Emerging Literary Translators — 2026

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.

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: Kotryna Garanasvili, Sean Gasper Bye, Mohini Gupta, Rosie Hedger, Sawad Hussain, Jonathan Reeder, Clare Richards and Marita Thomsen. Sincere thanks also to the organisations which have helped to fund the programme: Arts Council England, Flanders Literature, FarLit, the Literary Translation Institute of Korea, Lithuanian Culture Institute, the Charles Wallace India Trust, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, the Polish Cultural Institute, SALT at ALTA, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award and the Society of Authors.

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Foreword

Every year, as I get to have a first glimpse of the texts our international, multilingual group of translators choose, it gives me an opportunity to pause and reflect on the trends in literature. With this snapshot of the zeitgeist spanning continents, I get to play at being a literary scout, polishing my crystal ball in an attempt to predict what the future — or at least the next year — of literary translation may hold.

In my crystal ball, I see the nature of modern-day relationships as one of the themes. There is a focus on feelings of loneliness that can occur within a relationship, through a partner's illness or simply drifting apart. But also how unlikely friendships, the company of a dog, and a good bowl of miso ramen may aid in navigating this sense of isolation. It is telling that as well as parallels in their subject matter, these stories from Flanders, Norway and the Faroes also share an emphasis on crafting the perfect sentence to capture the nuances of emotion: to reflect with quiet simplicity the feelings of love and affection, the deadpan, restrained humour of a shunned lover, or the poetics of everyday life when you realize how fleeting it is.

As is often the case, literature with fantastical, magical or mythological elements can help us see our everyday experience in a new light. Be this a poetic retelling of the Greek myth of Hypatia that, through an earthy, urbane Marathi dialect, reminds us of the eternal suffering of mourning and the need for forgiveness, while serving as a comment on the rise of sectarian politics and religious nationalism in contemporary India. Or through prose written for young adults about an otherworldly encounter with the grim reaperess — the goddess of death — who has reincarnated as a female twenty-something start-up entrepreneur. Elon Musk meets teenage angst and traditional Lithuanian folklore.

Language making the intangible tangible is another theme emerging this year. Just like in the reimagining of Hypatia in an Indian context, the use of dialect is also a key feature in an Egyptian novel about trying to fit in, and accepting when it is a lost cause, with its elegant employment of the imagery of the shoe to illustrate the experience. This endeavour is shared by a cycle of ekphrastic prose poems and short stories translated from the Polish, which also aim to make the visual palpable in words, to illustrate that both poetry and painting can stem from the same creative force.

Literature in translation changes our perspective. Quite often it is in the subtle shifts towards the margins — the cancer patient's family recounting their experience of the illness; a focus on an ill-fitting shoe to stand in as a metaphor for society — that we discover something new about our current experience. A rediscovered travelogue by one of Korea's most eminent female novelists about her first solo trip to the USA recounts the alienation she experienced, through the opaque fog of an unfamiliar language, and is certainly familiar to many living in the US today. It is its quiet, understated pacing that makes this non-fiction piece stand out as a modern classic.

As I am writing this, the Lunar New Year is being celebrated around the world, ushering in the Year of the Fire Horse which stands for strength, grace, endurance, loyalty, freedom, and success. May our translators find all of these qualities, and may you, dear reader, help them along the way to success by showing interest in their translation samples.

Rebecca DeWald
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Programme Manager

Emerging Literary Translators 2026

Quaid Cey — Dutch from Flanders
Mentor: Jonathan Reeder

Kristin Dilani Nadarajah — Norwegian
Mentor: Rosie Hedger

Alaa Faez Beej — Arabic
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Philomena Ieva Marmion — Lithuanian
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Kata Veress — Faroese
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Nachiket Joshi — Marathi
Mentor: Mohini Gupta

Madeleine Wulfahrt — Polish
Mentor: Sean Gasper Bye

Dasom Yang — Korean
Mentor: Clare Richards

Dutch from Flanders to English

Quaid Cey

Mentor
Jonathan Reeder

Quaid Cey translates from Dutch to English. Originally from the U.S., he now lives in Brussels, where he is pursuing an MA in Linguistics and Literary Studies. He enjoys writing fiction and learning new languages in his free time.

Introduction

Quaid Cey

Missing Miso is the second novel by Antwerp-based author Raf De Bie. This heart-warming and occasionally comical story brings together two quirky, endearing characters, both lost in their own way. Nina is a twenty-six-year-old university dropout who manages a comic book shop and has never had more than one friend at a time. Yusuke is a Japanese tailor homesick for the flavor of Hokkaido miso ramen. As an unlikely friendship between the two develops over dinners shared at Japanese restaurants across the city of Antwerp, both must confront the past and consider what a new beginning might look like.

