

Counterpoint
Counterpoint
Counterpoint

Counterpoint • No.7 • 2022
CEATL's European Literary
Translators' E-zine

Contents

From the editors	3
The CEATL Companion: A new online idea hub Iztok Ilc	5
A gap in the clouds: Translating Japanese poetry James Hadley	8
A new online platform for literary translators Interview with Babelkat editor Gesine Schröder	13
Can literary translation be taught? Ros Schwartz	16

- Rooms of their own:
New residencies supporting the ‘small’
languages of the Western Balkans** **20**
Monica Dimitrova, Yana Genova
& Neva Micheva
- “Literary translators preserve the
richness of the Slovene language”
An interview with Vesna
Velkovrh Bukilica** **24**
- Sustaining Europe’s multilingual
literary heritage** **28**
Findings from the EU report
Translators on the Cover
Juliane Wammen
- Translators caught in the crossfire:
How to help Ukrainian colleagues?** **32**
Hanneke van der Heijden
- CEATL’s Click List:** **34**
Links to the world of translation

From the editors

“Oh East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet” said Rudyard Kipling in his ballad of 1889. The 7th issue of *Counterpoint/Contrepoint* aims to contradict this stance by turning our gaze in both directions, with the furthest point being Japan. In his article, James Hadley gives a detailed account on the intricacies of translating Japanese poetry. Most interestingly, he embarked on a collective journey with an Irish poet, Nell Regan, who knows no Japanese.

Yana Genova, recently appointed chair of RECIT, the European Network of International Centres for Literary Translation, and her colleagues Monica Dimitrova and Neva Micheva have written about the *Translation in Motion* project. Launched in 2020 in partnership with translation centres from eight West Balkan countries, these new translator residencies support the ‘small’ languages of the Western Balkans. ‘Rooms of their own’ looks at the importance of a space where literary translators can not only be alone but can also be amongst likeminded people.

Vesna Velkovich Bukilica writes a very personal and moving account of the importance of translating into one of the ‘small’ languages of Europe,

Slovenian, a distinct language since the 10th century. Slovenia has two additional official languages, Italian and Hungarian, which, alongside having been part of the multilingual Austro-Hungarian Empire, makes for considerable linguistic diversity. “A precious asset” in Bukilica’s view.

Three further articles showcase the continuous work being carried out by translators for translators. Firstly, Iztok Ilc and the CEATL team have compiled the marvellous *CEATL Companion for Literary Translators’ Associations*, probably the first go-to source for any translators’ association. Conceived by CEATL’s Best Practices working group in 2018 in Bucharest, it has been developed as a freely accessible resource tool for those proposing to form a literary translators’ association. Chock-a-block with practical advice, we exhort readers to check it out.

Secondly, Gesine Schröder and her team, Johanna Steiner and Martin Neusiedl, have spent many hours setting up a veritable bank of literary translator knowledge for the translation community on the new online platform, Babelwerk. Another not-to-be missed resource.

And then, from the west of the continent, Ros Schwartz, honorary CEATL member, asks us the perennially thorny question – Can literary translation be taught? She very cogently argues that there is in fact a role for training literary translators to develop their skills.

Counterpoint editor Juliane Wammen, covers the main points in the recently published EU report, *Translators on the Cover*. Fingers crossed all this work, and the recommendations, will translate into improved conditions for literary translators.

Any look towards Eastern Europe cannot but face the atrocities being carried out on a daily basis in Ukraine. First-hand accounts of how this war is affecting our colleagues was heard at the CEATL AGM held from 18–21 May in Sofia, Bulgaria. Ostap Slyvynsky, vice-president of PEN Ukraine and Natalia Pavliuk, president of the Ukrainian Association of Translators and Interpreters (UATI) addressed the delegates via Zoom. Ukrainian translator Oksana Stoianova, who fled to Bulgaria, attended the meeting in person.

Many of us were so mistakenly convinced that another war in Europe could never happen in our lifetime in this 21st century. What this unfolding tragedy sadly serves to highlight is how very fragile democracy is. All the more reason for our community of translators to add our grain of salt and continue to open and disseminate our cultures by translating literature into and out of every possible language.

Hanneke van der Heijden,
Anne Larchet and Juliane Wammen
editors@ceatl.eu



Hanneke van der Heijden is a literary translator and interpreter from Turkish into Dutch, and writes about *literature from Turkey*.

Photo: Private Archive



Anne Larchet is a freelance interpreter and translator from Spanish to English.

Photo: Martin de Haan



Juliane Wammen is an award-winning literary translator from English, Norwegian and Swedish into Danish.

Photo: Tim Flohr Sørensen

The CEATL Companion:

A new online idea hub

Iztok Ilc

In January 2022, the [CEATL Companion for Literary Translators' Associations](#) was officially launched. It was conceived in Bucharest by CEATL's Best Practices working group way back in 2018 as an openly available resource tool for emerging or existing literary translators' associations, as well as a platform for exchanging ideas and experiences that might help translators and their associations not just in Europe but also worldwide.

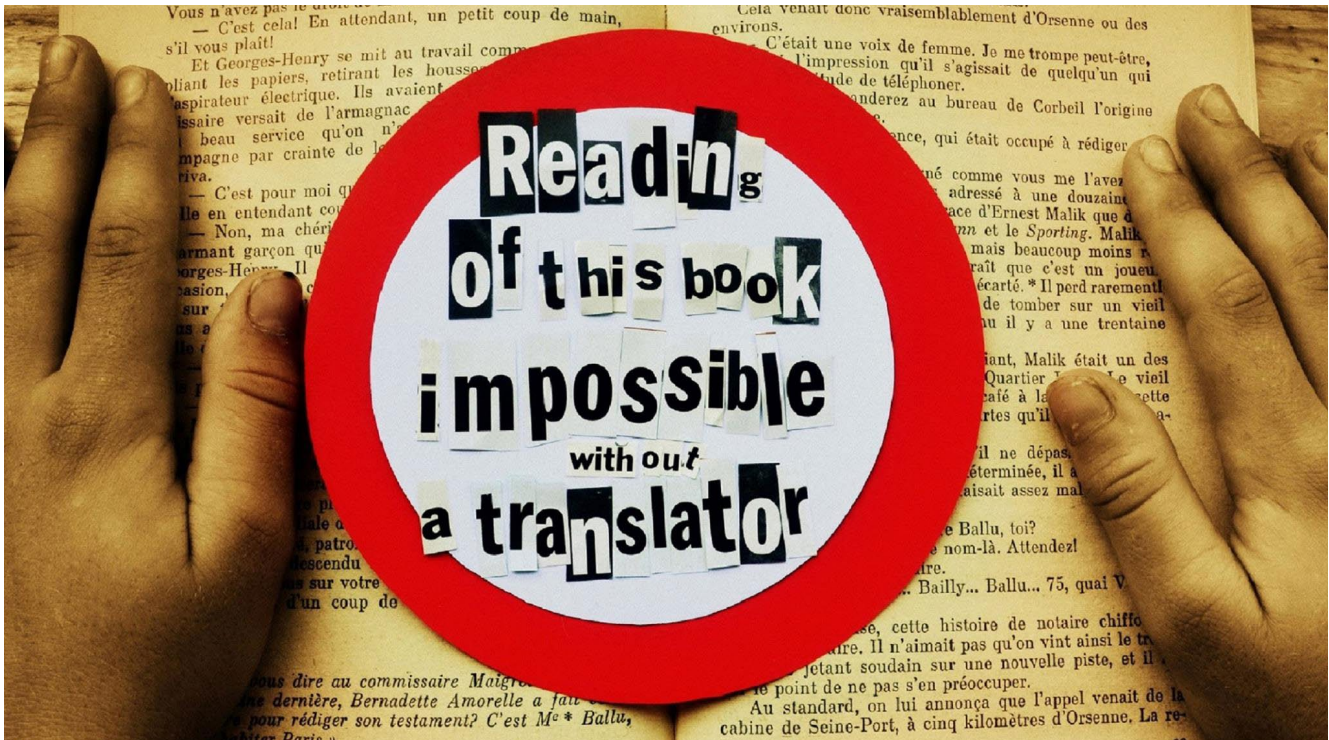
Literary translators' associations may vary in size and experience, but tend to share common goals and carry out similar activities. Some have long, distinguished histories and access to financial and other resources, whereas others might be relatively new and small, running largely on their members' enthusiasm and passion. They all aim to improve the working conditions for translators and to raise professional standards in the field, relying on creativity and ingenuity to combat the challenges the profession is increasingly facing in a world in which the merits of culture are largely viewed through a strictly commercial lens. This is where CEATL's Companion

for Literary Translators' Associations steps in as a repository of good practices and an online idea hub intended to boost associations' efforts and even expand their collaborative networks.

