — ***"To Save Honour: Manduadih is currently home to about three hundred courtesans. The loafers who frequent these sordid settlements have started to wander into the homes of neighbouring colonies too. Hence the people have devised this method to save their women."***

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Indonesian to English

Anandita 'Didiet' Budiman & Sekar Larasati Sulistya

Mentor

Khairani Barokka

Anandita 'Didiet' Budiman is an undergraduate student from Bandung currently majoring in Japanese Studies. Having an interest in languages has led them to pursue an education in translation. They believe translators are mediators between different cultures, an important position in an era where global communication networks are commonplace.

Sekar Larasati Sulistya recently graduated and majored in Japanese Studies. Born and raised in Pemalang, a small town located in Central Java, her interest in culture and languages has led her to pursue an education in cultural studies. She dreams of publishing her own book someday.

Introduction

Anandita 'Didiet' Budiman & Sekar Larasati Sulistya

What is a door's duty? To open or to close? The novel *Dua Muka Daun Pintu* is a story of a door's journey towards understanding how the world works, written by doctor and author Triskaidekaman and published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. This book was inspired by the feeling of helplessness and the intense desire to go outside that many felt when the pandemic upended our lives.

Dua Muka Daun Pintu tells of a steel door guarding a man, Garda, inside a secret isolation facility. Friendship blossoms between them as Garda offers the door songs and stories, and the door offers their companionship in return. Just when the monotony of their life begins to wear down the steel door, they are suddenly thrown into a mysterious gathering place for doors from all around the world. There, the steel door begins to learn what being a door ultimately means, and decides to help Garda escape his imprisonment.

From its very first page, the poetic imagery in this novel hooked us. Triskaidekaman's storytelling from a door's perspective invites us to ask: *"What if doors could understand humans?"* The surreal world building by the author and the way each character's story is poetically conveyed are its main charms. We took an interest in this novel because it stood out, premise-wise, compared to other novels released at the time. To us, this novel can make us readers feel the nuance in each scene and every intense emotion felt by the characters. We hope our translation does this work of literary art justice.

From *Dua Muka Daun Pintu*

Triskaidekaman, translated by Anandita 'Didiet' Budiman & Sekar Larasati Sulistya

"Who are you? New door?" one of them asked.

I looked to my left and right, wondering if there might be another new door like me nearby.

"We're talking to you, Little Steel Door. We haven't seen you before. What door are you, huh?" called the other. The doors in the group immediately had their eyes on me.

I tried to remember the introduction I had prepared. *No.* Too lengthy. I have to keep it short.

"Introduce yourself or leave," the first door demanded.

"H-h-hello," I began, adjusting my voice, "I'm a cell door from a special prison facility."

"Oh? Wow. Cool! Is there a prisoner behind you?"

I nodded.

A door at the corner of the crowd chimed in, "Special facilities usually have famous prisoners in them. That true?"

Before I was able to answer that question, the first door that greeted me immediately cut me off with a request, "Tell us about them. We want to know more."

"Guarding a political prisoner must be great, huh."

"Quite the assumption, there. Did they even say anything about guarding a political prisoner?"

Garda once asked me not to tell people too much about him. Reason number one was he wasn't comfortable being treated like that. Said it felt like being stabbed in the back. Reason number two — he never stated it out loud, but I knew — he was afraid an explanation like that would attract all sorts of danger. The people who threw Garda in jail knew he was still alive, but they didn't know where he was and what he was planning.

Those people might even hurt him.

"Just an activist."

"But they got sent to a special facility?"

I considered explaining further but changed my mind. I was afraid of spilling too much information. So, I stayed silent. The atmosphere turned awkward as I waited to be driven off.

But the moment never came.

That wasn't how this group operated.

"The person behind them sounds pretty interesting. Maybe they're not ready to talk about them yet. No big deal. Political prisoners tend to break their paroles, anyway. We can ask again some other time," said ICU Door, breaking the silence.

The doors acquiesced. Some grumbled, but most of them understood. They didn't have it in them to challenge ICU Door. I was not expecting ICU Door to approach me, to the point where their thick handle was touching mine — so this is how two doors greet each other.

"This is intergroup courtesy," they explained. "You're lucky for coming at the perfect time."

"Perfect time?"

"We're currently in the middle of a forum party now. Members are the only ones who can attend, but this is a good opportunity for you. You can get to know whichever doors you want to know better."

"Do all of you have to be in groups like this?"

"Ideally. Although, if you want to look at the other groups, go right ahead. No one's stopping you. Word of advice, though. Don't approach those celebrity doors there. Especially the sliding ones. They're just stuck-up snobs."

I tried to put on a smile. They didn't know I got here to this group because I was driven off from the group they mentioned.

"There are a few moderators here. If you have any troubles while looking around, try finding a door with a yellow ribbon."

I nodded.

"Go ahead and take a look around, now. You can choose whichever group you like later," they said. "You can come back here anytime."

When I looked back at the group of minor doors, it had been true — they had spread out, no longer gathering with their fellow small-fries. These doors were dynamic. Those who were in pairs now had formed groups. Some who were in groups split off to be in pairs. I simply went wherever my intuition took me. At least I'd gotten to know a few doors that quite piqued my interest.

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INDON
ENGL

Italian to English

Antonella Lettieri

Mentor

Howard Curtis

Antonella Lettieri works as a commercial and academic translator and as a reader and consultant for a literary scout, but translating literature has always been her dream. After graduating from Bologna, Italy, with an MA in Comparative Literatures and Post-Colonial Cultures, she moved to London, where she currently lives.

Introduction

Antonella Lettieri

La guerra dei Murazzi (*The War of the Murazzi*) by Enrico Remmert won the three most prestigious prizes in Italy for collections of short stories in 2018 and has since been named one of the 100 best Italian books of the last 20 years.

The title story captures the time, towards the late eighties or early nineties, when Italy transformed from a monocultural country into a multicultural society. The narrator Manu, like many of her peers, embraced multiculturalism enthusiastically, despite also feeling confused — and strangely fascinated — by some of the ugliest and most violent consequences of immigration and marginalisation. In telling her version of the facts, a forty-something Manu looks back with nostalgia at this key period of her youth.