What makes *Missing Miso* unique is its disarming simplicity. With everyday routines, sharp observations, and casual conversations as his tools, Raf De Bie tells a story that feels at once original and deeply familiar. The narrator, Nina, does not demand to be heard; she speaks to the reader as plainly as a friend on the phone. Stylistic choices such as unadorned language, stop-start indentation and punctuation, and unhurried descriptions are not incidental, but essential to the novel's effect. Together, these things make *Missing Miso* what it is: an invitation to slow down and savor life's small joys, like a bowl of miso ramen, a late-night phone call with a sibling, or a quiet afternoon spent sketching in an old notebook. Raf De Bie's writing reminds us that just a few words, placed with care, can make all the difference.

From *Missing Miso*

Raf De Bie, translated by Quaid Cey

When Yusuke talks about the miso ramen stands in Hokkaido, it's like he's talking about his first love. He gets a dreamy look in his eyes, and his voice becomes tinged with nostalgia. The best thing to do then is run, because once he starts, there's no stopping him. All evening, he'll talk about perfectly salted broth, steaming noodles, and all the possible combinations of toppings. Grilled corn, for example, with pork belly and a pat of butter. Or bean sprouts, spring onion, strips of pork, and sesame seeds. He even goes so far as to describe the colors of the bowls he's eaten those exact meals from. There's nothing anyone can do about it: Yusuke lost his heart to the food stands in Hokkaido.

At first, I try to broaden his horizons. "But Yusuke," I say, "we have good food here, too, you know? Steak tartare, baked chicory with cheese and ham…"

The words are barely out of my mouth before Yusuke brushes them aside. Those dishes don't come close to the miso ramen in Hokkaido, he tells me. In fact, they should stay as far away as possible.

So I try a different approach: I look up the best Japanese restaurants in the city and Yusuke and I go out for miso ramen. I reserve the best table and we stuff ourselves until our bellies ache. At the end of those meals, Yusuke wipes his mouth with a napkin and says: "Delicious." Then, without fail, he adds: "But it's no Hokkaido miso ramen."

I try one last argument before giving up. "Maybe you're just romanticizing the past," I tell him. "Lots of people feel nostalgic for their childhood. Things seemed so much better back then: more fun, more exciting — or, in your case, tastier. But a lot of the time all those wonderful things weren't really that special. We just forget the bad parts."

This reasoning doesn't win him over either. Yusuke is convinced that a bowl of miso ramen in Hokkaido would taste just as good now as it did back then. His childhood

has nothing to do with it.

After months of trying, I'm left with only one option: I have to let it go.

*

My name is Nina, I'm twenty-six years old, and I've never had more than one friend at once. Ever since I was a child, people have come into my life for short but special periods of time. Each one eventually disappears, and a new friend takes their place. It's a lot like the seasons: they come and go, always making room for the next. That's why I rarely feel lonely in the friendless intervals. After all, no one worries whether spring will come again after a dark winter. It just happens.

A while ago I read in a magazine that lots of people struggle to make new friends. I've never had much trouble in that department. The problem with my friendships is that they always come to an end. Not because we get in a fight, or because something dramatic happens, like a fatality. No, the reason is usually much more trivial. One of us forgets to call at the agreed-upon time, and just like that, the die is cast. We see each other less and less, and the special bond between us suddenly breaks. It feels then as if that friend and I have used up all our friendship, like a tank of gas that has run dry with no way to refill it.

When I say my friendships are like the seasons, I don't mean that they last exactly three months. Some friends stay for years, others only weeks. But each one comes to an end, and a new one follows. One at a time.

In the spring of 2024, Yusuke became my friend.

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Norwegian to English

Kristin Dilani Nadarajah

Mentor

Rosie Hedger

Kristin Dilani is a former economist and emerging translator, working between Norwegian and English. She is especially drawn to translating humour and non-fiction, exploring how tone, wit, and nuance survive across languages.

Introduction

Kristin Dilani Nadarajah

I was drawn to this book due to the poignant satire mixed with Loe's peculiar style, or as I like to call it, a touch of Scandinavian dorkiness. His quirky writing style and strange characters are a great challenge to translate for an audience unfamiliar with his work, as it is essential to preserve Loe's humour and his innate awkward charm: without the dorkiness, his characters would just sound arrogant. His peculiar writing is supposed to take you on a little journey, and before you know it, you find yourself rooting for or agreeing with his characters.

Erlend Loe is one of Norway's most prominent authors known for his deceivingly simplistic, humorous and naïvist style — which makes the challenge of translating his work more daunting. He is a leading voice in his critical and comical portrayals of Norwegian and Western society. As is characteristic of many of his novels, this piece features a quirky protagonist facing an existential crisis, disillusioned with modern lifestyles, and instead turning toward nature and animals. In this excerpt we get to know what propels one of the five protagonists in the novel into having a crisis in the first place, leading him onto a dark(er) path.