The Companion is divided into eight sections, covering the fundamental steps of founding, maintaining, and growing a translators' association: Getting started, Recruiting and motivating members, Fundraising, Lobbying, Building a dialogue with publishers, Continued professional development, Residences, and Visibility. Each section briefly defines the issue at hand and then offers success stories, or associations' concrete experiences that seem to have done the trick.

Maintaining members

The [Getting started](#) section outlines the key steps in establishing a new association, and showcases the success story of ARTLIT, the Romanian literary translators' association founded in 2014. For an association to have any impact, however, it needs members, members who will stay long-term and get actively involved. Most if not all associations face the challenge of attracting and



From the Companion's website

keeping members, so **Recruiting and motivating members** provides ideas for building an actively engaged translators' community, with success stories from Poland's STL and Italy's AITI, as well as prompts for various forms of gatherings and 'Stammtische' to keep translators connected. It is an uphill battle, but, as the success stories show, one worth fighting.

Money is a burning issue for a fair number of associations, especially the younger and smaller ones. The **Fundraising** section delineates the most common methods of funding an association – such as membership fees or financing from public institutions – as well as suggestions for more creative avenues for securing money for smaller projects, workshops, or publications, be they from public or private sources, collecting societies or lottery funds, depending on what a country might have on offer.

In addition to providing funding, public institutions responsible for culture make key decisions that directly affect translators' livelihoods, so it is crucial for associations to have their say in the decision-making processes. This is where **Lobbying** comes in: associations need a good grasp of the legislation regulating their field, as well as of the tools at their disposal to effect changes in favour of the profession. This task may appear daunting and even futile in countries in which institutions show very little interest, but this is precisely where lobbying and advocacy are most urgently needed.

CPD: an essential

The Companion also provides sections aimed inwards, at strengthening the skills and expanding the knowledge of translators themselves, since a large part of the literary translators' learning process comes from practice. **Continued professional development**



Iztok Ilc is a literary translator from French and Japanese into Slovene. He has a BA in French Language and Literature and Japanese Studies from the University of Ljubljana and is first delegate for CEATL for the Slovenian Association of Literary Translators (DSKP) where he is also a board member. Iztok Ilc's recent translations include works by Shuntaro Tanikawa, Minae Mizumura, Shusaku Endo, Catherine Cusset, Michel Houellebecq and others.

Iztok Ilc
Photo: Roman Šipić

helps associations with suggestions and success stories to get actively involved in providing translators with development opportunities outside the formal education system, curated and conducted by seasoned professionals. These may take the form of seminars and workshops, mentorship programmes, or simple peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge and experience. Among the success stories in this section, one may read of AELC's new consultancy programme for translators working with Catalan, as well as a list of various residential seminars for literary translators.

An association's growth and impact, and all its activities – be they recruiting members, fundraising, lobbying, or networking – is predicated on its **Visibility**. This section is chock-full of ideas and success stories, plenty of them kindly provided by Croatia's DHKP.

A collaborative and living document

This and plenty of other growing content on, for instance, **residencies** or **building a dialogue with publishers**, can be found

by visiting the Companion's website. As the Companion is both a collaborative and living document, the working group will regularly collect similar success stories from CEATL's members, but all associations, whether part of CEATL or not, are also warmly encouraged to send in their own experiences, as well as questions and comments through the page's **contact form**.

The CEATL Companion for Literary Translators' Associations would not have come to fruition without the hard work and dedication of the former and current members of the Best Practices working group (in alphabetical order): Lavinia Braniște, ARTLIT (Romania), Iztok Ilc, DSKP (Slovenia), Kalina Janeva, MATA (Macedonia), Ika Kaminka, NO (Norway), Francesca Novajra, AITI (Italy), Simina Popa, ARTLIT (Romania), Eva Valvo, STRADE (Italy), Ela Varošaneć, DHKP (Croatia), and Shaun Whiteside, TA (United Kingdom).

A gap in the clouds:

Translating Japanese poetry

James Hadley

In February 2021, in collaboration with award-winning Irish poet, Nell Regan, I published *A Gap in the Clouds: A New Translation of the Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*, which had been a labour of love for the two of us for several years. The *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu* is by far the most famous collection of poems in Japan. It consists of one hundred *tanka*, each one penned by a different poet. The *tanka*, also called the *waka*, is the longer antecedent of the more famous haiku. Haiku, with its famous 5-7-5 arrangement of syllables was developed in the seventeenth century by famous poets like Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694), who composed the iconic ‘old pond’:

古池や蛙飛び込む水の音
(*furu ike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto*)

which I might translate as:

An old pond
a frog jumps in
the sound of water

and Uejima Onitsura (1661–1738), who composed:

山里や井戸のはたなる梅の花
(*yamazato ya ido no hata naru ume no hana*)

which I might translate as:

Over a mountain village’s well
a banner –
a plum tree in bloom

As these examples illustrate, the 5-7-5 arrangement in Japanese is a formal device which defines the overall nature of the poems. However, it does not imply a line break or the introduction of punctuation as is often seen both in translations of haiku in English, and in haiku originally written in English. The same is true for the *tanka* form, which consists of a 5-7-5-7-7 pattern.

Tanka – a single moment in time
Tanka rose to prominence during the



Illustration from A Gap in the Clouds

ninth century, when the written Japanese language had no syllabary of its own, and was fully reliant on Chinese characters to represent Japanese words, variously logographically and phonetically. Thus, written Japanese was effectively a proxy of classical Chinese, meaning that writing at the time implied huge privilege, because it essentially required learners to have the leisure to acquire a solid grasp of written classical Chinese to write or read in Japanese. The hundred tanka in the *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu* were composed by historical figures who lived between the early eighth century and the mid-thirteenth century. Among them are emperors and empresses, ladies in waiting, priests, ministers, and even

Murasaki Shikubu, the author of the *Tale of Genji*, which has been called the world’s first novel by Martyn Lyons in *Books: A Living History* published in 2011. Many of these individuals are also related, with a large proportion being senior members of the Fujiwara clan, which was politically preeminent at the time. Thus, although the *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu* has become something of a national institution in Japan over the centuries, the poems actually capture a snapshot of the preoccupations of a tiny cross-section of the most elite members of medieval Japanese society.

A snapshot is a good metaphor for the poems in general, since in a very

similar way to the haiku tradition, tanka could be described as the art of depicting a single moment in time, often with implied or explicit emotional undertones, as can be seen in this example, by Harumichi no Tsuraki:

山川に風のかけたるしがらみは
流れもあへぬもみぢなりけり
(*yamagawa ni kaze no kaketaru shigarami
ha nagare mo aenu momiji nari keru*)

which we translated as:

The wind builds a dam
with maple leaves –
blown one-by-one
they clog the flow
of this mountain stream.

Very often, the emotions expressed in the poems are nostalgic, melancholic or vexed, rather than passionate or jubilant as may be more frequently seen in other poetic traditions. And this pattern, we found part way through the process of translating the poems, is reflective of the central position that poetry had for the medieval Japanese elite, of the mores of courtship at the time, and nature of the day to day lives of the poets. Poetry for this small group of elites was a hugely important element in the reckoning of social capital, whereby a single poem could make or break careers and relationships. Poems were used by both genders as forms of emotional expression in courtship. However, somewhat counterintuitively for the position of the people involved, the kinds of emotion that appear to have elicited the best response from potential partners are not those which might associate the poet with positions of power or supremacy, but those which

illustrate the fragility and weakness of the poet. Moreover, as members of the super elite, these individuals' lives were closely regulated and ritualised. Leaving the residence would have been a substantial affair, involving a retinue. Therefore, while poetry also no doubt acted as a form of entertainment, it gives us a window on the poets' state of mind when they say that they are gazing out of the window, for example.