Reading this story, I was struck by a prose that is not only uninhibited but rather driven forward by its long sentences and paragraphs and presents the events in an oral and colloquial style that I found extremely convincing and enjoyable and also thought would be a fantastic challenge for the translator.

Working with Howard, I quickly realised that one of my main goals in translating this piece should be preserving the colloquial tone without losing the richness of the writing and the feeling of a "cavalcade" of ideas organically flowing one from the other.

We paid great attention to register and rhythm and we decided early on that I should keep the original sentence structure as much as possible. My guiding image in this effort was the metaphor of the river Po, which is key to the story, as it seems to me that Remmert's writing flows as powerfully and impetuously as the river itself, though always contained by the strong embankments of his great control over style.

From *The War of the Murazzi*

Enrico Remmert, translated by Antonella Lettieri

Back in those days, I lived near the station, a place of arrivals and departures in every possible way, and I worked in a bar down there, at the Murazzi, in one of those places overlooking the river banks, and those days were the years between the nineties and the noughties and they were still days when I wasn't like I wanted to be but I wanted to be like I believed I could become, or at least that's what I kept telling everyone. Because down there at the Murazzi, everyone knew me and I knew everyone, and some were closer friends, others much less, but at the end of the day every single one of them had to talk to me, as it was me working behind the bar when they ordered, and it was hi Manu, how's it going Manu, two G&Ts Manu, everything alright Manu, and, anyway, lots of people used to come to that place but I don't think many knew it because to know a place you need to know its ghosts, otherwise you see only what we were taught to see, only what we learned to believe that place contained. Those who really knew it, on the other hand, understand that at a certain point a war broke out in that place, not in the daylight but by moonlight, and I'm talking about those years when you could still drive onto the banks and when the North Africans had started invading them and, after a certain time of the day, down at the Murazzi you could only hear the drug dealers yelling and only smell the stinking smoke from the barbecues and there were fights every day and every night ended with people being hurt, and some nights ended with people being seriously hurt and some nights ended with someone being dead, even if no one seems to remember any more.

Now, I don't really want to go down the path of I was there and you weren't, or I might end up sounding like one of those groupies such as Pamela Des Barres or Marianne Faithfull when they talk about how they were there, with The Rolling Stones, and who had the biggest dick, Mick Jagger or Keith Richards — I'd assume Richards,

of course — and stuff like that, but the thing is I was there and you weren't. Back in those days, I worked as a bartender at the Murazzi, like I've already said, but what I didn't say is that I tended bars down there for years, from when the banks were still a place only populated by a bunch of revolutionaries to when it felt like being on the main drag during the Sanremo Music Festival and then later still, that is when the rocket scientists who run this city and pass judgement on it closed down the Murazzi, which is absolute nonsense, like shutting down Las Ramblas in Barcelona or Temple Bar in Dublin or the Bairro Alto in Lisbon: basically, these guys shut down Turin's most famous place in Europe, may they be shrouded in a boundless shame until the end of times.

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Japanese to English

Cat Anderson

Mentor

Juliet Winters Carpenter

Cat Anderson is a UK-based translator working from Japanese to English. She was the winner of the 4th JLPP international translation competition and runner up in the Kurodahan Press Translation Prize. She works as a freelance literary translator, and is particularly interested in speculative fiction and travel literature.

Introduction

Cat Anderson

In spring 2013, author Natsu Miyashita and her family upped sticks and moved from their home on the Japanese mainland to Tomuraushi, a tiny community in the middle of a mountainous national park in Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's main islands. Initially reluctant to live somewhere so remote, Miyashita was eventually won over by the enthusiasm of her husband and their three children. In *The Playground of the Gods,* Miyashita records a memorable year in the life of her family in journal form.

Life is different in Tomuraushi (an Ainu name meaning "the place of many flowers"). Temperatures dip below freezing for much of the year, and there are new plants and animals to discover, and signs of life all around (as you'll see from the extract!). The neighbours are welcoming, and the social aspect of the family's new life really comes to the fore when the children join the local school, the heart of the tight-knit community. In fact, the children are probably the real stars of the story, constantly surprising Miyashita with their own discoveries and insights as they grow into this new environment. All the while, Miyashita ponders the family's priorities. Will her children be able to adapt to wider society if they grow up here? What's more important: being educated alongside everyone else, or gaining a different kind of experience? These questions ultimately influence the family's decision about whether to stay on in the village.

I like Miyashita's gentle humour, her affectionate eye for the little things her children say and do, and her depiction of a slower pace of life, in a place where the air is always fresh, and the seasons are especially vivid.

From *The Playground of the Gods* [神さまたちの遊ぶ庭]

Natsu Miyashita, translated by Cat Anderson

With thanks to Kobunsha for permission to use this extract.

Bear at the hot springs

A brown bear was recently spotted loitering around the hot springs at the upper end of the village. Actually, I'd heard there had already been other signs: paw prints on the riverbank near the school, mounds of bear droppings, a retreating bear seen from someone's car. But no-one around here sees brown bears as dangerous, as long as you don't have the bad luck to come across one suddenly at point-blank range. What's dangerous is when they encounter humans up close and neither bear nor human has any room to manoeuvre. So bears and people try to stay away from each other, and if an encounter seems likely, each side is careful to make their whereabouts known to the other.

Problems arise when tourists leave food lying around — throwing away picnic leftovers at the side of the road, for example, instead of taking them home. Bears gobble down the food and get a taste for it. Then they start showing up around human habitation in search of more, resulting in injury to humans and also to themselves.

I feel like maybe I'm tempting fate by writing all this, though. As if these words might come back to haunt me later on...

Snake invasion repelled

I locked eyes with the big snake that was trying to slither in through the kitchen window. Seeing it up close, there was something arresting about the way it flicked its tongue in and out. Well, at least it wasn't a bear trying to get in. In fact, it hardly bothered me. It turns out I'm quite unflappable when it comes to snakes and insects (except midges, of course). I closed the window, calmly.