From *The Big Five/Dyrene i Afrika*

Erlend Loe, translated by Kristin Dilani Nadarajah

The cause of the chaos was the partner Sperber had shared his life with for over twenty years. His partner and his cadaver dog on the other sofa were staring vacantly at the switched-off TV. Much like Sperber, his partner was a middle-aged and seemingly respectable man. Well dressed and slim and sinewy after countless hours spent hiking in rugged terrain. He made his living by strolling through fields and forests searching for dead people and animals. It was a steady business. Both people and livestock disappear all the time. Good cadaver dogs are not easy to breed, but they can reap considerable rewards for their owners when you finally get your hands on one.

It is often said that both parties are at fault when things go wrong in a relationship, but in this case, Sperber thought that it was exclusively his partner's fault. For a long time, Sperber had not noticed that something was wrong. He brushed off his partner's fatigue and cool distance as something caused by too much responsibility and stress at work. Sperber had tried to convince himself that things would improve after his partner had some time off work and a chance to recharge. But his partner slept and slept and nothing changed. Sperber was living in an emotional vacuum. The lack of physical touch was also hard to bear. He tried to tell himself that life has its phases and that he would have to just deal with it, like everyone else did. But it was hard indeed.

As the months passed, the air in the large, bright apartment grew heavier and heavier. At times, Sperber thought he might also remain silent and sullen, so that his partner could see how amusing it was to be ignored. But it backfired. It only became more obvious that they were at a cliff's edge. Besides, Sperber needed continuous validation. It had been like this since his childhood. It was his parents' fault. They had praised him for everything he had done and had given him the impression that he was great at everything. The result was that he

reacted sullenly if he did anything without recognition. It would have been enough if his partner had noticed that Sperber had tidied up the kitchen and offered him a smile, for instance. But a smile never came his way and nothing ever got noticed. Eventually, Sperber no longer doubted that he was being systematically overlooked and started to realise that his partner no longer cared for him. It was a hard blow. How was it possible not to love Sperber? He considered himself to be an attentive, nice, wise and even beautiful man. He was also what he would call an intellectually stimulating conversation partner. He read newspapers and books, talked people through the plotlines of complicated films, and otherwise kept a good eye on world events. Despite all these qualities, his partner seemed to have stopped loving him at some point. This uncomfortable suspicion started to resemble a form of trench warfare and went on for months.

Eventually, Sperber said that they needed to talk. Talk? No thank you, preferably not, is the impression Sperber got from his partner. But he wasn't going to let him get away this time. Sperber forced him onto the sofa and started to lecture him. They couldn't go on like this. At first his partner fell silent, but gradually he started to speak, albeit in jerks and snaps and rather half-choked. It eventually became clear that he hadn't behaved as agreed. He had unfortunately been with someone else for a bit. Not much, luckily. But just a bit. And besides, it was over.

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Arabic to English

Alaa Faez Beej

Mentor

Sawad Hussain

Alaa Faez Beej is an Iraqi literary translator and translation content creator dedicated to expanding professional opportunities for translators in Iraq and the region. She is the founder of Iraq's first Translation Jam and has coordinated national initiatives such as the Tarjamat Competition, fostering collaboration between emerging and established translators.

After attending the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT) Summer School in the United Kingdom, she specialized in literary translation from Arabic into English — an experience that marked a turning point in her practice and sharpened her approach to translating contemporary Arabic literature for global audiences.

Introduction

Alaa Faez Beej

This excerpt is taken from *All My Shoes Are Tight* by Adil Assad Al-Miri, a novel that explores what it means to be in a place that doesn't fit you. The selected passage appears in a reflective chapter about the main character's childhood and reflects the beginning of his inner conflicts. The text relies heavily on Egyptian Arabic, especially in dialogue. The dialect is used to express humor and conversational nuances, making it central to the novel's identity rather than a decorative feature. Translating this passage required close attention to idiomatic expressions, rhythm, and implied meaning, particularly where the dialect carries cultural or emotional weight that cannot be rendered literally.

All My Shoes Are Tight has been praised for its inventive metaphorical structure and its profound social insight. Critics have described the novel as a striking exploration of human expectations and societal constraints, highlighting its ability to translate abstract life challenges into vivid, tangible imagery. This excerpt exemplifies those qualities through its central metaphor of shoes crafted too small by society, family, and tradition. The protagonist tests these shoes throughout fifty years of life in search of a pair that fits. The passage captures his ultimate realization that all the shoes are tight, leading him to close the cupboard and step barefoot into life itself — a literary gesture that combines symbolic depth with emotional resonance, emphasizing autonomy, resilience, and the courage to live authentically.

From *All My Shoes Are Tight*

Adil Assad Al-Miri, translated by Alaa Faez Beej

I was in third grade, nine years old, a student at the school of Saint Louis, that honorable sheikh as they say. Though, between you and me, he was neither a sheikh nor honorable. He was just Louis IX, the one we captured at Dar Ibn Luqman in Mansoura. I have no idea how he managed to become a saint back in the land of the Franks, but that is a story for another time.