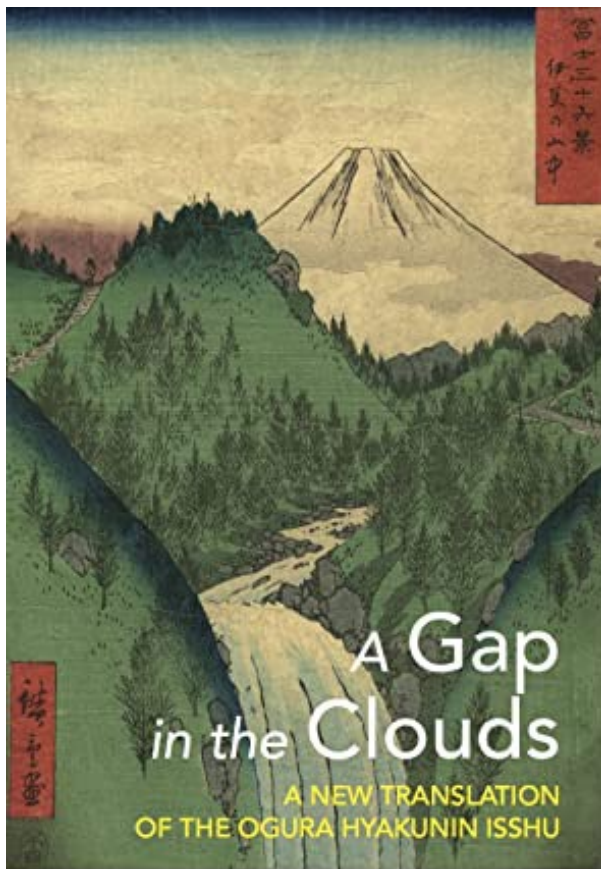
“A snapshot is a good metaphor for the poems in general”

A collective journey

Our journey through translating the poems was also a journey of discovery, as understanding these factors behind their composition allowed us to interpret the patterns and motifs that occurred in the collection. Nell Regan had already published several collections of poems before we embarked on our collective journey and was also familiar with translating between Irish and English. However, Nell had no understanding of Japanese. On the other hand, I had a grasp of the Japanese, but a limited capacity for writing poetry in English. Therefore, on paper at least, our respective expertise complemented one another.

I would take each poem and translate it for Nell in several different ways to give her as clear a picture of the Japanese

poem as possible. I aimed to give Nell a literal sense of the poem as it is written. So I aimed to translate each poem as a single sentence, accompanied by copious notes on cultural context and word plays. In addition, I would indicate where each of the syllable breaks fell and what content appeared in each of these breaks. I would also provide a transliteration of the Japanese poem, in order for Nell to get a sense of the sound of the poems.



Translated, with an Introduction, by
JAMES HADLEY & NELL REGAN

Cover of *A Gap in the Clouds*

The two of us would meet each week to discuss the poems. In the first place I would read the poems to Nell and talk her through the images and effects the poems contained. Later, she would bring several versions of the poems in English for us to discuss.

Aside from the obvious cultural distance between medieval Japan and contemporary Ireland, one of the key aspects of the translation process which raised its head in almost every poem is classical Japanese's liberal use of particles to introduce complexity. Where English and some other European languages may add adjectives to phrases to hint at the emotion behind an action, classical Japanese more frequently makes use of these small words with no direct translations, which add layers of meaning to a statement.

For example, in the following poem, particles are used extensively, but the final three words, all of which are particles interact with one another to create complex layers of meaning:

難波渦みじかき芦のふしの間も逢
はでこの世を過ぐしてよとや
(*Naniwagata mijikaki ashi no fushi no ma mo awade kono yo wo sugushi teyo to ya*)

The *teyo* particle indicates that the speaker is expressing a view with strong emotion. The *to* particle reacts to what comes before it. The *ya* particle indicates that the author is not sure about the statement they have just made. Thus, a sense translation might be something like 'could it really be the case that...?!'. The remainder of the poem is similarly built with heavy use of particles, such that a complex image can be built in relatively few syllables in Japanese which would take far more words in English to express. A very un-poetic translation of the whole line above might be something like 'Could it really be the case that the length of time that has passed without us meeting in this world is [as short as] the space between



James Hadley is Ussher Assistant Professor in Literary Translation at Trinity College Dublin, and the Director of the College's award-winning *MPhil in Literary Translation* master's degree. He is also the principal investigator on the *QuantiQual Project*, generously funded by the Irish Research Council's *COALESCE* scheme.

James Hadley
Photo: Private Archive

the nodes on the reeds in Naniwa lagoon?'. The translation we settled on for *A Gap in the Clouds*, however, is:

See the reeds of Naniwa lagoon,
that brief span between
each notch – are you saying
we've only been apart that long?
Already it's another world!

Witnessing Nell's power in judging what to say and what to omit, or to hint at using punctuation, was an eye-opening experience for me, and one which I feel has gone on to influence the way that I translate in general, even in the case of prose. I realised that I tend to assume a reader will not latch onto something unless I make it explicit. However, watching complex and multi-layered concepts be condensed into a small amount of space and that the result was also poetic has demonstrated to me the power of saying less in translation. This is not a question of what is lost or found in translation, but one of the leeway that

one can give a reader to make their own interpretations based on what you are able to give them. If everything is laid out, the reader is passive in the reading process. But if some of the dots are not joined, the reader is included. The instinct is to feel that by not joining the dots the reader will take away the wrong impression. But in the case of the *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*, the concept of a word-for-word translation is a fantasy. Even putting the concept of translating a poem as a poem to one side, the fundamental building blocks of the two languages are so different that any translation is necessarily an extrapolation. The range and variation of interpretations inherent in the poems can be easily seen by comparing our translations with others, such as Peter McMillan's *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each: A Treasury of Classical Japanese Verse*, published in 2018. Therefore, is it important for the reader to take away the same impressions of the poem's underlying meaning as I do?

A new online platform for literary translators

Interview with Babelkat editor *Gesine Schröder*

In January this year, the new online platform *Babelwerk*, based in Germany, saw the light of day at a launch party at the *Literarisches Colloquium Berlin*. Counterpoint talked to one of the platform editors, *Gesine Schröder*, who is responsible for the database *Babelkat*.

What is the main idea behind the platform *Babelwerk* and how did you go about it in practical terms?

The very first idea that led to what is now *Babelwerk* came from Marie Luise Knott at the German Translators' Fund (*Deutscher Übersetzerfonds*): She suggested creating a platform containing "literary translators' knowledge". Late in 2020, a brainstorming session with various experts was called to give this idea some shape: What kind of knowledge did we want to present, to whom, and in which formats? The platform would need different sections to cover the production, presentation and documentation of knowledge for various audiences. Johanna Steiner was tasked

with project coordination and took me on board as a freelance contributor to draft and develop the bibliography database, *Babelkat*. The German Translators' Fund acquires, edits and curates the content and provides the organisational framework for the project.

Today, an editorial team consisting of Johanna Steiner, Martin Neusiedl and myself, supported by an advisory board, edits the three main sections of *Babelwerk*: the magazine *Konterbande*, in which we publish essays, articles and international news items; a collection of online resources for literary translators in the *Handwerk* section; and the bibliography database *Babelkat*.

For its development over a year and its first year online, *Babelwerk* has been funded through the pandemic grant programme *Neustart Kultur* ('cultural relaunch'), issued by the Minister of State for Culture and Media.

Who do you want to use Babelwerk and what do you hope to give them?

True to the original idea, Babelwerk has become a platform that compiles and presents existing knowledge resources for literary translators as well as publishing new contributions to our knowledge pool.

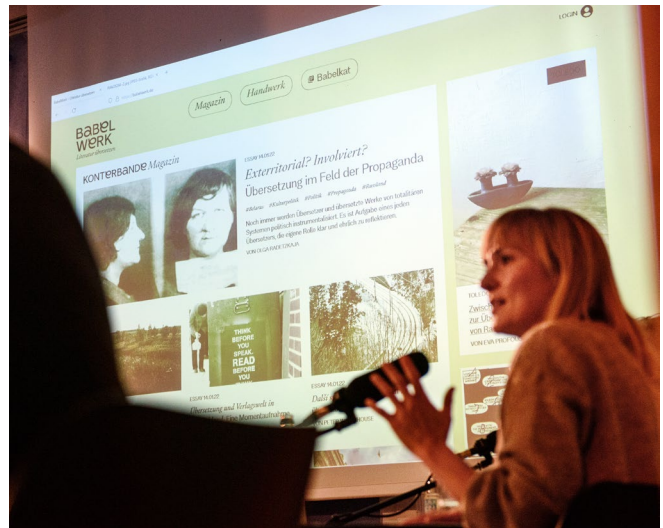
For the professional audience, we are hoping that Babelkat will prove to be a useful research tool that accumulates, interlinks and combines knowledge resources and presents them all in one spot. Additionally, Babelkat offers users the possibility of organising and annotating their (private) personal research library, thereby keeping their knowledge easily accessible for future projects. Plus, they can build a visible profile by presenting their area of expertise in public resource collections (called ‘Sammlungen’ in Babelkat) and by adding their own publications to the bibliography.