Carpenter bee

I heard what sounded like the lowing of a cow. *A cow? Here?* I looked around — only to find it was a humongous carpenter bee. I was quite chuffed at having discovered that a carpenter bee's wing beats sound like a cow mooing, though I wasn't sure what to do with the information. For now, it was time to beat a swift and silent retreat, leaving the giant bee to its own devices.

Bear in the potato patch

When we got home from a family outing today, we came face to face with a Yezo sika deer in front of the house. We all stood there oohing and aahing as it gracefully turned tail and dashed off. We later found out from a neighbour that at that very moment, a vegetable plot just a few hundred metres away had actually been playing host to a brown bear. The bear had clambered over the deer fence and invaded the plot, and was digging up the potatoes and helping itself. We all decided that since the bear must have filled up on potatoes, it wouldn't try to eat any of us now. Though what is it they say? There's always room for pudding...

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Korean to English

Gene Png

Mentor

Anton Hur

Gene Png is a Singaporean literary translator and illustrator based in Seoul. She was awarded the Grand Prize in Poetry at the 53rd Modern Korean Literature Translation Awards.

Introduction

Gene Png

Me, Some Day by Lee Juran tells the story of an impoverished young woman who must learn how to be her own person after the death of her grandmother. Yuri grieves by visiting her old neighbourhood and talking to the house where she and her grandmother used to live. She also makes clay art of her grandmother's favourite things. As she learns to cope, unexpected friendships blossom and Yuri discovers new hobbies that nudge her toward acceptance and happiness.

But this could not be possible without her strongest pillar of support, her best friend. The unnamed woman whom Yuri addresses as "unni" is a writer who feels estranged from her family. Their friendship weaves the novella together; the pair plant spring onions, share childhood stories, celebrate each other's birthdays when everyone else has forgotten, and give each other space to be with their sadness. These vulnerable and intimate moments are written in Lee Juran's signature sparse yet introspective prose.

Lee Juran's stories offer an unfiltered look into the lives of the lower and middle-class living in Seoul. Her characters are often aware of their dire living situations, yet instead of aspiring to achieve the unattainable, they choose to accept things as they are and redefine their own happiness. Though this perspective may seem bleak, the agency it provides lends power and strength to those who do not have the luxury of choices.

From *Me, Some Day*

Lee Juran, translated by Gene Png

Unni said she'd like to go on walks again, so we've started spending more time together in the evenings. I don't know how far we usually walk, but it seems like we've been more energetic. It's a good thing. Today we made sujebi from scratch and went to the park after dinner. As we avoided bumping into the people walking toward us, I thought, So many people, dogs, bicycles, and we're one of them, mixed in together.

As I was caught up in my own thoughts, unni and I drifted apart and I was left alone. The 63 Building came into view. Having someone to go home with is such a nice thing to have. So many people want to live alone, but for some reason, I don't want that. But still, when I'm left alone I wonder, Am I weird? Is it a weakness to want someone there with me all the time? Is weakness that much of a bad thing? People keep telling me to get back on my feet.

Oh, there you are. I barely caught you.

Unni and I met up at the park entrance and walked home together. Two months ago, she left the company that she'd been with for sixteen years. She worked for six thousand days, and barely rested for fifty, but there were already people who were worried about her. Unni would tell people, It's barely been two weeks, It's barely been fifteen days, It's barely been three weeks now, It's barely been a month. Perhaps she repeated herself too much, but adding "barely" to her sentences became a habit of hers.

And sure enough, even though she had intended on resting, she was always busy. Even when it feels like I'm the busiest person in the world, she made sure that I wasn't. Unni starts her day with cleaning the house. Before she moved in, this tiny house was always covered in a bit of dust. Dust bunnies had a way of burrowing in the corners. Since I hated cleaning, I would only sweep them up when I discovered them. But since unni moved

in, the house has been cleaner than when I was its only occupant. On her first weekend here, she went to the supply store to buy repair putty, and covered up the small holes that had been left by nails. She also got lubricant and applied them to every creaky door. Later, she bought trash bags and folded them up one-by-one so they were easy to take out. Let's not forget the fire extinguisher. Unni bought a small one and placed it by the entrance. Sometimes just looking at it makes me feel safe, the way it guards the door silently.

Unni has two very special abilities related to bugs and ramyeon. You wouldn't consider them very special if you've lived in a bug-free house or don't enjoy ramyeon. Unni herself didn't realize that she possessed them, since she hadn't lived in a house with bugs nor does she eat ramyeon often. She's an expert in finding bugs, catching them alive, and letting them out. And on random days when I feel like ramyeon, she has a knack for taking out a packet that was just about to expire. It always feels like she's doing good for the world. Like she is preventing something bad that could've happened if we hadn't thrown out that packet of ramyeon. Like she is turning back time and leaving no space for regrets. I wonder if I think too much of a packet of ramyeon, but that's just how it feels.

We definitely need proper walking shoes. These slippers aren't made for walking, I thought as unni and I looked up at the 63 Building.

Have you been?
Once. When I was little.
What's up there?
An aquarium.
Is it still there?
I got a present, it was a necklace with a tiny clam sitting in sparkly water.
Who gave it to you?
My kindergarten teacher.

On our way home, we talked about things like this, about walking shoes too. Things that probably cost about five hundred to a thousand dollars. Things that we could afford, but for some reason, don't ever. We live between a necklace and a pair of walking shoes. After our long walks, after passing by so many people, we'll reach home, and in that space it'll be unni and me. Just us two. It's nice being in a crowd, but lately the quietness of my room appeals to me too. Not like when I lived alone. After a good shower, changing into comfy clothes, and lying down on my bed, I'm no longer a person amongst others, I am me. I realize: I exist in this world, I am breathing. After a whole day of putting on different costumes and personalities, my body and mind are now nothing but me, and in living as I am, I become myself, and the world becomes mine.

