

NO. 78 | SPRING 2019

SOURCE

A QUARTERLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE ATA'S
LITERARY
DIVISION



TRANSLATING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

FEATURING

Marc Chagall, *Child with a Dove* (1977)

Shelley Fairweather-Vega: Interview with SCBWI's
Avery Fischer Udagawa

Raekyong Kang: Sound Symbolism

Lydia Razran Stone: Translating Children's Poetry

Nanette McGuinness: Social Justice in Children's Books

Mercedes Guhl: Translating Twain's *Prince Oleomargarine*

Tony Beckwith: "What Would I Do?" bilingual poem



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From the Editors



Michele Aynesworth
Editor-in-Chief



Patrick Saari
Associate Editor



Mercedes Guhl
Associate Editor

Every year in early spring, on or close to Hans Christian Andersen's birthday (April 2), the world celebrates International Children's Book Day (ICBD) sponsored by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) founded in 1953 in Switzerland. The IBBY is also the driving force behind the most prestigious children's book prize, the Hans Christian Andersen Award to an Author and to an Illustrator. This year the Lithuania Section of IBBY has sponsored ICBD with the slogan "Books help slow us down." And amongst our most loyal contributors to *Source*, we have a handful of superlative translators dedicated to translating children's literature. Therefore, this spring, *Source* is focusing on translating children's literature to honor these books, the writers and illustrators who create them, the translators who ensure they can be read in other countries, and the children who enjoy them (all contributors and editors have sent us photos of when they themselves were children or young adults).

In our feature interview, frequent *Source* contributor Shelley Fairweather-Vega asks Japanese-to-English translator Avery Fischer Udagawa questions about her experiences translating "kidlit" and her role as International Translator Coordinator of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). Then, Korean translator Raekyong Kang examines how onomatopoeia has been used and translated from Korean into English for *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*, using the notion of sound symbolism.

Nanette McGuinness, translator of more than 40 books and graphic novels for children and adults from French and Italian into English, provides us with an overview of books for children dealing with issues of social justice from various countries. Lydia Razran Stone, Russian-to-English translator and editor of ATA's *Slanfile*, has written her "confessions" on translating Russian poetry aimed at children although widely read by adults, with a wide assortment of examples. Our editor Mercedes Guhl then wraps up this issue's theme with an in-depth essay on how she prepared for translating a long-lost Mark Twain story into Spanish, *The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine*, published in 2017.

In addition to his usual toons, Tony Beckwith provides us with a short poem, which he's also translated into Spanish, and talks about the experience of composing it and how it might be ideal for young readers.

In her letter, our LD Administrator Paula Arturo confirms this year's LD Distinguished Speaker for ATA60 and provides us with details of events being planned for the conference, a book fair in New York, and coming elections for the LD Administrator.

Upcoming issues

In response to the UN declaration that 2019 is the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL 2019), for our summer 2019 issue we are looking for articles focusing on the languages and cultures of the world's indigenous, aboriginal, native, and first peoples.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Michele Aynesworth specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. E-mail: michele@mckayaynesworth.com

Patrick Saari, born in Pasadena, California, now living in Quito, Ecuador, writes, translates, and interprets in English, French, and Spanish. Email: patricksaari@netlife.ec

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Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and to LD Administrators **Paula Arturo** and **Amanda Williams** for their support.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

As the journal of the ATA's Literary Division, *Source* is both a forum for the discussion of literary translation and a vehicle for LD members and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit translations of poetry and prose together with their meditations on the process. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.

TOPIC FOR THE SUMMER 2019 ISSUE:

- In response to the UN's declaration that **2019 is the International Year of Indigenous Languages** (IYIL 2019), for our summer issue we are looking for articles focusing on the languages and cultures of the world's indigenous, aboriginal, native, and first peoples.
- Contributors are asked to follow the format guidelines below.
- **Submission deadline for the Summer issue: August 21**

FORMAT:

- Submit articles up to 1600 words, Word or text file, single-spaced.
- Garamond font, size 12, without indented paragraphs.
- Line breaks between paragraphs but no word breaks.
- Unjustified righthand margin.
- Endnotes please, not footnotes.
- Please include a brief, factual bio and photograph.
- Links and illustrations, etc., are encouraged.
- Submissions may be edited.
- Submissions go to patricksaari@netlife.ec or michele@mckayaynesworth.com

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LETTER FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Literary Division,
I'm pleased to announce that the organizers for ATA's 60th Annual Conference in Palm Springs, California, on October 23-26, have accepted our proposed Distinguished Speaker, and we are in for a treat. She's big. So big in fact that we had to join forces with the Italian Language Division to be able to get her here. Curious yet? I'll give you a few hints:

She's an American editor and Italian-to-English translator who began her career as a proofreader for *Esquire* magazine, then moved on to work for *The New Yorker*, where she ultimately became the head of its Copy Department in the late 1980s. She's best known for translating Elena Ferrante's *Neapolitan Quartet* and for editing the three-volume publication of *The Complete Works of Primo Levi*, for which she oversaw a team of nine translators.