For the broader public, the magazine *Konterbande* provides high quality contributions to the public dialogue on cultural topics from the unique point of view that translators have, drawing on the vast knowledge base that we all acquire during our professional lives.

Babelwerk is based in Germany and has a German language starting point. What are your thoughts on the issue of language when it comes to reaching an international audience?

Babelkat contains documents in many languages, and these will be added to by the user community over time. We are still very much in the early stages of the project, but structurally, it is laid out to serve different language communities.

Once all the planned features are implemented, we can translate the user interface and start building a more international user base. The magazine *Konterbande* might start publishing in languages other than German if the overall concept proves successful.



Project coordinator Johanna Steiner at the launch party for Babelwerk, January 2022
Photo: Tobias Bohm

What do you see as the greatest challenges for literary translators at the moment?

The gig economy, growing automation and rising demands on efficiency and speed are changing the working conditions of technical translators, but starting to affect literary translators as well. Where personal relationships are replaced by gig worker pools or pitches, low production prices are the only means of distinction for us. In order to counter this trend, we are aiming to make the complexity and creativity of our work more visible.

At the same time, literary translators are increasingly contemplating their own role in a complex cultural landscape. In their essays in *Konterbande* magazine,



Gesine Schröder is a literary translator from English to German. Voluntary work for the VdÜ translators' association magazine *Übersetzen* prompted her to delve into the field of knowledge organisation and information retrieval. For *Babelwerk*, she provided a first draft of the bibliography database *Babelkat* and has been contributing to the development of this part of the website as a freelancer ever since.

Gesine Schröder
Photo: Frischefotos

Olga Radetzkaja points out the danger of becoming part of a cultural propaganda machine; **Larissa Bender** reports on the hostility she faced when promoting the literary work of Syrian authors as an editor; and **Claudia Hamm** reflects on language choices in the

translation of postcolonial literature. An in-depth examination of topics like these will help us take on our cultural role actively and responsibly.

Babelwerk consists of three sections:

1. The magazine *Konterbande* ('Contraband') is aimed at the general interested public. It contains essays on a wide variety of translation-related topics, articles about important keywords and technical terms – compiled in the 'translators' alphabet' – as well as notes and reports on international debates about translation topics, provided by a network of correspondents.

2. The section *Handwerk* ('Craftmanship') is a curated link collection containing important resources for translators, so

it is directed at a more professional audience.

3. The bibliography database *Babelkat* contains metadata on documents for and about translation. Several magazines and blogs (including *Counterpoint/Contrepoint*) have been contributing bibliographical data to all their articles and posts. Research is facilitated by tags and annotations added to the documents. Registered users can save, organise and export their findings or add new entries to *Babelkat*.

Can literary translation be taught?

Ros Schwartz

As with creative writing, there are contradictory schools of thought about whether literary translation can be taught. If an aspiring translator possesses the two fundamental requisites, i.e. an in-depth knowledge of their source language and culture as well as excellent writing skills in their target language, is there a role for training to develop their abilities as a literary translator? I argue that there is, and I shall expand below on how I see that role. Over the past decade, I have led translation workshops and training events, including literary translation summer schools under the aegis of various UK universities, and the views I offer below are rooted in my observations.

Literary translation is a solitary activity. There is no one to say that “this is the right way to approach this particular challenge”. Often, translators are hamstrung by a lack of confidence. Working instinctively, a fledgeling

translator will often come up with an interesting and creative response to a thorny problem, but then pull back because they’re “not sure this is allowed” or “it’s going too far from the original”. And so, the role of the translation mentor or tutor is to boost the hesitant student’s confidence and empower them. It’s about encouraging them to be bold and to take ownership of their translation, while being able to justify their choices, even though these may be controversial.

With the proliferation of university degrees in translation studies from the 1970s¹, graduates have emerged armed to the teeth with theory, having been taught mainly by academics and rarely by practitioners. I believe that peer training can help bridge the disconnect between abstract theory and publishing realities. Some students espouse a particular theory and use it as a sort of shield, applying it to everything they do in a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.

¹ ‘Translation studies’ was coined by the Amsterdam-based American scholar James S. Holmes in his 1972 paper ‘The name and nature of translation studies’.

The role of the mentor then is to wean them off theory (I'm not arguing against theory, it can provide a useful framework for articulating our practice) and offer a more nuanced approach that weighs up the translator's various and sometimes conflicting loyalties – to the author, to the reader and to the publisher.



Photo: Maksym Kaharlytskyi
Unsplash

Training initiatives

So, what kind of training is beneficial to the aspiring and even the mid-career literary translator? I have been actively involved in several types of training, all of which I have found to be of great value.

Single-language-pair workshops

Participants work on the same excerpt, taking a deep dive into the source text and discussing possible solutions to the challenges it presents. This format is

eye-opening in that it reveals different ways of understanding the source text and the different translation options, all of which may be equally valid. It gives the students (and often the tutor) pause for thought and prompts them to slow down and question their own assumptions and habits.

Translation clinics

Facilitated by an experienced translator, the idea of translation clinics is to have participants working from different source languages. Each person outlines the particular translation problem they are facing, which could be a generic issue, such as “the three protagonists all speak different dialects which reflect their social class/geographical origin”, or “should I keep in source-language honorifics?” “When to italicise (or not)”. The interest of these clinics is the discussion of common translation problems and the cross-fertilization that happens between translators working from very different languages.

The “Vice-Versa” model

A bilingual workshop as practised by ATLAS at the [Centre International de Traduction Littéraire](#) in Arles. During a week-long residential course, 6 participants working from French into a given language and 6 translating from that language into French work together on an excerpt of a translation in progress from each person, under the supervision of two tutors, one from each of the two languages. It is a unique opportunity for each participant to garner mother-tongue-speaker insights as well as constructive input from peers. In addition to overall confidence-building and technique-sharing, another benefit of all these group activities is the

networking and informal social media groups that evolve out of them, providing ongoing peer support. As well as strictly translation-related discussions, participants also gain valuable industry knowledge about working with publishers and editors and how the book chain operates, which is another key aspect of professional development.

One-on-one mentoring

Like artisan apprenticeships, mentoring offers a privileged opportunity for emerging translators to learn from an old hand. There is a financial consideration here: mentoring is time-consuming, and the mentor needs to be remunerated. In the UK, there is a well-established, funded mentoring scheme run by the [National Centre for Writing](#) in Norwich, which matches emerging translators with top professionals. The mentorship takes the form that best suits the mentee's needs, depending on the stage they're at in their career. It may consist of a granular analysis and reworking of a first-draft translation, or it may involve introducing the mentee to publishers and helping them find their way into print.

Remote tutoring

This the format offered by the Belgian [Centre Européen de Traduction Littéraire](#) spearheaded by Françoise Wuilmart. Tutors provide texts for translation and the students' work is submitted to them for critiquing. There is also the option of a follow-up Skype session. The advantage of this scheme is that the students have a chance to work on a range of texts with several different tutors (who may have differing, even diametrically opposed, approaches), and it takes place over an extended period, unlike a one-off workshop or short

course, allowing the student to develop their skills with practice over time.

A two-way street

To any translators considering branching out into training/mentoring, I would add that there are huge benefits for the trainer too. Tutoring has made me articulate and constantly question my own practice, which was initially intuitive. I myself have developed as a practitioner through having to analyse my translation process – what I do and why I do it –, and from becoming aware of some theories, mainly through my students' writings.

“Group training workshops lead to ongoing peer support”

Training the trainers

There have been initiatives to 'train the trainers', notably a summit first held at the [British Centre for Literary Translators](#) summer school in 2014 and now a regular feature of the summer school. This week-long gathering brought together translation tutors to brainstorm and share best practice. There is also the [European School of Literary Translation \(ESLT\)](#) conference which again brings together translators involved in professional development activities from different countries to pool ideas. Translator trainers may also find some valuable guidance in the [PETRA-E Framework](#) for the education and



Ros Schwartz is an award-winning translator of more than a hundred works of fiction and nonfiction, particularly by contemporary Francophone writers. Ros was made a Chevalier d'Honneur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2009.