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KOREA

ENGLI

Norwegian to English

Olivia Blyth

Mentor

Rosie Hedger

Olivia Blyth is originally from Northumberland and now lives in London. She's a second language speaker of Norwegian who began translating from academic and historical sources during an MA in Museums, Galleries and Contemporary Culture in 2020. She also writes short stories and films.

Introduction

Olivia Blyth

Ida Takes Charge (*Ida Tar Ansvar*), is a book I read shortly after it came out in 2019 and it stuck with me until I began translating it as part of this mentorship. It's a debut novel by Kjersti Halvorsen, nominated for the *Tarjei Vesaas Debutantpris* upon publication and adapted for television in 2022. At a glance, it presents as a novel about being in your early 20s; university accommodation, social anxiety, slightly strange boyfriends. However, it quickly becomes a nightmarish blur of the lines between rational and irrational fears.

Ida is going to university again, starting first year for the second time. She's preoccupied by a fear of terror attacks, like the infamous 2011 shooting in Oslo which permanently altered Norwegian collective consciousness. This is heightened when she stumbles across an online community of misogyny, sexualisation and violence linked to a boy she meets in the library.

The prose has a flat toned, muted realism which in some ways reminds me of Sally Rooney's writing. It's very snappy, which I've sometimes found challenging to replicate in English. The weight of its themes — gendered violence, internet radicalisation and terror — are suspended in a light, mundane tone. It captures details of contemporary life that feels honest and horrible in a way that I was so captivated by when I first read it and even more so now in working on its translation.

I began translating Norwegian fiction as a hobby and I don't have any formal education in either translation or languages. That's why it has been really wonderful working with Rosie to develop my skill and better understand how translation fits into the international publishing process. I've also been really grateful to meet other translators and make connections through the National Centre for Writing.

From *Ida Takes Charge*

Kjersti Halvorsen, translated by Olivia Blyth

I jump and spill my tea when the doorbell rings. It's 10 o'clock. I open the door. A fairly young man stands there. He must be Tarjei. He reminds me of Theodor, in a way, even though his hair is longer. He has sunglasses but no white cane. He holds himself against the railing on the stairs. I wonder how he got here. Maybe by taxi. Maybe he got the bus and then walked. He reaches out to shake my hand, smiling in an unclear direction. He looks freshly shaven. I wonder how blind people shave.

"The piano is downstairs," I say.

He walks down the stairs in careful steps. Holds onto the banister, traces his other hand along the wall: the embossed wallpaper, the framed photos of me and Theodor.

"I can smell it," he says, smiling. "I can actually smell a neglected piano from a distance." He turns his head in my direction, so that his sunglasses look past me. Maybe he's lying to make himself sound interesting.

"Sorry," is all I can think to say, as if the piano's disrepair is my fault.

"It's not me you should apologise to," he says. He taps his fingers on the piano lid, as if it's his.

"To the piano, then?" I say. "Will I be forgiven?"

He laughs politely. "If pianos were always in tune, I'd be out of a job."

To make small talk, I ask how you become a piano tuner.

"Before anything else, you need to practise pitch."

"Do you have perfect pitch?"

He nods. "Can I?" he says, placing a hand on the piano stool.

I start to feel like I'm in the way. He opens the lid. Plays some chords and scales. The piano is out of tune. It sounds as if the music is balanced on something narrow and unstable. It reminds me of Theodor's dancing. Theodor's shaky horror film music.

Tarjei leaves the lid open. He presses down a single note with an increasing rhythm. He opens his box of piano tools, then feels his way back to the lacquered surface. I stand in the doorway, watching him while he works.

He tells me I can go and do something else for a while. "I'll let you know when I'm done." He probably prefers to not be watched.

I go out into the utility room. Move around some clothes, open and close the washing machine just for something to do. Instead of going back upstairs into the living room, I stay quietly in the doorway.

I stand looking at Tarjei while he works. His biceps tensing as he adjusts the strings, a single tendon shifting in the back of his hand. It feels like a bad porn film.

"Hello?" he says, tentatively. As if out into space. It hits me: he doesn't know if I've left or not. He can't know. It's me looking at him. Not the other way around.

"Hello," he says again, more lightly this time. His nostrils widen slightly.

He gets up and moves. His hands grip the screwdriver. He's scared, I think. I have it in me to scare somebody.

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Polish to English

Dawid Mobolaji

Mentor

Sean Gasper Bye

Dawid Mobolaji is a Polish-Nigerian translator, writer and medical doctor based in London. Born and raised in West Pomerania, he works between English and his native Polish. In September 2022, he was the translator-in-residence at Dragon Hall, translating contemporary poet Klara Nowakowska. His translation from Martyna Bunda's novel *The Blue Cat* appeared in the journal *Turkoslavia.*

Introduction

Dawid Mobolaji

The Pavilion for Small Mammals is the lightly fictionalised diary of Polish writer Patryk Pufelski, born in 1990. Pufelski works in Wrocław, at the oldest zoo in Poland, where he primarily takes care of penguins, seals and shelducks. As a young, Jewish, openly gay man with a charming affinity for things past, his diary offers answers to questions you didn't know you had. How do you nanny a baby flamingo? Is being a vegetarian cyclist really enough to be an enemy of the Polish state? What does a friendship between a twenty-something-year-old, self-declared wannabe pensioner and an octogenarian Holocaust survivor look like?

Spanning almost a decade, Pufelski chronicles his journey from dropping out of university to landing a zookeeping job of his dreams. He shares not only laugh-out-loud, self-deprecating anecdotes from his personal and professional life, but also offers moving pictures of his family history, the present-day Jewish community in Poland, and life as a queer person under a socially conservative government. He mixes the personal with the political, commenting, for instance, on the coronavirus pandemic, the war in Ukraine and a string of protests for reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights ripping through Poland. All the while, animals leap off the page, not least pet ferrets and Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs. Coupled with verbatim transcriptions of conversations taken from life, he paints a portrait of an entourage of loveable, hilariously larger-than-life family members, colleagues and friends — "all of them animals, some of them humans."