Can you guess who I'm talking about yet? If you guessed Ann Goldstein, you guessed right! Ms. Goldstein will be giving a 60-minute presentation titled *Art and Craft of Translation*, as well as a 60-minute interview session that we'll be co-conducting with the Italian Language Division.

So, what's next? In the upcoming weeks, we'll be asking our members to submit questions that they would like us to ask Ms. Goldstein at the interview session. We'll send out a broadcast on the ListServ and our Division's social media pages when we're ready to start receiving questions.

Convincing the conference organizers to let us do an interview session instead of a regular presentation was no easy task, so we'd like to encourage our members to take advantage of this unique opportunity to ask her anything you want to know about her career and translation process. We want to learn as much as we can from and about her and make her feel welcome as our Distinguished Speaker.

As the conference draws closer, I can't tell you how excited I am to see you all at Ms. Goldstein's sessions. I'm also pleased to announce that, thanks to your input at last year's Annual Meeting, ATA has participated for the first time in an American book fair. Formally known as the International Adult and Children's Content and Licensing Marketplace, the New York Rights Fair was held at the Jacob Javits Center in New York City on May 29 to 31. This year it ran concurrently with Book Expo, making these two fairs the biggest and most important U.S. publishing event of the year.

And last but not least, elections are coming up, and candidates for Administrator and Assistant Administrator will be announced very soon. So please pay attention to ATA broadcasts about the elections.

Best,
Paula

Literary Division Administrator: Paula Arturo, paula@translatinglawyers.com

Assistant Administrator: Amanda Williams, amanda@mirrorimagertranslations.com



Paula Arturo is a lawyer, translator, and law professor. Throughout her fifteen-year career, in addition to various legal and financial documents, she has translated several highly technical law books and publications in major international journals for high-profile authors, including several Nobel Prize Laureates and renowned jurists.



Bertha Lum, *Japanese children rolling large snow balls* (woodcut, 1913)

AN INTERVIEW WITH AVERY FISCHER UDAGAWA

International Translator Coordinator of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI)

By Shelley Fairweather-Vega

Avery Fischer Udagawa's translations from Japanese to English include *J-Boys: Kazuo's World, Tokyo, 1965* by Shogo Oketani, *"House of Trust"* by Sachiko Kashiwaba in *Tomo: Friendship Through Fiction—An Anthology of Japan Teen Stories*, and *"Festival Time"* by Mogami Ippei in *The Best Asian Short Stories 2018*. She is the International and Japan Translator Coordinator for SCBWI.



Avery Fischer Udagawa

When I think back on it, I realize that children were the audience for some of my very first translation work: the kids in the Russian elementary school where I taught English from 2000 to 2002. As a professional translator, I've worked on many animated films for children, but the books I translated were all for adults. That changed in 2017, when I met and fell in love with an adventure story for kids, co-authored by two of the Kazakhstani writers whose "grownup" work I've been translating. Suddenly I faced a new challenge: How could I find a publisher who would properly appreciate, and pay me to translate, this amazing book? None of my usual contacts seemed able to help. I went searching for new resources, and I discovered the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI).

The organization's acronym is already unpronounceable, which is perhaps the reason they haven't added a "T" for translators, the other group of kidlit experts they welcome as members. In the regional SCBWI events I've attended so far, I've always been the only translator in the room, meaning I have lots of opportunities to teach other writers what a translator does. But there are indeed translators in SCBWI, and their numbers are growing, under the leadership of International Translator Coordinator Avery Fischer Udagawa. Avery was kind enough to answer my questions about her work and about SCBWI for this issue of Source.

—Shelley Fairweather-Vega

Shelley Fairweather-Vega: Tell me a little about yourself! Where are you located? What do you translate?