The important thing is that I was usually first in my class, known for being polite and disciplined. As a result, whenever a teacher had to step out for a few minutes and left me to monitor the class, I stood at the blackboard to record the names of any troublemakers. Anyone who dared to make a noise or cause a scene. It happened once that my classmate, Bastawisi, spoke to his neighbor, so I wrote both their names on the board.

All I knew about Bastawisi was that when I asked him about his father's profession, he said, "Owner of a manifatura shop in Qaysariya." The immense mystery of the phrase unsettled me at once, purely because of the immense mystery surrounding that phrase. As if the name Bastawisi wasn't source enough for magic and mystery on its own. It would take me years to realize that mani meant hand and fatura meant working, that the father simply owned a shop selling hand-woven textiles.

Was my interest in my classmates' fathers driven by some childish class consciousness? I remember my own father always reminding my brother and me that he was a specialist doctor with a PhD. Perhaps asking about professions was just my desire to know if a manifatura ranked higher than a medical specialization. As for the Qaysariya, I wouldn't learn that it meant a covered market until I started studying archaeology. But on that day, Bastawisi only grew more mysterious.

Bastawisi got up from his seat and moved toward the blackboard where I stood. He came very close, close enough to slip his hand into my pocket and deposit something there. We used to wear smocks over our

clothes, to protect them from whatever mess a child might make, and these smocks had deep, wide pockets, perfect for a sandwich, or in this case, for Bastawisi's mysterious object. Then, he whispered this baffling sentence, "By the Mushaf, erase me."

He went back to his seat without another word. I understood the second half easily enough, he wanted me to erase his name, but did he mean only himself, or his neighbor too? Why didn't he explain? And surely, the first part of the sentence was connected to the secret in my pocket.

I reached for the object and pulled it out. It was a tiny booklet, no bigger than four centimetres by three, filled with hundreds of leaves of the thinnest paper and thousands of microscopic words. I wanted to keep it immediately. So, I reached for the eraser and wiped off Bastawisi's name.

I turned my face back to the class, looking at the picture of innocence, completely oblivious to the crime of bribery I had just committed in front of dozens of silent eyes. His neighbor stood up immediately in protest: "Me too!" A murmur rippled through the room, so I erased him as well.

When I returned home, I showed the booklet to my mother with great pride. She said, "That's not ours." "What do you mean?" I asked. "We have the Holy Bible and the Gospels," she replied. "Why?" "No whys. That's just how it is". "I didn't know," I said. "What should I do?" "Give it back tomorrow."

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Lithuanian to English

Philomena Ieva Marmion

Mentor

Kotryna Garanasvili

Philomena Ieva Marmion is a Lithuanian-British linguist, illustrator, and translator, working from Lithuanian into English. She holds a BA in Illustration from the University of Edinburgh and an MA in English Studies from Vilnius University. Philomena is drawn to unconventional, atmospheric narratives in prose and to vivid, image-rich poetry.

Introduction

Philomena Ieva Marmion

Summer, the End of the World (*Vasara, pasaulio pabaiga*), published by Aukso žuvys in 2025, is a YA urban fantasy novel by Gabija Plukė that draws on Lithuanian mythology, reimagining its deities in a modern setting. The author's debut introduces readers to Plukė's sincere yet witty narrative voice.

Plagued by guilt, Giltinė — the grim reaper and goddess of death — takes a leave of absence after accidentally turning a human immortal. She takes on a human form and name, and as a twenty-something Giltė, she works a boring copywriting job and spends time with her best friend Jūra. But her new life is turned upside-down when her demon assistant Magyla shows up to remind her of who she really is. To make matters worse, the world is about to end, leaving Giltė with no choice but to try and save it.

Lithuanian mythology has been on the rise in the local literary scene, yet *Summer, the End of the World* offers a fresh and inventive take on the subject. Here, Lithuanian deities come alive as vivid, distinct characters. Meanwhile, Plukė's affectionate descriptions of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, make the city feel like a character in its own right.

The novel also captures what it means to be a young person in the modern world. Its characters feel everything intensely and grapple with near-constant anxiety, despite being gods. But friendship — the core of the narrative — makes everything much more bearable. Alongside heartfelt moments, Plukė creates memorably humorous scenes. For instance, it's revealed that making a deal with the Devil condemns one's soul to working in his underworld start-up. *Summer, the End of the World* is a lively and engaging read, appealing to anyone in search of exciting mythologies, humour, and honesty.

Translating the text offered some interesting challenges, such as finding ways to present Lithuanian mythology to an English-speaking audience while keeping the original's snappy rhythm and wit. Above all, as an emerging translator, I'm excited to share the work of an up-and-coming author from my generation.

