

From the editors

How to describe the world as it is, and how to change it – these struggles are the basis of the two main topics in our 8th *Counterpoint* issue.

Fifteen years ago Lars Kleberg and his colleagues began work on compiling an encyclopedia of Swedish translators – an important initiative, not only from the perspective of making the work of translators visible, but also as a contribution to translation criticism and translation history. [Kleberg](#) describes how his team went about it, and how their initiative was followed in other countries.

The importance of selection criteria for such an encyclopedia is shown by [Elisabeth Gibbels](#), who conducted research on how translators' encyclopedias and indices represent women translators from the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Her study reveals that a large number of important women have not been included at all, or that the description of their lives and works is inadequate. "Showing past contributions is vital," Gibbels concludes, and not only as "an act of reverence". It "offers an opportunity to change cultural memory". Describing the world and changing it is often closely connected.

A demand for change is also heard when it comes to the imbalance of languages on the book market. It is well-known that most translations by far are from English, followed by a few other 'big' languages. Books written in so-called 'small' languages, however, are rarely translated. The chances of them finding their way to an international readership are slim – even to the readership in neighbouring countries. The books of authors who write in the 'small' language Arabic, for example, are rarely found in Turkish bookshops. The same is true for books from Turkey's other neighbours, Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran.

Although the [call](#) for translating 'small' languages' literature into both 'big' and other 'small' languages is getting louder and the will to do so is growing, the current situation is far from ideal. One of the main challenges for redressing this imbalance is the limited number of translators for certain small languages.

Two translators describe two different approaches to overcome this problem, both from their own experience.

Danish translator Nanna Lund translated a Hebrew and a Turkish novel, both from German. Indirect translation, in other

words. Translating a translation is at least as old as the Bible and has been a common way of getting around a lack of translators, but is “mired in problems”, as Lund points out. She vowed to never again do such a translation. But despite the “extremely frustrating problems” she faced and her principal objections, she is about to start the Danish translation of Orhan Pamuk’s latest novel. From English this time. In her candid [article](#) she tells you why.

[Translation in Motion](#), a new initiative to support the professional development of literary translators working from and into the languages of the Western Balkans, tries to find a different solution to the shortage of qualified small language translators. Through intensive language education, experienced translators are trained in the shortest time possible to translate from new languages. Elizabeta Lindner, a Macedonian translator of German, English and Serbian poetry, joined one of these residencies, and [tells](#) us how she started to translate Latvian poetry while still learning the language.

Can we, for the time being, leave the situation as it is? Can we, as [Nayara Güercio](#) asks, afford to keep waiting, or is cultural richness advanced by indirect translations, even if these are far from ideal?

We are here, dear readers. And we’re 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