Avery Fischer Udagawa: I grew up in Kansas, live in a suburb of Bangkok, and translate from Japanese to English. My focus for the past ten years or so has been children's literature (kidlit)—“children's” being the industry term for everything from picture books through Young Adult (YA). I also translate *about* this literature; for example, I co-translate a yearly catalog of new, outstanding books curated by the Japanese Board on Books for Young People for distribution at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. Getting Japanese kidlit into English and spreading the word about it—and, more broadly, getting the children's literature of many cultures published in English—is my passion. I also work in education, currently as native language coordinator at International School Bangkok.

How did you come to be involved in SCBWI, and what is your role in the organization?

AFU: I met members of SCBWI's Japan region (chapter) through networking in Tokyo as a postgraduate in the early aughts. I then married and moved away from Japan in 2004—first to Oman, and then to Thailand following my husband's job as a music teacher—but I stayed in touch with SCBWI Japan (then called SCBWI Tokyo) and tested the waters as a translator, soon finding that I gravitated to children's books. Perhaps this came with starting a family in the orbit of international schools, or perhaps it came with discovering that my emotional age is somewhere around upper middle grade or lower YA! In any case, kidlit became my focus and SCBWI my source of info, contacts, and infrastructure for professional development. The Japan region has supported creating a listserv and group blog about Japanese-to-English kidlit translation; it also supports translators in holding a biennial Translation Day featuring master translators and publishing professionals. Co-Regional Advisor Holly Thompson advocated for Translator to become a member category SCBWI-wide, and this happened in 2014. Translators can now be found in more than sixty SCBWI regions globally.

I currently serve as SCBWI Japan Translator Coordinator, heading up the region's translation-specific offerings. I also wear the hat of SCBWI International Translator Coordinator, conveying translator concerns to SCBWI leadership and supporting member translators however I can.

What opportunities does SCBWI afford translators?

AFU: SCBWI offers an international email listserv for translator members—the only pan-region listserv devoted to translation of children's literature, as far as I know. SCBWI also recently opened its Work-In-Progress award program to translators. Different regions have been experimenting with offerings, from including a translator on a conference panel to publishing translator interviews in an e-magazine. Perhaps the main opportunity SCBWI affords translators, however, is the chance to become part of the children's publishing scene. Editors and publishers, especially Stateside, come to big SCBWI events to find new material and share what they are looking for. SCBWI's publications for members, including an e-newsletter and a manual called *The Book*, offer up-to-date details on children's publishing people and practices. Regional programs cater to regional needs. In my experience, many translators know about translation but don't

know about children's literature, which like any field has its idiosyncrasies. Need to know how U.S. editors might evaluate a picture book manuscript? Care to explore which publishers do (and don't) embrace international literature? Need some expert critiques? SCBWI is the group to join if you need connections and community in children's literature.

Where do you see the organization going next with regard to translators and translated children's literature?

AFU: SCBWI still has much to do with regard to including translators and centering translation as a creative activity supported by the organization. Like children's publishing in the United States, where SCBWI began and remains headquartered, SCBWI focuses on English-language writing and on illustration, and except in certain regions, translators are few and far-flung, so it can be challenging to offer translation programming. Even at large annual conferences, it's difficult to know if translation sessions will draw comers. We are in an early, chicken-and-egg stage where low translator membership makes it hard to offer numerous benefits, and, by the same token, difficulty in offering benefits also makes it hard to increase translator membership. I have found, however, that SCBWI is worth joining if someone is committed to translating kidlit, especially into English. Even programming about writing and illustration is useful to a translator who wants to learn "what works" in this industry. If you join expecting not to be catered to as a translator, but because you wish to specialize in this field, you will benefit from SCBWI.