From *Summer, the End of the World*

Gabija Plukė, translated by Philomena Ieva Marmion

He stretched out his hand. An old key lay in his palm, its surface darkened by time, attached to a round metal keychain slightly larger than a two-euro coin. On the dark blue charm glistened an image of a rich yellow bowl of soup, slightly tinged with green. *Didn't my grandma have a keychain just like that?* Giltė thought. *This one, too, has been worn down by long stays in coat pockets, and the bowl looks as if it's also made of brass.*

'I can't just hand it to you. You have to take it yourself,' said the stranger, his hand still held out in the space between them. 'Last time you told me all about free will and how important it is, especially in deals like this, so if I had more time, I really would fill you in. But now —'

He rambled on but Giltė had stopped listening. She couldn't look away from the scuffed key. Her entire body was being pulled towards it. It seemed so familiar, so… dear to her. Surrendering to the pull, she slowly reached out and clutched the key in her hand. For a second, she felt a numbing chill, then sudden heat. Soon, all Giltė could focus on was her hand, burning, and the way her fingers refused to let go of the scalding metal.

And then, all that had been forgotten came rushing back. Here she is now: next to the crumbling house, next to the pedestal, which until recently propped up the statue of Petras Cvirka, in between swaying scooter riders, glitching apps, and snippets of news about Elon Musk. But she is also there: in the time when trolleybuses had yet to be invented and their electric whiskers didn't graze the city sky. When the city didn't exist. And later — just as it came into being. Giltė could hear the Iron Wolf's howls from long ago. She could see the burning

altars twinkling in the night and feel their warmth with her entire body. She could feel the coarse hair of the fae as she ran her fingers through it. She could smell the Midsummer flower crowns and the bundles of yarrow. She could see the scythe at the foot of an old man's bed and the scythe by the blue body of a drowned man. Finally, the only thought that remained was of the lost soul she had to take under her wing.

The metal in her hand grew hotter, then cold, and suddenly Giltė was back, just here, just now. Right in front of him, Magyla.

'Giltė?' he said, his voice piercing through the fog, time, and the nausea churning in her stomach.

Giltė squeezed her eyes shut, as if trying to drive off the hallucination, which was taking over reality. Finally, she found the courage to look into Magyla's black eyes. She is here again, and now she clearly remembers how pine needles always get caught in his curls whenever they walk through a forest and how his wardrobe is filled with countless combinations of the same black suit, white shirt, and skinny black tie, the collar of each shirt always starched. She also remembers how, once, there wasn't a day they didn't work side by side.

Giltė's eyes filled with hot tears. She looked down at the piece of metal, now cold in her palm. In this life, it had taken the shape of a key. Anxiety began to tickle Giltė's fingers and run laps in the pit of her stomach. She could feel her heartbeat speeding up.

This can't be happening!

'No!' Giltė cried, her jaw clenched. The shape of Magyla began to blur in a teary haze. She didn't even notice the confusion on his face. 'No, it isn't time yet!'

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FARO
ENGL

Faroese to English

Kata Veress

Mentor

Marita Thomsen

Kata Veress translates mostly prose from Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, German, and Hungarian. Being an editor, she has a keen eye for detail, and as an avid singer, she is fascinated by the musicality of words and strives to render not just meaning but melody, too.

Introduction

Kata Veress

Faroese author Oddfríður Marni Rasmussen's *Ikki fyrr enn tá* ('Not until then', 2019) is a novel about chronic illness and grief, written from a different angle: it explores the impact of receiving a cancer diagnosis and living with a terminal illness, but instead of the patient as the first-person narrator, the story is told by her husband, bringing cancer patients' family members into focus.

In the first part of the book, the protagonist Janus recounts how Elsa's brain tumor changed their lives, and what her decline and their daily life looked like at the different stages of the illness. The novel's second part shows Janus coping with his wife's death, moving on and embracing a new beginning with a new love, a new job, and a new dog.

Rasmussen does not make a mystery of illness, nor does he try to embellish it. Instead, he describes particular moments in excruciating detail, using calm, sensitive, fragmentary, and poetic everyday language. Poetry not only shows in the rich imagery of the otherwise succinct text: there is a poem by Poul F. Joensen, a paraphrastic take on Goethe's *Wanderers Nachtlied*, woven into it, posing a beautiful challenge to the translator.

As much as *Ikki fyrr enn tá* is a Faroese novel set in the Faroes, it tackles an important topic concerning far too many across borders, yet is sung in a more remote, smaller language to the melody of breaking waves in the North Atlantic, with salt in the air.

The following excerpt is taken from the very beginning of the book.

From *Ikki fyrr enn tá*

Oddfríður Marni Rasmussen, translated by Kata Veress

'Write on white, search in the dark.' Elsa pulled the duvet up to her chin.

The flat was soundless.

'Write on white, search in the dark,' she repeated in a hollow, groggy voice, and the yawn on her pale face slowly faded into her restless dreams. One of her legs was sticking out from under the duvet. I caressed her soft thigh, and she took a deep breath. A familiar sound.