I was delighted to work on this infectiously joyful book. Pufelski's voice presents a special kind of seemingly effortless literary wit. As Kinga Dunin said in *Krytyka Polityczna*, it is "a remarkably likeable and unpretentious book," and "if mental health problems are truly commonplace nowadays, doctors and therapists should issue it as a prescription."

From *The Pavilion for Small Mammals*

Patryk Pufelski, translated by Dawid Mobolaji

28th July 2016 [page 45]

You can choose to laugh or not — thankfully when it comes to private, unverbalised judgements, there still prevails a degree of discretion, however:

when the army stop you in the Vistula river boulevards to check you're carrying your identity papers at half six in the morning, even though you're travelling on a sea-green bike and telling them you're in a rush to get to the penguins, everywhere's noisy, stuffy and muggy, and then your day at work is miserable and frustrating (not the first, nor the last), then it's nice to come back home. There's chłodnik, a chilled summer soup, in the fridge. Zośka the dog, Soufflé the ferret and Bubble the tarantula are over the moon (the spider remains steadfastly restrained in displays of emotion). My ancestors look on kindly from a photo on the wall. And all my things are exactly where they should be — that is, in total disarray.

9th March 2020 [page 109]

Today's not only Purim and the anniversary of the birth of the poet Zuzanna Ginczanka, but also the birthday of my grandma Wusia, my knight in woollen armour. Grandma's interested in animals — she's the one who would take me to the zoo or Oliwa district park to feed the rats, or to the beach to watch the jellyfish, or the long-tailed ducks and the eiders wintering over in the bay. When she calls, she often asks: How're your cape birds doing? Penguins are her favourite animals. When I was maybe seven or so, I asked her, and that's what she told me. I must've been invested in what answer she'd give because I remember it precisely. For now, Grandma isn't able to come to Wrocław to meet our penguins personally. That's why, this year, we named one of our chicks Wusia, after none other than her. And that made Grandma as proud as a peacock!

(Everyone at work, to my surprise, very much liked the idea, which moved me wildly. Plus, Milena rustled up

a purple leg band because that's my Wusia's favourite colour.)

17th May 2019 [page 95]

In the absolutely perfect book, *Things I Didn't Throw Out*, Marcin Wicha writes about how his difficult mother would spring up to fight like "an oversensitive Semitic rhinoceros" whenever she heard anti-Semitic comments. After today's honours from the Lublin province governor for people who've distinguished themselves, in his mind, in the fight against LGBT ideology, today of all days — the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia — when just a few kilometres away in that very same Lublin, people were laying flowers for the gay victims of the Majdanek concentration camp — I've decided: no more. Not when my colleague kept prying into everyone in turn in the cafeteria, asking who's into guys, and I didn't have the guts to speak up. Not when a close friend wrote to me saying she can't return to Poland for now because Poland doesn't want her daughter as she's got two mums. And she'd get sod all, no citizenship! And not when I've heard about the Holocaust experiences of my loved ones, about the bunkers, the wardrobes, the ghettos, the lice, the ramps and the gas chambers.

Fucking enough. Even if it means they'll kick my head in, I solemnly swear that I will no longer cover my ears and pretend I can't hear the anti-Semitic, racist and homophobic comments. That's what I've trained myself to do since I was a kid. It's unseemly, they'd say. It's safer this way, better not to stick out. You can stomach anything, keep your head down. I was afraid, it's that simple. And now I no longer want to be. I'm a little more grown-up and know I've got support.

Fucking enough. Here comes the oversensitive Semitic rhinoceros. And it's fucking livid.

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Québec French to English

Claire Gullander-Drolet

Mentor

Sarah Ardizzone

Claire Gullander-Drolet is a writer and academic currently based in Hong Kong. She grew up in Montréal and is a longtime student of Korean. Passionate about fiction that crosses geographical and linguistic borders, she is especially drawn to narratives that speak to history from the margins of the mainstream.

Introduction

Claire Gullander-Drolet

Ook Chung was born in Japan to Korean parents in 1963 and moved to Montréal at the age of two. He has built an impressive career as a writer and translator over the past twenty years and received several prestigious prizes, including the John Glassco prize for translation (into French) of Kerri Sakamoto's *The Electrical Field*, and the Prix littéraire Canada-Japon in 2000 for *Kimchi*. I encountered Chung's writing completely by chance; as a long-time Korean language learner, I was excited to discover the work of a Korean author from Montréal writing in French. Chung's work explores themes of linguistic and cultural displacement as well as Asian diasporic identity in the Francophone world. Consistent across his oeuvre is a concern with the messiness of history and identity, and the ways that the past always (and despite our best efforts) finds ways to haunt and inflect the present.

Chung's most recent book *La Jeune Fille de la Paix* (*Peace Girl*) is an ambitious riff on these thematic preoccupations. The title refers to the statues memorializing the so-called "Comfort Women," young girls sexually enslaved by the Japanese Imperial army during the occupation of South Korea. The first of these statues was erected opposite the Japanese Embassy in Seoul in 2011, and since then, many other statues in the likeness of young girls have been erected both in South Korea and abroad. Using the figure of the "peace girl," *La Jeune Fille* grapples with the idea of historical reckoning, and why women's (and girls') contributions to history are so frequently elided.

The excerpt I've translated for this anthology (under Sarah Ardizzone's expert guidance) encapsulates some of the challenges of translating Chung, whose writing can be densely allusive and richly allegorical and is often laden with Korea-specific references left uncontextualized

in the original. Though the title this section suggests a conversation between a statue and an actual bird, many of the peace girl statues feature birds as well. Readers interested in the symbolism of the statues can learn more here: https://www.pacificatrocities.org/blog/peace-girl-a-statue-of-peace

From *La Jeune Fille de la Paix*

Ook Chung, translated by Claire Gullander-Drolet

Dialogue between a Bird and Statue

At the entrance to the traditional Korean village in Jeonju, angled in the direction of the old gate called Pungnam-mun, stands a statue of bronze called the Peace Girl. Coiffed tomboyishly, hair bobbed at the chin, she looks like a student wearing chima-jeogori, traditional Korean dress. She sits there with a bird perched on her shoulder.