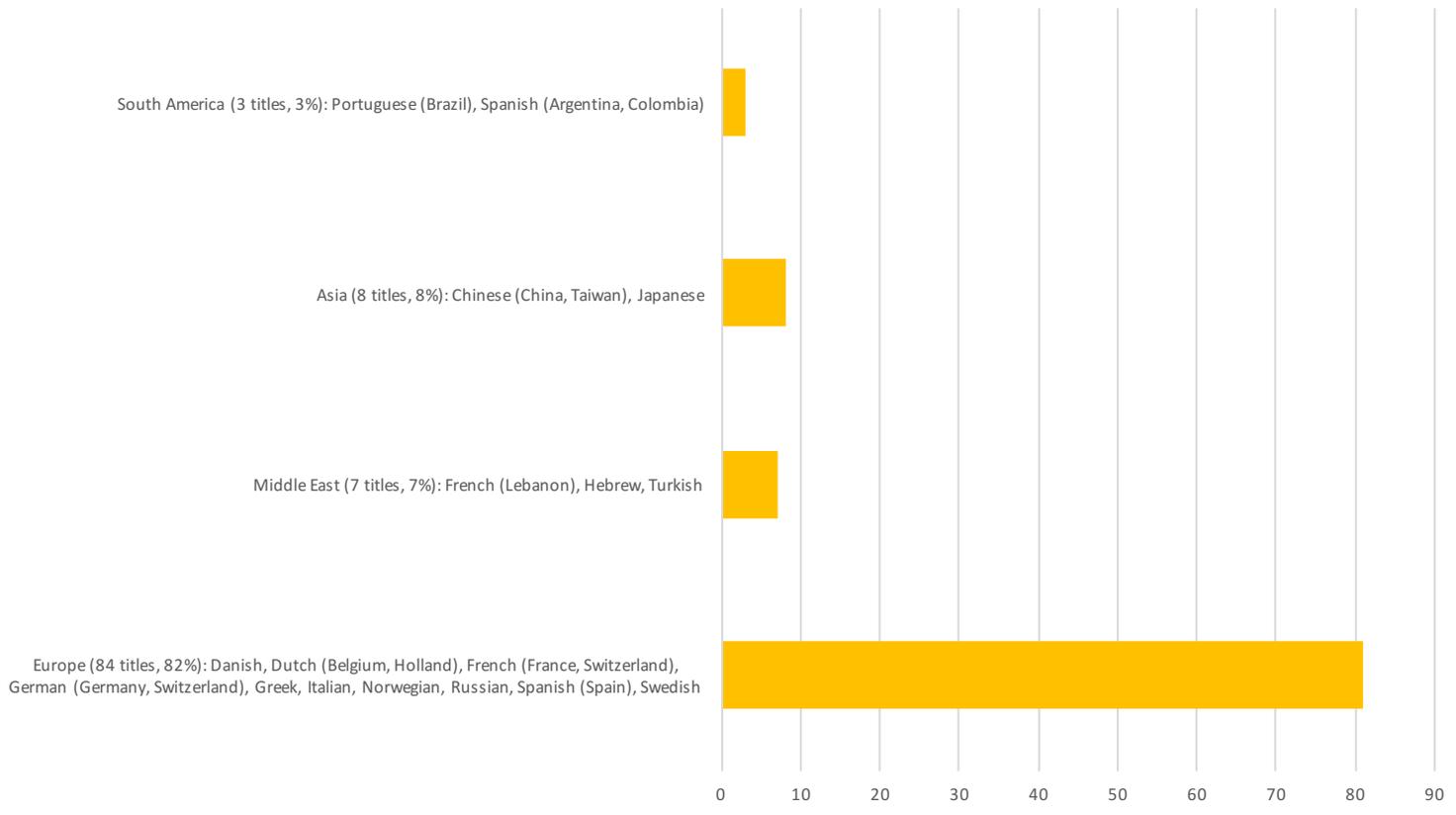
What do you most love about translating for children?

AFU: I love knowing that my translations will reach readers at a formative age, and perhaps shape their conception of the world. As the character Kathleen Kelly (Meg Ryan) in *You've Got Mail* says, "When you read a book as a child, it becomes a part of your identity in a way that no other reading in your whole life does." At a time of pernicious nativism and isolationism—in the United States and many other societies—translating literature that nurtures a global perspective, for the most open group of readers in existence, holds tremendous appeal for me.

What are the biggest challenges in translating for children?

AFU: Marginalization, and the time pressures of having to advocate while translating. Translated books account for a tiny percentage of children's books published in the United States, and among prominent translations, the representation of the world's languages is skewed (see charts, next page; the second one uses data from the Cooperative Children's Book Center). Books from languages similar to English, and from countries that devote funding to support translation of their literature, enjoy a hefty advantage. Publishers also tend to use established translators repeatedly. Unfortunately for aspiring translators, large houses require submissions to come in via literary agents, who often only represent authors and illustrators. Small presses may accept pitches and submissions from translators but face financial struggles themselves. Many publishers fail to grant copyright and to #namethetranslator, with translators not credited in many picture books, including the winner of this year's Batchelder Award, effectively the Oscar for translated kidlit. Better-known U.S. awards such as the Newbery and the Caldecott stipulate that recipients be U.S. persons who write in English.