Her heartbeat was pulsating on her neck. I lay next to her, listening to her breathing, in and out, the way breakers roar in the distance. You could hear a slight snore from time to time, her hair spread out on the pillow — her face a familiar shadow. She looked like a tiny, lonely piece of sea glass in the sand, washed ashore, waiting for someone to pick it up for play, until fatigue sets in.

It was quiet and dark outside, as if the city lay in the stomach of a sleeping animal.

Elsa's dreams were locked in. I couldn't enter them. No one could. I lay awake all night, looking at her. Observed the lines and wrinkles in her face as she tossed and turned, groaning. Her eyes darted left and right under the eyelids. Up and down. She sounded like the scraps of a lost child's cry for help, or an angry man fighting a fight he's unused to. Her dream echoed here where the dream was not, but the images remained locked inside her head, only escaping as desperate sounds. The uncontrollable night dreams were nothing compared to what she had to endure in her waking hours. But at times she would lie still, as if she had taken death at his word. She would lie there as if she were nothing.

A great big nothing.

At five in the morning, I was still awake and got up. Went to the living room, sat down to the view over Tórshavn, and opened the curtains wider so I could see across the bay. The water was swelling dark in Nólsoyarfjørður, lapping silently like the fluid between your brain and skull, or the liquid between the Earth's crust, life, and the

skies.

A dream.

She was still asleep. Like a city under the dark veil of night. Cities never slumber. They only drowse. Doze off. Whimper briefly and fall silent again. I saw a couple of rear lights moving down the road. The serenity of the night soothed me, or was it the sleepy city? I lit a cigarette and cracked the window. Poured myself some leftover coffee and returned to the view. In the windowpane, I could see the blurred contours of myself and the cigarette smoke. The coffee had a sour smell, so I decided not to drink it. I made instant instead. Dog was sleeping in his basket next to the kitchen island. His bowl was empty. I poured him water and myself coffee. He looked up at me, wheezed a bit, and lay back down. We couldn't have children, so we got him. A white labrador. A very good boy. Loyal and kind. I lit another cigarette and blew the smoke out the window. A dizzy spell and mounting pressure behind my eyes told me that I should probably have paced myself with that cigarette.

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MARA
ENGL

Marathi to English

Nachiket Joshi

Mentor

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Nachiket Joshi is a literary scholar, translator, and educator based in Mumbai, India. He translates poetry, literary fiction, and works of criticism from Marathi and French into English.

Introduction

Nachiket Joshi

Hypatia is a poetic sequence in Marathi by the bilingual Indian poet, Arun Kolatkar. It is part of a longer cycle of poems called *Bhijaki Vahi*, or "sodden notebook", published in 2003. Each poem in *Bhijaki Vahi* is devoted to a female figure, drawn from history, mythology, or literature, and narrates a tale of suffering, grief, or loss. The motif of the teardrop runs like Ariadne's thread throughout the collection, and connects the disparate stories and events.

The poem selected for this project centres on the eponymous female philosopher and mathematician who lived around the 4th and 5th centuries C.E in Alexandria. It recounts the events surrounding her brutal murder at the hands of a Christian mob, acting on the behest of the city's bishop — the early church Patriarch, Cyril. Like the other poems in the collection, *Hypatia* is a meditation on not just violence and death, but also on the regenerative powers of mourning and forgiveness.

Its longest central section is narrated by Cyril, the man who ordered Hypatia's lynching, and who, far from being remorseful about his actions, seems to exult in his capacity for violence and terror. Kolatkar casts Cyril as a modern-day demagogue, full of bluster, humour, machismo, and a kind of sinister charisma. His monologue is rife with expletives, delivered in an earthy, urbane, dialectal register of Marathi, and expounds his deeply intolerant and misogynistic worldview.

In this extract, Cyril, sitting amidst the ruins of the Serapeum with his minion Peter, recounts the destruction of the ancient temple to Alexandria's patron deity. Kolatkar explicitly links this act of religious vandalism to the rise of sectarian politics and religious nationalism in contemporary India. The figure of the charismatic strongman serves as a perfect cynosure for both eras.

From *Hypatia*

Arun Kolatkar, translated by Nachiket Joshi

there used to be a temple for serapis
where we are sitting right now
you've probably heard of it
but I am sure you have never seen it
with your own eyes

you are just a kid peter
I was barely sixteen myself
when uncle theophilus
tore that temple down

we killed
three idolaters that day
crushed two of them with rocks
and burned a third one alive

hotheads all of us
back in the day
egged on by one thought alone
establishing christ's rule over this earth

and what can I say about uncle theophilus
a great man if ever there was one
I am still living off his praises
twenty-five years later

there was something different in the air back then,
and I was there
right at the front of that crowd
of *karsevaks*

and when the first blow of the axe fell
on the idol of serapis
carved by bryaxis
five hundred years ago

that's the moment when I felt like
the kingdom of christ had truly begun,
and I am only continuing
my uncle's good work

the snake in serapis' right hand
had three tails, and each tail a head
a dog, a wolf, and a lion
I kept the dog's head with me

for many years
just like that for no reason
before I got bored
and sold it off for scrap

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Polish to English

Madeleine Wulfahrt

Mentor

Sean Gasper Bye

Madeleine Wulfahrt is a writer and member of the *New Yorker*'s editorial staff. She has written for the *New Yorker*, Penguin Modern Classics, *MUBI Notebook*, *Literary Hub*, the *TLS*, and elsewhere. Between 2017 and 2022, she spent time living in Russia and Poland. She now lives in New York.