The bronze girl spends her days in this public space flanked by an empty chair. Waiting for what, or who? And since when? No one knows, least of all the tourists who pass by that way.

– Little bird, I'd feel lonely without you. Thanks for keeping me company.

– I should be the one thanking you for letting me rest on your shoulder, after I've flown all this way.

– Where did you come from?

– From an island across the sea. There I met a young girl wreathed in birds, hands toiling to fold one thousand before she becomes fixed in time, like you. And you, who are you? How long have you existed for?

– I'm a million names. I'm older than this century.

– You don't look older than fifteen, sixteen.

– People call me Halmoni. Grandmother.

– I feel like I've seen you all over the Peninsula. In Gunsan, Gimje, Buan, Seoul. You're always depicted as the Peace Girl. So how could you be a halmoni?

– My age stopped when they stole my youth.

– Who stole it from you?

– The old keepers of the country you flew in from. Come with me, I'll show you. We'll have to return to the Past.

– Wait. I'm a Migrant Bird. I can cover vast distances, countless countries — but I'm not sure I can fly to the Past or the Future.

– Aren't the Past and the Future one and the same? She who travels to the past has already seen the future,

and she who voyages to the future already knows the past. It's how I can be Young and Old at the same time, like that statue at Nam-San: three girls in a circle holding hands and facing outward, one of them turned towards an old woman who is yet another incarnation of me.

– We Migrant Birds are like this too, both here and there at once, residents of Nowhere. This makes me think of a boy around your age, Korean as well, whose family is divided between Korea and Canada. We call these families by a bird-name, too. Gireogis, goose-families.

– Tell me about him. After all, I'm just a girl waiting for I don't know what. I have all the time in the world.

–I'll tell you about my stay in Canada, in a little seaside village where you can find a river whose current switches directions at a certain point. They call it Reversing Falls. I met a young Korean of a similar age, there, named Ji-hoon.

– What's a boy from Korea doing so far from his homeland?

–This question could just as well apply to all immigrants. In Guadalajara Mexico, I found a statue of a young Asian girl adopted by Mexicans. They call her the China Poblana, but who knows if she wasn't Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese? For people in the other hemisphere, it's easier to call every Asian person Chinese.

– And this Korean boy, was he happy to have arrived in Canada?

– Aren't we all from somewhere else? Take me, I'm only passing through this town. Where I'm from, the statues celebrate different heads of state, but we birds of passage don't discriminate between statues. In the little village near the Bay of Fundy I selected a perch on a statue in King's square, commemorating the Canadian victims of the Korean War.

– How do you know? Can a bird read?

– I can read the thoughts of the statues I perch on, yes.

– Then read mine. Tell me: what is in the head of a schoolgirl on the eve of an important history exam? Very late at night, overwhelmed with revision, Present and Past, Dream and Reality, telescoping together.

– I'm afraid I don't understand you...

– I'll tell you a secret. Just once in their lives, on a single magic night, statues can liberate themselves from their fixed forms to change something. But I need your help to do this, no matter your name, Bird-of-the Present Past or Future. Are you with me?

Swedish to English

Megan Evans

Mentor

Nichola Smalley

Megan Evans, 24, graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a MA(Hons) in English Literature and Scandinavian Studies, including a year studying at Uppsala University, and subsequently completed a Masters in Publishing. She is passionate about diversifying Swedish translation in the UK in terms of gender and genre imbalance, the focus of her MA dissertation.

Introduction

Megan Evans

Linda Böstrom Knausgård has never been far from the literary public eye in Scandinavia, mostly due to her ex-husband's writings rather than her own, but it's easy to see how her own writings are more than exciting enough to rival any other discussion of her. Prior to the publication of my chosen text, *Grand Mal,* in 2011, Knausgård also published an untranslated poetry collection titled *Gör mig behaglig för såret.* Her subsequent novels (*Helioskatastrofen, Välkommen til Amerika* and *Oktoberbarn*) have been translated to English, and performed well, yet her two primary works have not been touched, perhaps due to their experimental nature. I found *Grand Mal* during the completion of my MA dissertation which focused on the need of more diverse Swedish translated works on the UK book market, due to the lack of female writers and diverse genres (such as horror), and the UK audience's penchant for male crime writers.

Grand Mal itself is a collection of utterly surreal, horror-adjacent short stories which are characterised by their unnerving tone. There are no big shows of human violence or supernatural malice, yet the reader is left feeling somewhat haunted. The collection is highly experimental, and no two stories are the same, bar their unmistakable air of dread and uncertainty. "Meanwhile," the story I chose to showcase, has dystopian, Science Fiction echoes to it. The collection is reliant on its intensity, its unpredictable narrators and protagonists, and an overwhelming feeling of creeping doom. It is a collection that stays with the reader, whether they want it to or not, and that will keep you up at night in the same overbearing sense of dread.

From *Grand Mal*

Linda Böstrom Knausgård, translated by Megan Evans

Meanwhile

The drops shimmer like dreams in the night. Run in thin threads over the window.

Outside, the garden is growing. The leaves that climb up the front of the house tear down plaster and damaged mortar. The roots make their way in tunnels. Displace stones and rubbish. Wrap themselves around each other for support.

While I wait I listen to the sounds. To the growth underground and to the roar of the stars. It's nothing I am alone in knowing. It's not the result of heightened consciousness or exhaustion. It is the air that has become different.

It transports sound as if it were underwater.

The rain beats down on old bathtubs and rusty oil barrels. Hammers in different keys. I distinguish the sound of rain against tin and rain against tarp and lay them next to each other. I hear tubs and barrels being dragged out into the garden. Anything that can be collected. I hear empty stomachs filling up.

Months can go by without a drop. Some people save their urine. Freeze it and use it in emergencies. There are even those who claim it's beneficial. I remember how the necessity to collect water weighed heavily on my head and arms. How the heart's beating urged one to continue. I feel better now. I've never had any inclination to life.