Languages of All Authors of Batchelder Award and Honor Books by Region, 1968-2019



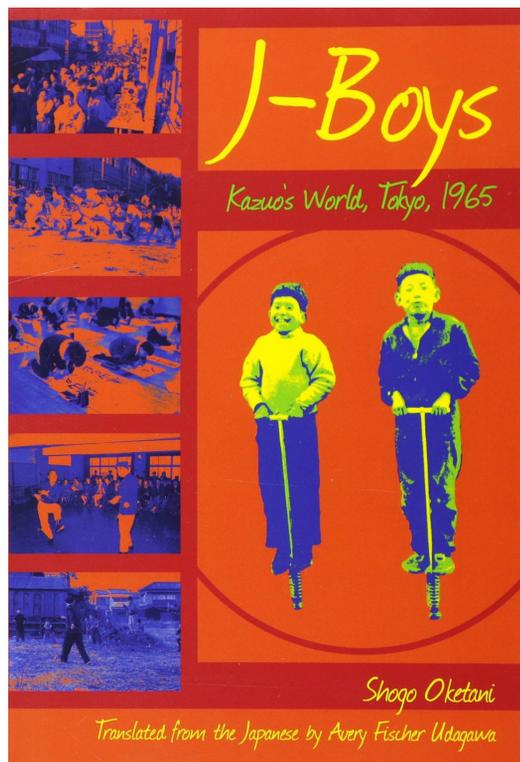
Children's Books in English Translation Published in the U.S. 1994-2018

Year	Estimated Number of Books Published	Number of Books Received at CCBC	Number of Books in Translation Logged at CCBC	Translations as Percentage of Books Received at CCBC	Translations as Percentage of Total Number of Books Published
2018		3,703	169	4.56%	
2017		3,700	182	4.92%	
2016		3,400	157	4.62%	
2015		3,400	140	4.12%	
2014		3,500	100	2.86%	
2013		3,200	136	4.25%	
2012		3,600	108	3.00%	
2011		3,400	76	2.24%	
2010		3,400	62	1.82%	
2009		3,000	41	1.37%	
2008		3,000	59	1.97%	
2007		3,000	69	2.30%	
2006		3,000	75	2.50%	
2005		2,800	46	1.64%	
2004		2,800	49	1.75%	
2003		3,200	67	2.09%	
2002		3,150	75	2.38%	
2001	5,000-5,500		77		1.54%
2000	5,000-5,500		45		0.90%
1999	5,000		45		0.90%
1998	5,000		41		0.82%
1997	4,500-5000		53		1.18%
1996	4,500		56		1.24%
1995	4,500		56		1.24%
1994	4,500		59		1.31%
				Average: 2.85%	Average: 1.14 %

As you can imagine, in this environment, rights fairs often feature U.S. publishers selling foreign rights and non-U.S. publishers buying them—not the reverse—meaning that into-English commissions rarely just happen. To counteract this, translators and allies have to invest time raising their hands in conference sessions, courting editors, writing blog and social media posts, talking to gatekeepers (many children’s books are bought by adults), and promoting translations—all while often being dismissed as irrelevant. That’s on top of actually translating *and* earning a living some other way entirely. Not for the faint of heart! The upside to all this, is that those who consider it their life’s work tend to be a warm, supportive community with whom it is a privilege to collaborate.

What’s your next big project?

AFU: I have had a middle-grade fantasy novel translation accepted by a small press, for which I now seek grant funding. I am tinkering with a middle-grade first-romance novel and a YA sports novel, and I hope to pitch a few picture books soon. I also participate in educational programs (such as a webinar for teachers) about the middle-grade historical novel *J-Boys: Kazuo’s World, Tokyo, 1965* by Shogo Oketani, which I translated some years ago. Published by a small press, *J-Boys* went out of print but has been republished in near-identical format at the author’s initiative, and paints a fascinating picture of Japan after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. It’s relevant now as Japan will host the 2020 Tokyo Olympics!



How can translators interested in children's literature get involved with SCBWI?

AFU: Translators can join via the SCBWI website, and swiftly gain access to members-only publications and podcasts. If you tick Translator in your membership profile, you will also be eligible to join the SCBWI Translation email listserv, which I moderate. If, alternatively, you would like to dip a toe into SCBWI before paying dues, you can look up events offered by your regional chapter and attend at the non-member price. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me: itc@scbwi.org

Any other good advice you'd like to share?

AFU: Resist seeing children's literature as "mere" children's books. The faster our society learns to appreciate #worldkidlit's importance, the faster we can internationalize young readers' shelves and tastes—and young readers will eventually become adult readers.