Ros Schwartz
Photo: Private Archive

training of literary translators, developed for institutional teaching purposes, but useful too for peer training practitioners.

Joining the dots

I firmly believe that practitioners can play an important part in bridging the gap between academia and translation at the coal face. Some universities recognise this and invite literary translators to give masterclasses, workshops and talks, often focused on the practicalities of working within the publishing industry and covering topics such as how to pitch a project to an editor; the editing process; contractual considerations; or to give talks about how they approached the translation of a particular title and even to stage events with a pedagogical component, like translation duels.

And so, to answer the question of whether literary translation can be taught, I would argue that when an

aspiring translator has a solid grounding in their source language and culture, and can write well in their target language, they can be encouraged and empowered through established practitioners sharing their know-how and experience. When I started out, forty years ago, there were no translation courses, no peer-led workshops. My early translations were toe-curlingly bad. I learned the hard way, on the job, thanks to the patience and generosity of skilled editors. Sadly, nowadays, editing can be very patchy because since the advent of new technologies, publishers have cut down on in-house staff, putting experienced editors out to grass and consequently losing their wealth of knowledge. I would not wish that painful uphill slog on anyone, and perhaps that is why today I am so committed to reaching out to emerging translators to pass on the wisdom and techniques that weren't available to me at the start of my career.

Rooms of their own:

New residencies supporting the ‘small’ languages of the Western Balkans

Monica Dimitrova, Yana Genova & Neva Micheva

Translation in Motion is a three-year initiative co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. It was launched by **RECIT**, the European Network of International Centres for Literary Translation, in 2020, in partnership with a cluster of translation centres from eight European countries from the Western Balkans, and the EU.

Translation in Motion’s ambition is to aid the increase in numbers, diversity and quality of literary works available to readers across Europe. The project partners will organize translation workshops in Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia, and RECIT will map all literary translation residencies in Europe. In 2022, the partner residency centres will host 20 literary translators working between the languages of the Western Balkans and other European languages.

New residencies sprouting

Literary translators’ residency programmes have been a part of the translation landscape in Europe for a long time and many of them are members of the **pan-European RECIT network**, established in 2000. Today, a new group of translation residencies is on the rise in Southeast Europe. Alongside Goga in Novo mesto (Slovenia), Udruga Kurs in Split (Croatia) and the Literature and Translation House in Sofia (Bulgaria), literary organisations in Skopje, Tirana, Belgrade and Cetinje have expanded their work to function also as translation residencies.

These centres were mostly initiated by prominent writers and intellectuals such as Vladimir Arsenijevic in Serbia, Robert Alagjozovski in North Macedonia or Arian Leka in Albania, by literary organisations, publishers and by organisations within the book sector. Because they are essentially civic initiatives run by independent cultural organisations, these centres rarely receive support from state and municipal institutions, and the significance of their work often goes

unrecognised by public bodies. The high degree of economic uncertainty makes these centres dependent on project-based funding and therefore vulnerable. **The international Traduki network**, which helped to kickstart them, still remains the major source of financial support when it comes to creating networks between literary agents and translators inside the region.

space for focused creative work and in this way contribute to the translation diversity in Europe. The centres are located in the capitals (Belgrade, Tirana, Skopje) rather than in the tranquillity of small towns surrounded by nature, and their programmes are exclusively for translators from the local language.

Given the lack of large-scale public programmes for the promotion of national literatures – that elsewhere would provide information, books, mobility grants, awards and many other resources to aid translators and book professionals in their work – the new Balkan translators’ residencies are a direct entry point to the local cultural scene. They act as literary agents for the literature of the source language, knowledgeable liaisons, and welcoming hosts, all at the same time.

In other words, while a traditional translators’ centre offers its guests a creative retreat and inspiring meetings with fellow professionals, the new ones also function as a trampoline for the residents to the otherwise inaccessible local cultural and linguistic life.

During her residency in Tirana within the **Translation in Motion** project, **Zuzana Finger**, a literary translator from Albanian, Czech, Slovak, Serbian and Hungarian into German, said: “Being in the country offers the best opportunity to experience and keep up with current language developments and changes, as dictionaries (...) quickly become outdated.” During her residency at Poeteka, Finger worked on a German translation of Albanian poetry, and she lay great emphasis on the importance of face-to-face interaction, i.e. “the opportunity to have an analogue



Map of Translation Centres
Photo: Next Page Foundation

Multiple roles for residencies

Older translation residencies elsewhere, Goten in North Macedonia, Krokodil in Serbia and Poeteka in Albania offer a



Sofia Literature and Translation House
Photo: Milena Selimi

exchange with the translated writers, as personal conversation is constructive, associative and creative, and so is the work of literary translators.”

Promoting and protecting “small” languages

Residencies are a way to motivate and support emerging translators of less-translated languages – like the French translator [Marie van Effenterre](#) who completed her very first translation of a Serbian novel, *Zabluda Svetog Sebastijana* by Vladimir Tabasevic, during a residency at Krokodil in 2021. Residencies are also a way to back the efforts of well-established translators, because as professionals working with lesser-known literatures they frequently find themselves in the role of literary agents and promoters for authors, titles or even entire cultural contexts.

Slovene translator [Sonja Dolzan](#) who worked on the translation of the novel *He oдам никаде* by Rumena Buzarovska from Macedonian, stresses this aspect

of the role of translators: “After the residency, I will be more successful in presenting contemporary Macedonian literature to Slovenian publishers who are interested in translating works by Macedonian authors.”

“There I can be isolated and at the same time be in the right crowd”

Depending on the local specificities, translation centres might differ on a formal level, both organisational and financial, but they share a common mission to support the creative work of translators and to seed new cross-border professional connections. The Bulgarian translator Neva Micheva writes about her experience in an honest and frank manner:



Yana Genova
*Photo: Next Page
Foundation*



Neva Micheva
*Photo: Sofia Literature
and Translation House*



Monica Dimitrova
Photo: Irina Fomina

“Whenever somebody asks me, why do I go to a rented room in another country to do exactly what I do at home, my answer is this: there I can be isolated and at the same time in the right crowd. Translators’ residencies are the best places for us to be both completely closed and open, to share solutions and new knowledge, to understand and feel understood, to practise different languages, connect with the world and stay culturally awake. Translation is about all of this.”

Although translation centres differ in many specific ways, residencies are the background champions of literary translation, and thankfully, their indispensable role is slowly gaining more appreciation, as we see new centres emerge across Europe.

Monica Dimitrova is a communications and visibility manager in the field of culture with a background in event management, **Yana Genova** is a cultural manager and researcher, founder of Next Page Foundation and the Sofia Literature and Translation House and currently president of RECIT, and **Neva Micheva** is a translator from Italian, Spanish, Catalan and occasionally Russian into Bulgarian, and a passionate advocate for translation residencies.

“Literary translators preserve the richness of the Slovene language”

An interview with
Vesna Velkoverh Bukilica

You translate into Slovenian, one of the ‘small languages’ in Europe, i.e. a language with relatively few (native-)speakers. For countries with a ‘small language’ as its official language, translation is of special importance. How relevant is book translation in Slovenia?

Of course, translation is of paramount importance for the culture of any nation, regardless of its ‘size’. (Just imagine English-speaking readers not having access to German or Russian literature – or vice versa.) But for ‘small’ languages, translation can have a fundamental role in constituting its own literature, as was the case in Slovenia. It goes beyond the spreading of new concepts and ideas; it forces us to explore and refine our own linguistic resources.

In Slovenia, having been a part of the multilingual Austrian empire for many centuries, most people in the past were

familiar with German, because it was taught in schools. Many intellectuals – those who tended to introduce new ideas – spoke or at least read several other languages, too. Yet it was arguably through translations that the Slovene language fully tapped into its own resources, developed or perfected the verbal tools needed for full cultural and, later, political autonomy (which is a paradox only in appearance) – i.e. for new growth from *within*. And today, in a visually overloaded but linguistically considerably impoverished world, it is no exaggeration to say that it is literary translators who are probably the most efficient *de facto* keepers of the original richness of the Slovene language.