It's no secret that I long for death. I pray for it every waking moment. Now I have resigned myself to the point that I just wait. Since making that decision, my success has increased significantly.

The nights are filled with liquid. We all dream the same dream. About waterfalls, canals and running taps. We look like suckling new-borns in their sleep with our synchronised mouth movements. Our gaping holes. Many people think that life has become ugly. They talk of how other colours fill the eyes now. The kind that sting

and penetrate the eyelids. Make them thin. That the light is too bright. It's said that it's harder and harder to sleep. And that is what will end it. The lack of sleep will drive us crazy. But that's not something I think about.

I have laid sick in my bed for half a year. It's something to do with the lungs. With the nice little air-sacks outside the lung-meat. Something that doesn't communicate. I remember what it feels like to take a blister of protective plastic between your thumb and forefinger and squeeze until it bursts. I remember the little explosions and my own rapture. This is how I imagine my illness.

There's a lot coming now. It had been a long time since it fell so hard against the window. Now the courtyard consists of swallowing and gurgling. Like an old man's mouth. A rusty drain. Now the snakes are moving down there. Maybe they don't know they've been sleeping. Outside the window, the view is dented and desirable like an old film before it burns up. The air grows thick and foul. I decide to stop breathing.

It isn't hard. I sense the colour of the garden. The rain down the running glass. I set my hearing to my heart and listen for the remaining beats. In the background I hear lungs and rain.

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Ukrainian to English

Tetiana Savchynska

Mentor

Nina Murray

Tetiana Savchynska is a literary translator working between Ukrainian and English. She holds an MA in Comparative Literature from Dartmouth College, where she studied on a Fulbright Scholarship. She was a 2019 resident at the Banff International Literary Translation Centre in Canada, and a 2022 graduate of the BCLT and Bristol Translates Summer Schools. Her writing and translations into English have appeared in *The Los Angeles Review of Books, Asymptote, Apofenie,* and *elsewhere*.

Introduction

Tetiana Savchynska

The Land of the Lost, or Frightening Little Tales is a 2017 collection of short stories by contemporary Ukrainian writer Kateryna Kalytko. In 2017, the book was named the BBC Ukraine Book of the Year, and Kateryna Kalytko became a laureate of the Joseph Conrad Korzienowski Literary Prize from the Polish Institute in Kyiv.

In the nine short stories featured in the collection, Kalytko gives readers an unsettling and complex exploration of trauma and displacement — a topic both timeless and all too timely. Throughout the collection, Kalytko's characters cross geographical borders and gender binaries in search of safety and identity in violent times. The title of the book speaks for itself: the Land of the Lost is a place that grew out of a need for a shelter or a bastion, where the phantasmagorical and the modern merge in tales of tender desire and collective and individual violence.

The opening story of the collection, "Water," excerpted here, is narrated by an orphaned girl called Laleh, who was raised by her adoptive parents as a boy. In Ukrainian, verbs are grammatically gendered, and it becomes clear from the verb endings that the narrator identifies herself as a girl while the people around her perceive her as a boy. Verbs don't have the same grammatical markers in English, so I strived to render the protagonist's alienation and shifting identity using other linguistic means. While challenging from a translator's perspective, Kalytko's vivid imagery and haunting prose demonstrate why she is regarded as one of the most important and promising voices in contemporary Ukrainian literature.

It is an honor for me to give Kateryna Kalytko a voice in English, and it has been a pleasure to work on this project with my mentor, Nina Murray. I'm deeply grateful to Nina for her generous advice and support.

From *The Land of the Lost, or Frightening Little Tales*

Kateryna Kalytko, translated by Tetiana Savchynska

There was a small clearing in the thicket behind the cemetery, right under the eastern wall, that turned after each downpour into a small pond. After the heavy rain, I — *I, a he* — would sprint there as fast as I could, before the fog that stole the paths and burned the eyes swirled above the damp cliffs; I would swim there, I mean, I swam there as boys did, naked, until I got cramps in my joints. One day, I took it into my head to show my little pond to my friends, and it was then that the "I, a he" turned into "I, a she".

I wasn't even ten, it had just stopped raining, we raced each other to the pond, fighting through the thicket of wind thorns — their shrubs always indicated the wind direction on the slopes. I had to stop for a moment — one of the branches tore through my pants, caught my ankle and scratched my leg, so I had to untangle it — while the boys made it all the way to the water, took off their shirts and made running jumps into the cool pond, splashing and screaming. I — *I, a she* — was watching them and growing cold, but not from the water — only now I — *I, a she,* — realized how different their bodies were from mine. Their narrow hips, covered with dark hairs, strong legs like the saplings of wind thorns that had been scrambling up the hill before we were born and would be scrambling still after we die, their firm buttocks like green fruits of a wild apple tree, especially with the halves contracted and clenched tight from the cold, their backs with rippling muscles, made even more pronounced by the hard work, and the broad shoulders of even the skinniest boys. And I was a lump of dough that grew mellow in the warmth and stretched out her white, tender limbs, searched for curves to recreate them, smoothed things over, swelled with prohibited softness, and grew heavy with a promise of tenderness. Each of my friends had a sign of their sex, just a shy, childish flower bud that was submerged

unexpectedly into cold water, and yet I would never be in possession of such a flower. I felt as if I — *I, a she* — suddenly found an invisible splinter that had pained me for years, wandering through my body. I was a field, trampled down by horses, even though it had never been a battlefield. I was a eunuch, not even born as a man. The cold was crawling under my clothes, tickling me under the collar and in the bosom, and I — *I, a she* — realized — yes, yes, I now realized it as a girl — that I would not undress myself in front of them, not now, not ever, and realized how close I came to unmasking myself. "Laleh! Laleh! Come here! Why did you get stuck there?", my friends shouted, but I, frightened, only shook my head and shouted back that I was cold, wrapping myself into my clothes as if they were my last bastion. Stupefied, I sat on a stone while my friends swam to their hearts' content, and never again did my entire body ache like it did on that day by the pond. Since then, I already realized who I — *I, a she* — was, but continued being who I was made to be. I stayed away from my peers even more until I became a complete loner, laughed at behind my back. But it didn't hurt me. Nothing ever hurt me more than that day by the pond, when I — *I, a she* — found myself and lost myself for good.