Introduction

Madeleine Wulfahrt

'A Life Made Out of Cloth' and 'Tommy' are two of the opening fragments of Zuzanna Bartoszek's forthcoming book, *36 Rooms*. Throughout, *36 Rooms* flits between scenes of childhood and dreamlike, post-apocalyptic visions. Bartoszek, who was nominated for Poland's prestigious Wysława Szymborska Prize in 2022, began her artistic career as a poet and oil painter. Bartoszek's poetic voice maintains a delicate balance of vivid, mystical imagery and irreverent, internet-inflected vernacular. In *36 Rooms*, she transposes this idiosyncratic voice for the first time into prose, working at the intersection of prose poetry and short story.

The primary challenge of translating Bartoszek's text has been preserving the particularity of its stylised Polish — honouring its neologisms, abstract images, and colloquialisms without smoothing them over beyond recognition. In my mentorship with Sean Gasper Bye, I have really benefited from sifting through the text on a granular level, examining the many potential English valences of Bartoszek's experimental Polish prose.

'Tommy' was filled with precisely these types of challenges, ranging from playfully unconventional perspectives (such as the use of the first person plural), to childlike vocabulary and wordplay. I also wanted to make sure that my translation captured Zuzanna's painterly descriptions of colors and textures, many of which required close attention to Polish vocabulary and material culture. 'A Life Made Out of Cloth' is exemplary of Bartoszek's prose at the height of its sensory powers. In translating this fragment, I learned a great deal about balancing complex and often nonsensical descriptions with a heightened sensitivity to the tactile nature of both Polish and English.

From *36 Rooms*

Zuzanna Bartoszek, translated by Madeleine Wulfahrt

A Life Made Out of Cloth

I found a set of glowing car keys on the street. On the warm, black plastic there were two symbols: an open and a closed padlock. I touched the open one. One of the parked cars blinked and chirped. So this is it. The car was silver with a silver logo. I looked around and got in. I fired up the engine, and then slowly edged out onto the street. As it turns out, I'm a great driver. There wasn't much traffic. I drove home. When I got to the building, I drove into our lift, and then into my apartment. I made it into the entry hall without any trouble. I drove in very quietly, not waking anyone up or knocking anything over. The car just about squeezed into every room, and through every door. Fair enough — the lift in our building was really quite big, but I was surprised that the car could even squeeze into the toilet. I opened the window and stuck out my arm to touch the tiles. They were soft, and gave way under my fingers. I realised that the walls were made of cloth. Everything inside had been printed onto drapes. This terrified me. Obviously, I shouldn't have taken the keys and driven someone else's car here. Now my entire apartment was made of cloth. I backed out into the living room, where I realised that even my children and husband were just printed on fabric. When I first drove in there, I thought that their bodies were moving gently, breathing in and out after a post-lunch nap. But it was just the drapes swaying. At first, this seemed too severe a punishment for what I had done, but later, I remembered that justice is a virtue invented by human beings, and I accepted my new life made out of cloth.

Tommy

Maggie is walking down the corridor. Let's say that *we are* Maggie. We are walking Maggie down the corridor. We know where to have a wee, because we've been here a million times. We're at the Kowalskis' house in Szczebrzeszyn. The house is full of weird objects. Mama

says approvingly, “The Kowalskis are artists,” so that must be why. We love this house. Ours is super boring. On the right is Tommy’s room with the multi-leaf double windows. These windows are the Spider Hotel. Well, that’s what Maggie calls them in her head, so there. Tommy is afraid of spiders. We, Maggie, are not. Maggie might be a little thick, but for that same reason she’s also fearless. “Maggie is fearless!!!” comes bursting out of me, I’m banging my hand on the door frame to make my cry more convincing. I’m bored because Tom’s been in the toilet for ages. I can barely reach, but I stick my nose up to the windowpane on the door. I can see something, but it’s all chopped up and multiplied, like in a kaleidoscope. “Tommy! Get out here! You’ve gotta see this! You’ve got forty heads! You’ve got a million heads!” You hear Tommy start to giggle in the toilet. He flushes — he was done peeing long ago or doing whatever he was up to in there. Better not to pry. He puts his face to the windowpane on the other side, still giggling, but he doesn’t open the door. “Open up, police!!!” I shake the doorknob, but it doesn’t give way. Tommy is clearly having lots of fun with my impatience. He fakes the sounds of yawning and farting. And then, little by little, to a dubstep beat, he starts dancing in the toilet and singing in a low voice, “I have/got forty heads, I have/got a million heads, I’m forty years old, I have/got a fuckload of wives…” In the end, he comes out of the toilet pretending to be a surfer, and I imitate him, and that’s how we ride out of the gaff and into the yard.