How is this reflected in the position of the translator in Slovenian society (in terms of rights, fees, status etc.)?

I remember reading reviews of translated books that were published in widely read

Slovene magazines before and during WWI. Often, the reviewers' attention to the details of the translations was stupendous (even going as far as offering well-substantiated alternative solutions – delving deep into both the source and the target language – when necessary).

Nowadays, such an in-depth analysis of translations is practically non-existent (except within the context of traductology courses, obviously) and it happens quite often that in book reviews the translator is mentioned almost as an afterthought – as if the book had somehow translated itself, in a sort of august, mysterious parthenogenesis.

But there have been positive changes, too. In the past two decades or so, naming the translator on the cover itself has become the norm. And since this nation reveres books – at least in theory – being introduced as a literary translator tends to garner respect and some sort of admiration among people from all walks of life. But translation fees are lagging considerably behind salaries and living costs, which may be a more realistic measure of the true status of translators in the eyes of 'society' in general.

How was the Slovenian language affected by nationalistic tendencies during and after the Balkan wars? Does this affect your work as a translator?

The Slovene language in Slovenia itself (as opposed to its already limited use in various federal institutions, such as the army) was never under any direct threat. It couldn't have been – after all, it's been a distinct language since at least the 10th century (when the oldest

preserved document of the language, the *Freising Manuscripts*, was produced) and survived a thousand-years under multilingual political entities.

What was under attack was the coherence of the cultural 'memory' – in effect, the very cultural identity – of the nation. In 1983, it was proposed that school curricula throughout the then -Yugoslavia use a common basic 'template', in which the amount of material assigned to the history and culture of each of the (six) federal republics was to be based on the *percentage* its people represented within Yugoslavia – (NB Yugoslavia had 20 million inhabitants; Slovenia had two million.) Which means that important personalities and developments, essential to the specific culture of some of the nations comprising the common country, were to be expunged, obliterated from the memory of future generations. This was an important spur to revolt (and not only in Slovenia), leading directly to the idea of complete political independence, which was achieved eight years later.

You once called words “both a prison and a space of freedom”. Could you explain what you mean by this?

By 'prison', I meant the fact that humans appear unable to think whatever is not worded – a reality that seems curiously neglected or misunderstood in everyday life. Wittgenstein said it exactly 100 years ago: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.” It's not merely about semantics, about individually conditioned understanding of expressions – it's about concepts of the world, and our

‘reality’, itself. Words are the instrument of reason; but reason is not the *only*, or truest, mode of cognition we have.

It is by rearranging words in creative ways – poetry does this best – that we can begin to open some ‘cracks’ in the brick walls of our realities. In this sense, words are a space of (relative) freedom.

And of course, words can be a powerful means of releasing the heavy, bronze-like weight of certain emotions – such as intense gratitude. Or joy. Or the burning slag of anger. Emotions that *need* verbal expression to escape their own tail-biting circuit and perhaps yield some sort of fruit. Sadness, on the other hand, can be deeply silent, far beyond words.

How do you see the relationship between an original work and its translation?

I subscribe to the school of thought that a translation has to be as faithful to the original as possible – including stylistic faults. In my opinion, it is not the translator’s place to act as the original’s ‘editor’ – certainly not without the author’s explicit and specific consent.

Sometimes a text can be easily improved – so it becomes a better autonomous literary text than the original – but as a *translation*, it will not be a good one. And vice versa, a good translation of a mediocre original will inevitably be a mediocre text itself. I am especially averse to ‘ironing-out’ any stylistic kinks of the original, simplifying – in effect, depleting – the original so as to make it ‘more readable’.

In my opinion, one should strive to make a text exactly as ‘readable’ as it was originally intended to be. I believe

even errors on the author’s part (I don’t mean typos, obviously) should be considered very carefully – and respected, unless they are of a kind that would seriously harm the integrity and credibility of the text. I know many people are averse to footnotes, but often a discreet explanatory footnote might be much preferable – more loyal, to both the author and the reader – to over-editing the text.

“Awareness of linguistic diversity brings a measure of tolerance”

You grew up with many different languages, Slovenian, Montenegrin, Serbian, Spanish among others. Is language diversity important, and do you think ‘smaller languages’ should be stimulated, protected?

I grew up bilingual from birth, and growing up in South America from age five gave me Spanish, too. Ever since that age I’ve been interested in translation (probably due to my mother’s smiling, patient insistence that every sentence I babbled in Spanish I also repeat in Slovene). A curious and telling anecdote (although I am not yet sure quite *what* is it a telling of): when I was around eight years old, I wrote a short story about a girl, illustrated it, then sewed it together into a proper little ‘book’ – but on the cover I identified myself as the *translator*. I remember the feeling; somehow, it felt more ‘fancy’ to be a translator. Very curious. Aged 14, I did my first translation (never submitted



Vesna Velkovich Bukilica is an art historian by profession, with a special affinity for early medieval art and conceptual art, and has worked extensively as a journalist, too. Since the late 1980s she has translated some 50 books, mostly fiction. She also loves subtitling: “The technical – spatial and temporal – limitations help tighten the expression, forcing one to convey both the meaning and the tone as succinctly as possible.”

Vesna Velkovich Bukilica
Photo: Private Archive

for publication, of course). It was a poem by Srečko Kosovel, a fantastic Slovene poet, which I translated into Spanish.

Other languages followed, as is probably normal under such circumstances. And of course, living in Slovenia (which has two additional official languages, Italian and Hungarian), only a short trip away from countries in which other languages are spoken, linguistic diversity is the only thing I’ve ever known.

Of course, the same is true of many European communities – and it is one of the most precious assets we Europeans have. You don’t have to actually speak those other languages: the presence, and awareness, of linguistic diversity in itself eventually brings about some measure of tolerance, far beyond any political gesturing. It also brings about a deeper understanding of ourselves and our own language.

Languages that are more exposed to the oversized influence of culturally more dominant languages, should be protected, no doubt about it – but protected in the sense of ensuring their existence as functional living

organisms, not as folkloristic ‘museum’ items, to be trotted out on special occasions, as a political symbol of (perhaps) faux-diversity.

Language, any natural language, is possibly the only direct, living and breathing link to the history of the environment and the community from which it grew. Which is why I am also a fervent believer in the fostering of dialects, for example.

How does your multilingual background affect your view on your profession as a literary translator?

For complicated personal reasons, I often regret taking this professional path. At the same time, I am fully aware that probably no other profession would have made me grow so much – in all directions, including the most important one: towards my own core, such as it is – as this one. Whatever I regret, it is in no small part thanks precisely to this profession that has forced me to transcend myself in unexpected directions, deepening and widening my capacity for reflection. In other words, there is nothing to regret, really. Not even this particular regret itself.

Sustaining Europe's multilingual literary heritage

Findings from the EU report
Translators on the Cover

Juliane Wammen

Translators on the Cover – Multilingualism & Translation was published in English on January 31st 2022 and is currently being translated into the 23 other official languages of the EU. The report was prepared by the Open Method of Cooperation Group (OMC) “Multilingualism and Translation” under the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022. The work took place between the summer of 2020 to January 2022. The OMC group was made up of experts in multilingualism and translation from 20 EU countries as well as Norway, Switzerland and Iceland. The majority were from national literary agencies, funding bodies or representatives from national ministries of culture, but the group also included four professional literary translators and a publisher. The author of this article represented Denmark, both as chair of the *Danish Translators' Association* and – not least – as a literary translator for the past 15 years.

“United in Diversity” is EU’s official motto, and a very great deal of this diversity resides in the many languages and cultures spoken and written within the union. Some of the main practitioners within this area and the ones upholding this diversity in a concrete sense, are (literary) translators. These days, however, there is a general decline in the dissemination of translated literature from so-called small languages. To counter this tendency and develop viable policy solutions, the EU Commission decided to gather a group of national experts to discuss and pinpoint the main issues creating barriers to the spread of literature within Europe and beyond. The underlying thought is that multilingualism and cultural diversity should be seen and used as a strength, not as a problem – and to this end, translation and translators are needed.