Afterward, I swam in that after-rain pond a couple more times, but only alone, and each time the water seemed bitter, as if it skinned me alive with its green tongue.

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Welsh to English

Emyr Wallace Humphreys

Mentor

Meena Kandasamy

Emyr Wallace Humphreys translates from Portuguese and Welsh and graduated with a distinction from UCL's MA Translation Studies programme. He was awarded a bursary for the 2022 Bristol Translates literary translation summer school and was nominated for Deep Vellum's Best Literary Translations Anthology 2024. He lives in rural Wales.

Introduction

Emyr Wallace Humphreys

Y Dydd Olaf (*The Last Day*) is a speculative fiction novel in the form of diary entries, letters and miscellaneous documents from the "Lost Century". These documents only survive because they are written in Welsh. We meet protagonist Marc in his student days, in midlife, and finally in old age, awaiting his "utmost honour" at the Sunset House, where swathes of the human population are catalogued and "stored". We are drawn alongside Marc to piece together the events leading to this nightmarish scenario and learn of the tangle of relationships between the few figures who could have stopped the horror before it was too late.

Published in 1976, *Y Dydd Olaf* achieved a posthumous recognition unparalleled in Welsh-language writing. Having garnered cult status amongst Welsh readers, in 2014 the Welsh singer Gwenno released a Welsh-language concept album of the same name based on the novel. It went on to win the Welsh Music Prize, generating a renewed interest in the novel, translations into Polish and Cornish and the republication of the Welsh-language original in 2021.

Owain Owain (1929–1993), as well as a prolific author, was a physicist and a prominent language activist. This is apparent in one of the central themes running through the novel: the use of a minority language as an act of resistance. However, *Y Dydd Olaf* is more than a moving call-to-arms for speakers and writers of minority languages facing extinction. At its heart, it's a complex human-scale drama and a testament to the depth and creativity of Welsh literature. The literary critic Pennar Davies wrote: "Nothing like this book has been seen before either in our language or in any other. We should rejoice that such brilliance exists in Welsh writing." Its translation into English is long overdue.

From *The Last Day*

Owain Owain, translated by Emyr Wallace Humphreys

Yesterday was the end of an era for Lv.2 — that is, except for the hundred pairs of eyes glistening blindly in one the storage basements, the half-hundred pairs of testicles frozen solid in another, and the tiny cubes of DNA waiting for resurrection in plastic tombs further below.

The ex-hallmates of Lv.2 are now as still and lifeless as the sacks of pellets they feed us. Whose idea was it to sustain human lives with cattle feed? Tomorrow — but not my tomorrow — it'll be Lv.4's turn to receive the "utmost honour".

The beginning of a century, the end of an age... for some reason, I'd rather go today than tomorrow. And if superstition is the reason for this twisted logic, then rejoice! For doesn't this kernel of superstition deep inside prove their failure to assimilate me completely?

I never imagined how I would write this final entry, though I'd known before coming that here at the Sunset House was where I'd be writing it. I knew I would *have* to... just not like this.

They're very clever, I'll give Them that. So is he. Or should I say *it*? A clever oddity. By now I'm almost convinced that this really is the way, that I really am about to be granted the "utmost honour" and complete my highest duty within the next three hours. Fratolish hiang perpetshki!

Yes, very clever, but that cleverness is how I got away with writing my diary like this. They're as cold as the storage basements, as lifeless as the residents of Lv.2, in the hereafter as of yesterday. Fratolish hiang perpetshki...

I never did learn why They made us keep diaries. Nor why they're microfilmed and fed to the Computer-General. Something to do with social studies, I think. Discovering weaknesses in the system, the failures of the assimilation.

Clever, but not clever enough, because they forgot one little thing: that the Computer-General's translation programme for sub-languages was deleted ages ago.

And he doesn't know that I know! The all-knowing Computer-General doesn't understand my little mother tongue... this diary will be digested by his electronic stomach without so much as a hiccup. He'll find nothing forbidden written here because he doesn't understand a word of this lowly language, and everything, forbidden or not, will be microfilmed and safely stored in his electronic memory.

That's right: a complete diary as well as instructions on how to find the other documents, the letters and all. Stored in the Final Diaries section, subsection: Unintelligible, sub-subsection: Semi-logical. Brilliant!

How lucky I am that the electromagnetic messages from outer space, from AΩ, trouble him, frighten him. I'm lucky the Computer-General's competence is finite after all, straining under the weight of responding effectively to AΩ's ambiguous demands, needing all his computational power to analyse the messages, deleting the smaller programmes that are, according to Them, irrelevant.

Those poor sods — a translation programme the Computer-General doesn't need any more. It's the funniest thing! When will people (if a person is what he is) be able to tell the difference between big and small, important and trivial?

Everything will be made available for the coming ages — if they ever come. But for what purpose? If there are people left to read this diary, who will those readers be? Who will understand it? Treasure it?

It doesn't matter who. To me, right now, that's not what's important. Perhaps no one needs to read and understand it to find value in it. Isn't the making, the writing, what matters? Doesn't acceptance — or rejection — come later?

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Thank you

We gratefully acknowledge all organisations
that have contributed funding.

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

British Centre for Literary Translation

BRITISH COUNCIL

DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION

Harvill Secker Young Translators' Prize

ISTITUTO italiano DI CULTURA

LTI Korea
Literature Translation Institute of Korea

POLISH CULTURAL INSTITUTE LONDON

Québec

SAROJ LAL MENTORSHIP

SWEDISH ARTSCOUNCIL

ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

Visible Communities

YANAI INITIATIVE

Printed and bound by Page Bros, Norwich

National Centre for Writing
Dragon Hall, 115–123 King Street
Norwich NR1 1QE

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Supported using public money by
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