

From the editors

In the current, rather convulsed world, people everywhere are raising their voices to speak out against the many things that are causing such big problems – climate change, a growing inequality, polarisation, migration, to name a few. The larger community of translators, including literary translators, have not been found wanting in this regard, even though the problems facing the translation community are admittedly on a somewhat smaller scale.

But raising one's voice seems to be at odds with the very nature of being a translator. Aren't we translators bound by what has been said by somebody else?

To answer with a definitive 'yes' would be to overlook what it means to be a translator. Just as much as it would leave out how languages function in society.

"Language is the mirror of our lives," says one of the characters in *Tutunamayanlar* ('The Disconnected'), a ground-breaking novel by Oğuz Atay (1934-1977). The character comments on how political ideologies have shaped

the Turkish language. While purists, who preferred to leave the past behind, engaged in a movement of neologisms, more conservative movements insisted on the use of Arabic and Persian loans from the past – a development which resulted in a nearly diglossic situation, and for quite a while left every user of the language with the obligation to choose either one or the other. It's this dichotomy the disconnected try to get out of, in language as much as in other areas of society.

A present-day example of heavily politicized words and the dilemmas they entail is presented in Johanna Hedenberg's contribution on how to translate Italian *negro* and *negrigura* into Swedish. Many factors are taken into account in her nuanced considerations: the changes in meaning, the different connotations these words have had over time; the literary function of words, how they can be used to characterize protagonists in a novel; the relationship between a translator and her readership; the thoughts of the publishers.

Her account not only tells of conflicting values and assumptions, but also demonstrates the freedom the translator has – and the responsibility this freedom involves: after the publication of her translation, Hedenberg engaged in a public discussion about her choices.

“Translators too can raise their voices, and in many different ways”

In a similar vein, Golda van der Meer shows how translators into and out of Yiddish have played an important role in revitalizing the language and keeping it for the future, how translating untranslated poets is a way of raising one’s voice against the marginalisation of a language, and of what has been expressed in that language. Magnea Matthíasdóttir tells the story of a language that, partly through its translators, ‘speaks up’ against its former colonizer by ‘icelandising’ every word and taking them home.

Overall, this issue of *Counterpoint* shows that translators too can raise their voices, and in many different ways: Werner Richter reports about the trying process of having the DSM Copyright Directive

transposed into Austrian law. Francesca Novajra gives a long list of examples of initiatives taken by translators’ associations all over Europe during the last (Covid) year. Jennifer Croft and Mark Haddon relate how they started their #TranslatorsOnTheCover campaign, a joint initiative of a translator and a writer to persuade publishers. And Renate Birkenhauer describes how the well-known translators’ residency in Straelen, Germany, was set up as a place to meet colleagues, to do research and exchange ideas. All of them show how important it is to raise your voice, to raise your voices together.

Since the last issue of *Counterpoint / Contrepoint* in June 2021, we received some very good news from the [Jan Michalski Foundation for Writing and Literature](#) to whom we had applied for funding. Founded in Switzerland in 2004, the Jan Michalski Foundation aims to “foster literary creation and encourage the practice of reading through a range of initiatives and activities”. *Counterpoint / Contrepoint* was granted a generous contribution to the costs of the preparation of this bilingual e-zine which will help to ensure its survival. We editors feel this is a vote of confidence in our work and are very grateful indeed for their support. The grant serves to further highlight the importance of financial support for the field of literary creation and, in this instance, its translation.

“I’m here, dear reader, where are you?” says a writer and vendor of stories at the end of Oğuz Atay’s famous

collection of short stories. We editors hope you are out there, we hope this issue of *Counterpoint* inspires you to raise your voice, through literature or in whichever way you see fit. We are here, and are happy to hear back from you.

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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