The work of the group of experts has resulted in the report *Translators on the Cover*, the first comprehensive charting of this particular area on a European scale. The introduction to

the report makes the importance of translated literature clear: *“Translation plays a strategic role in Europe’s cultural development. It allows for the passage of ideas, knowledge and cultural expressions between different languages and cultures, and thus contributes to a stronger shared knowledge among European citizens of their history, their creations and their shared concerns.”* [p. 15]

So, the OMC-group definitely had their work cut out for them. Amidst Covid-19 restrictions and general lockdown, the experts met online in the course of almost 18 months to discuss the problems facing the dissemination of translated literature and to give recommendations on how to deal with these problems in a constructive way. Thus, *Translators on the Cover* outlines the problematic issues within the field and gives concrete recommendations, based on the hands-on knowledge of the experts involved.

Three main issues

After initial discussions within the group, three main areas of interest were identified. Accordingly, it was decided to split the group into three sub-groups, each addressing one of the main problems for the current dissemination of translated literature in Europe: language education, working conditions for literary translators and funding for translated literature. The reasoning behind focusing on these areas was, in short, as follows: if nobody learns languages, nobody will be able to translate. If the working conditions for translators are deteriorating, nobody will want to become a translator, and if funding for translated literature is not

readily available, nobody will be able to publish books that are not bestsellers.

In the area of education, it seems clear that fewer and fewer students at university level study languages other than English. When and if a European publisher decides to publish a book translated to or from ‘small’ languages, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified translators. So the recommendations in this area mainly deal with improving the possibilities for student mobility, and for stronger cooperation between publishers and educational institutions and more mentor-based learning, which could help bridge the gap between formal training and actually working as a literary translator.

“The ones upholding this diversity in a concrete sense are (literary) translators”

The other main issue, and probably the most immediately interesting to the (potential) publishers reading the report, is funding. As it is, the mechanics of the global book market favour bestsellers and English language writers. Hence, publishers typically feel they would be taking a

considerable risk in translating from other languages. This is why funding, made as easily available as possible, is needed, on both EU and national levels. More funding, and better access to the existing funding is essential. Also, if you compare literature to another high-profile artform receiving considerable support, namely film, it is relatively cheap to produce if you consider the individual work. Accordingly, EU and the national and regional cultural institutions could get a lot of 'value for money' by supporting translated literature to an even higher degree.

One of the key recommendations concerning working conditions in particular is having the [DSM directive](#) implemented properly, since important parts of the directive deal with fair remuneration and transparency. This might seem evident, but many problems with implementation are being reported, e.g. in [Austria](#). Also, to get legitimate exceptions to EU competition law restrictions and making it possible for translators and their associations to engage in collective bargaining, would help translators better their conditions considerably.

Sharing information

Although more funding is certainly needed, working on the report showed that sharing information and knowing how to make contact with the appropriate people are some of the keys to bettering the conditions for translated literature. Apart from the main body of the text which deals with the three above-mentioned issues, the report also contains a number of annexes with useful links for 'Opportunities for Continuous Training', translator

associations and translator databases, centres for regional cooperation and funding opportunities for translated literature in Europe, among other things.

It will help publishers if they can easily access information on funding schemes and qualified translators with the specific language skills they need. Translators, on the other hand, need to be able to share information on remuneration, translators' rights and availability of individual funding and grants with each other. This links directly into the third issue, namely the working conditions for translators in Europe these days.

The problem of remuneration

Of course, the most pressing problem for most literary translators, and probably the single thing that would make it more attractive to become a translator and stay within the profession for a longer period of time, is the issue of fair remuneration. Getting better payment for the highly qualified work being done would make it easier to attract students to the language professions. And it is also clear that in the way the book market is organized now, publishers would have a stronger incentive to pay their translators fairly if funding was more abundant.

To illustrate the very real problems of remuneration, the report gives concrete examples from Austria, Denmark and Spain, where average earnings of a literary translator are compared with earnings of the rest of the workforce in each country. Because of the still relatively great differences between income levels, social security systems, PLR systems, cost of living etc., it is of course hard to compare one translator's conditions with another's. However,

two CEATL surveys from 2008 and 2020 support the claims of the report with actual statistics. Looking at how the level of remuneration has developed in the 12 years between the two surveys, is, however, not encouraging: in a majority of countries, the level of fees is exactly the same or only slightly higher than 12 years ago – even though prices everywhere have increased considerably.

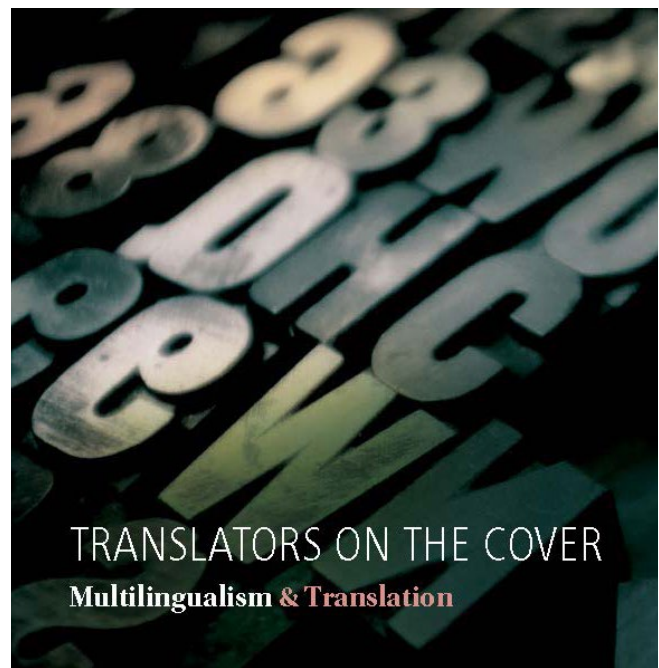
What next?

What is encouraging, however, is that several countries in the EU, and the EU Commission, are working actively to ease the restrictions of competition law. The group of experts – most of whom were not themselves practising literary translators – broadly agreed that stronger support for literary translators' associations is needed, including umbrella organisations working on a European level, such as CEATL, the audio-visual translators' AVTE, the European Theatre Convention and other similar bodies. This is essential to match the powerful organisations already lobbying for the interests of publishers and booksellers. Sharing information on rights and fees, giving qualified (legal) advice to match the publishers' legal counsel and upholding a community of qualified professionals is best achieved by the individual translators' associations and their federations. Translators themselves need to strengthen their bargaining positions, just as much as the publishers need better funding schemes.

All in all, after working on the report it seems clear to me that the issues I had suspected to be a problem – i.e. language education, remuneration, dissemination of information and the contractual

situation in very general terms – are, in fact, problematic and constitute great barriers to upholding the diversity of the literature being published in Europe. On the other hand, it is also clear that things can be done, and are already being done, to improve the situation, in the short and especially long term.

So, my hope – and no doubt the hope of the many others who have worked on the report – is that it will be read with openness and in the spirit of cooperation by policy makers and others with deciding power. There are many people deeply interested in sustaining and developing Europe's multilingual literary heritage and the recommendations in this report might just hold the key as to how to go about this.



REPORT OF THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION (OMC)
GROUP OF EU MEMBER STATES' EXPERTS

EU WORK PLAN FOR CULTURE 2019-2022



Translators caught in the crossfire

How to help Ukrainian colleagues?

Hanneke van der Heijden

Among the many people that have been affected by the war in Ukraine, there are also numerous translators, and as colleagues we are interested in knowing what their concrete situation is and what – if anything – we can do to help. *Counterpoint* was present at the recent annual CEATL meeting, held from 18–21 May in Sofia, where three Ukrainian colleagues were invited to talk about the urgent situation of Ukrainian translators.

Live from Ukraine

Poet, essayist and translator Ostap Slyvynsky, who is vicepresident of PEN Ukraine, and Natalia Pavliuk, president of the Ukrainian association of translators and interpreters UATI joined via Zoom. Ukrainian translator Oksana Stoianova, who has found refuge in Bulgaria, participated in the meeting in Sofia in person. Together they gave an impressive and moving description of the situation.

As Slyvynsky reported from Lviv, most Ukrainian publishing houses have suspended their activities. The ones that do announce new book publications have hardly any possibilities to publish books,

since one of the big printing facilities has been destroyed, and logistical problems hamper the availability of essential materials such as paper.

On top of the many other hardships people are facing in general, this leaves book translators in a very difficult financial situation. This is especially true for those who have no other sources of income.

How to help?

Our three colleagues suggested several ways of helping Ukrainian translators.