Korean to English

Dasom Yang

Mentor

Clare Richards

Dasom Yang is a writer and translator from South Korea, living in Berlin. She holds an MPhil in Creative Writing from Trinity College Dublin. Her co-translation of kim haeja’s poetry collection with Deborah Smith was supported by LTI Korea and is forthcoming from the Poetry Translation Centre in 2027.

Introduction

Dasom Yang

For the past four months, Clare and I have been working on my translation of essays by Park Wan-suh (1931–2011), a seminal figure in Korean literature. I grew up reading her novels and short stories in school textbooks as well as in my local libraries. As a teenager, I found Park's work revolutionary for its attention to the inner worlds of women — mothers and daughters whose lives were ravaged by war, poverty, and patriarchy. Her wit and wisdom, her unsentimental, dexterous language have informed my taste in reading and writing, in any genre or language.

In April 2025, while visiting my family in Korea, I found a collection of her essays titled 다만 여행자가 될 수 있다면*; If Only I Could Be a Mere Traveler*. The book was published as part of a series of nonfiction writings, edited by her daughter Ho Won-suk, herself a writer. The collection brings together fourteen essays that blend life writing, memoir, and travelogue, revealing a more intimate voice of a national author. I was amused by Park's irreverent candor and struck by her relaxed, agile use of language, traversing high and low registers, pairing the elegant utterances of a literary master with the nutty, spicy textures of everyday speech.

I decided to sample and pitch this book almost immediately. As a writer and reader of nonfiction, I have always wanted to bring more Korean nonfiction into English, and I believe Park's autographical writing sits comfortably in conversation with works by Annie Ernaux, Natalia Ginzburg, and Tove Ditlevsen. I am deeply grateful to Ho Won-suk who trusted me with her mother's book, to the Emerging Translators Mentorship for helping me structure and focus my work, and most importantly to Clare, whose attentive feedback has improved this sample immensely.

From 'On Not Being Able to Forget', an essay in the collection *If Only I Could Be a Mere Traveler*

Park Wan-suh, translated by Dasom Yang

It happened when I first stepped foot in the United States, alone. This was not my first trip abroad, but it was the first time I'd traveled to another country by myself. Regardless, I was not anxious at all, for it had been a long-held dream of mine to allow myself to linger on the strange streets of strange countries. At the security screening, a Black officer whose gender I couldn't discern paused before unzipping my bag, asking me something. A simple question; not a sentence even — word. But this brief utterance that America greeted me with, I could not decipher. It sounded something like "hwi-shers?"; to my understanding this word would have meant fish or fishermen. But of course, it made no sense in that scenario. Basically, I had no clue what I was being asked. Feeling highly intimidated, I replied: *clothes*. I don't think I pronounced the word clothes correctly, and the officer didn't seem to understand me, but they nevertheless stopped unzipping my bag and let me through.

The shock of not understanding the First Word was hard to shake off. Only then did the sheer fact of my aloneness send an icy shiver through my flesh. To make matters worse, no one was waiting for me at the airport. People around me dissipated rapidly. Though I had travelled on Korean Airlines, not a word of Korean could be heard around me. I found myself so thoroughly miserable, lonely, and sad. The quality of solitude and woe I felt then was of a different kind than any I'd felt before. Soon, my daughter's family found me, but this feeling of being the odd one out did not leave me.

Once I returned home to Korea, the biggest relief and joy was the fact that all the cacophonous voices around me turned into language I only had to pay attention to understand. To be frank, I didn't even have to pay attention. All it took was the melody. Its musicality was the

water I grew up in; to be back in the water I had learned to swim in was true happiness. Was I too old to change waters? Was it because of my profession, which required me to wrestle with language at all times? Perhaps both. It could also have been that, because I was not merely traveling through but actually sojourning, albeit briefly, I was fixated on the new water's strange textures rather than focusing on the joy of experiencing its newness.

*

The origin of all my novels is a word, caught unexpectedly from the pool of my own experiences or the secondhand lives of others. At times, a stranger generously hands me a pile of novel plots. They unload their extraordinary experiences or their checkered fate, asking, wouldn't these make for a great novel? I meet people like this every now and then, but so far, a full set of meals prepared by someone else has strangely never piqued my appetite, not even once. I never allow myself to lift even a tiny piece of hint from it, and that's my own nasty temper's doing.

Not being able to forget an errant word heard in passing — a word that not only sets my imagination running but also begets images and demands a story to form — is not just a habit I acquired since I became a novelist.

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