Getting informed

PEN Ukraine has launched a very informative website in English, offering a lot of information on the present situation in Ukraine. Among the many sources are a series of conversations, on Zoom, called ‘Dialogues on war’. In every episode of this series Ukrainian and foreign intellectuals (such as Olga Tokarczuk and Margaret Atwood) talk about the experience of the war and share their observations. They may be found on PEN Ukraine’s [website](#) and via [Facebook](#).

Translating books and informing others

The website also contains a list of recent books from **Ukrainian authors** with useful background: nonfiction works, novels, memoirs, plays and children's books. Making them available in other languages could help the world gain a better understanding.

Translation work for Ukrainian translators

As all three speakers stressed, translators who are out of work and/or have had to flee the country will be most helped by finding translation work. Translators' associations or individuals outside of Ukraine who can help out in this respect, can find translators in this **database**.

Furthermore, the speakers suggested that the European translator associations make themselves visible to Ukrainian translators, both with respect to finding work, and as a means to meeting people in the same line of work. An example of how to do this may be found on the website of the Polish translators' association (**STL**). It's also possible to contact PEN Ukraine or the UATI association directly, who will try to help establish contacts with refugee translators who have left the country.

Donations

PEN Ukraine, together with PEN Belarus, Polish PEN Club, and Open Culture Foundation, have opened a **special account** to support the creative community of Ukraine, their families, and children (scroll down for the English text).

On the initiative of the Ukrainian Book Institute and the Federation of European Publishers / Europäischen Verlegerverbands took the initiative to

have childrens books and young adult literature translated into Ukrainian. Translated books will be distributed freely among refugee children. For more information, please click **here**. The Ukrainian Association for Translators and Interpreters have also set up their own support fund site which can be found **here**.

Keeping literature in circulation

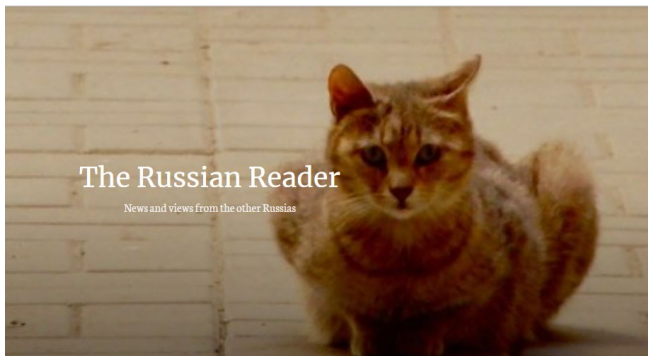
Another project *Counterpoint* would like to mention in this context is the project **#FreeAllWords**, the European Writers' Council (EWC)'s project to translate texts by Ukrainian and Belarusian writers, as well as anti-war Russian voices, into as many European languages as possible, and to disseminate their works, opinions and testimonies. The project is the initiative of the Swiss authors' association A*dS (Authors of Switzerland), Norway's Forfatterforbundet and the Union of Belarusian writers. CEATL has signed up as partner to the project.

The fund of 44,000 Euros was raised from seed funding by the Landis&Gyr Foundation and the Sophie and Karl Binding Foundation, both in Switzerland, and the Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway. The intention is to publish short texts, interviews, reports, essays and poems by Belarusian, Ukrainian and anti-Putin Russian authors into European and international languages and have them disseminated by a wide variety of channels, digital and otherwise. The first texts and translations by 30 authors should be published in up to 31 countries throughout June and July 2022.

More information is available at the **website**.

CEATL's Click List

Links to the world of translation



Petition from Russian translators

Shortly after Russia's attack on Ukraine in February, a group of Russian translators published an open letter with a petition to co-sign and strongly condemn the aggression, emphasising their support for their Ukrainian colleagues and all those affected by the war. At the same time the translators made a plea for continued openness to Russian literature and culture and an understanding that many people from this sector do not support the actions of the current Russian government. As translators, they claim, they know better than most how important the exchange of literature, art and ideas – not to mention news – is a country's gateway to the rest of the world.

The petition was published in Russian at change.org and signed by 26 translators. On March 1st it was translated into

English by Thomas H. Campbell and republished on *The Russian Reader*, an online resource that brings “news and views from the other Russia”. At the beginning of June 2022, the petition had been signed by over 2,200 people.

Human and non-human subtitlers

The increase of global streaming services has put the subtitling sector under the spotlight. Two important themes are being debated: the notably miserable working conditions for human subtitlers, and the development of subtitling technology.

Doğa Uludağ, long-time English – Turkish subtitler of series such as *The Crown*, *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, or *Squid Game*, makes it very clear how unacceptable these working conditions are. One of the principal problems is the practice of outsourcing, which “sees TV stations, movie studios and streaming giants hire external subtitling vendors instead of using in-house subtitlers. Netflix, for example, abandoned its in-house subtitling program Hermes one year after its launch in 2017. The result is that funds trickle down from managers until employees at the bottom – the subtitlers – are left with the dregs.”

Meanwhile, Seyma Albarino states in an [article](#) in *Slator*, a magazine for language industry intelligence, that the huge demand for subtitling has given rise to an impetus to develop subtitling technology further. New technologies are “designed around human subtitlers, with the goal of improving efficiency and speed”. Albarino gives interesting links to other *Slator* articles about developments in subtitling technology.

Outsourcing streaming giants who refuse principles of fair pay, and big investments in subtitling technology could lead to big changes in the future of subtitling.

Booker Foundation supports royalty payments for translators

[Frank Wynne](#), the first translator to chair the [International Booker Prize](#) jury, has proposed that all publishers pay translators royalties on the sale of the books they translate. Although some European countries do pay royalties, even if a translator is granted copyright of their translation, it does not guarantee an income from their work, particularly if the book is adapted for theatre or film adaptations or any other derivative work.



Frank Wynne
Photo: Nick Bradshaw

It comes as no surprise that the Booker Foundation has endorsed Wynne’s proposal given the fact that their position is that both translator and author are equally deserving of the honour and the winnings from a book award. The Foundation’s press statement included [CEATL’s](#) recommendation that “translators share in any profits from the sale of the books they have translated”.

EU funded research on human vs. machine literary translation

An EU Horizon 2022 funded research project, [CREAMT](#), used an interdisciplinary approach to assess the differences between machine translated texts, machine translated postedited texts and texts translated by humans. The chosen text was a Kurt Vonnegut short story, translated from English into Catalan and Dutch.

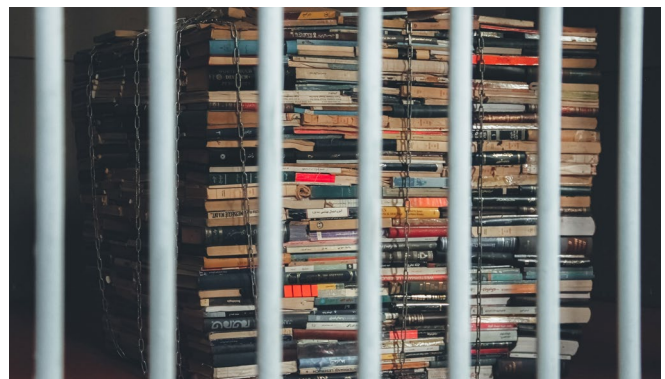


Photo: Khashayar Kouchpeydeh
Unsplash

The aim of the study was to explore creativity and the results demonstrated that human translation received the highest score. The professional translators engaged in the study found that their post-editing was very constrained by the machine translated text they had to work on as they were unable to set up their own mechanisms to make changes.

Colophon

Counterpoint. CEATL's European Literary Translators' E-zine is an online publication of the European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL) and is published twice a year in English and French.



ISSN: 2708-4418

Editorial team:

Hanneke van der Heijden
Anne Larchet
Juliane Wammen

Coordination of French issue:

Valérie Le Plouhinec

Proofreading English:

Annette Schiller

Proofreading French:

Valérie Le Plouhinec

Design:

Róisín Ryan
roryan.com

Webmaster:

David Kiš

Distribution:

Valérie Le Plouhinec

Suggestions and comments can be sent by email to editors@ceatl.eu

To subscribe to the e-zine, please [click this link](#)

To unsubscribe, please [click here](#)

The editors reserve the right to edit all material submitted. Views expressed in *Counterpoint* do not necessarily reflect the official views of CEATL. All rights of reproduction, translation and adaptation reserved for all countries. CEATL, *Counterpoint* and officers accept no responsibility collectively or individually for the service of agencies or persons advertised or announced in the pages of this journal. The good faith with which we publish offers no implied/implicit guarantee.