Helpful resources

SCBWI website: <https://www.scbwi.org/>

Translation-related blog posts from the SCBWI British Isles online magazine:

<https://www.wordsandpics.org/search/label/translation>

SCBWI Japan Translation Group blog: <http://ihatov.wordpress.com>

Avery Fischer Udagawa's website: www.averyfischerudagawa.com

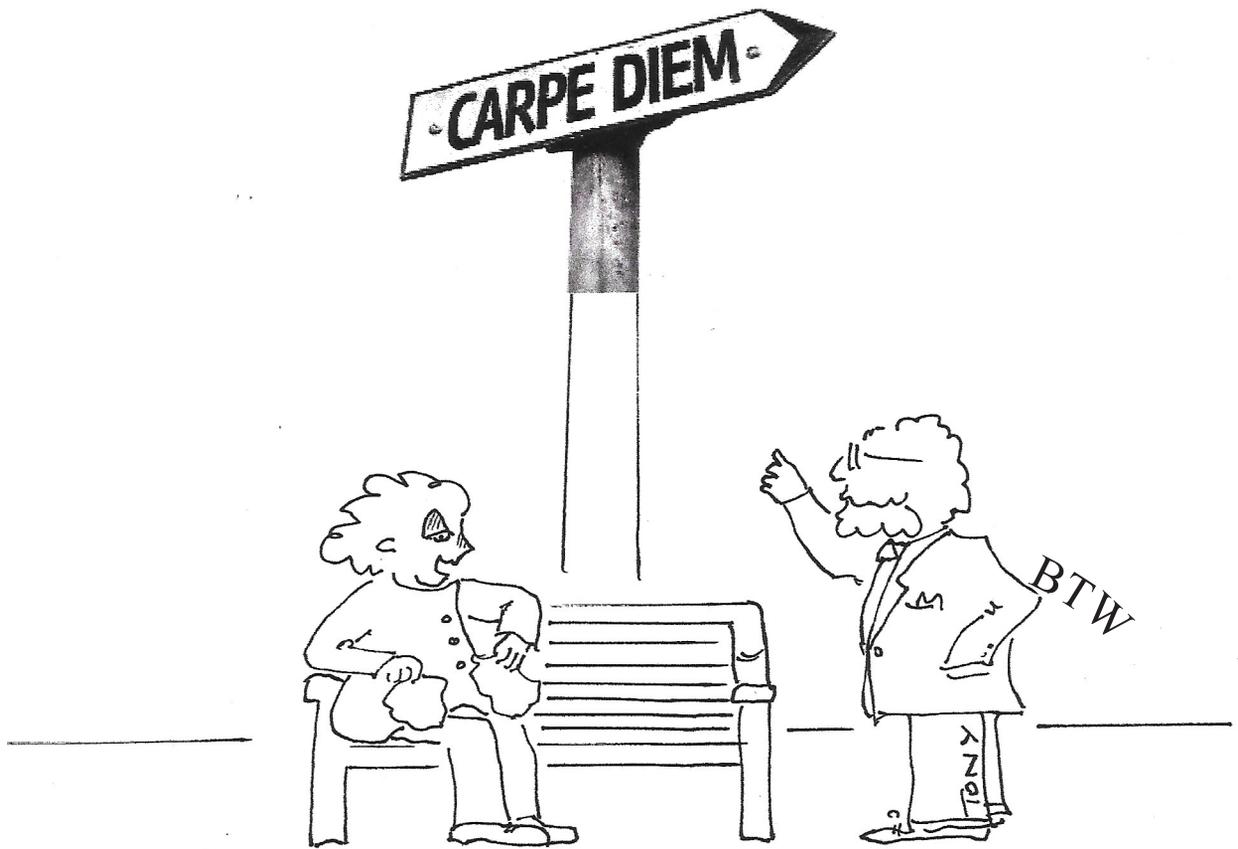
Batchelder Award: <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/batchelderaward>

International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY): <http://ibby.org/>

Bologna Children's Book Fair: <http://www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com/>



Shelley Fairweather-Vega translates mostly literature from Russia and Central Asia to English. Her translations have been published by Routledge and AmazonCrossing and in *Words Without Borders* and *Translation Review*. Shelley is president of the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society.



“I know, I know, but during allergy season all I can do is sneeze the day!”

SOUND SYMBOLISM: Onomatopoeia in Children’s Literature

By Raekyong Kang



Raekyong Kang

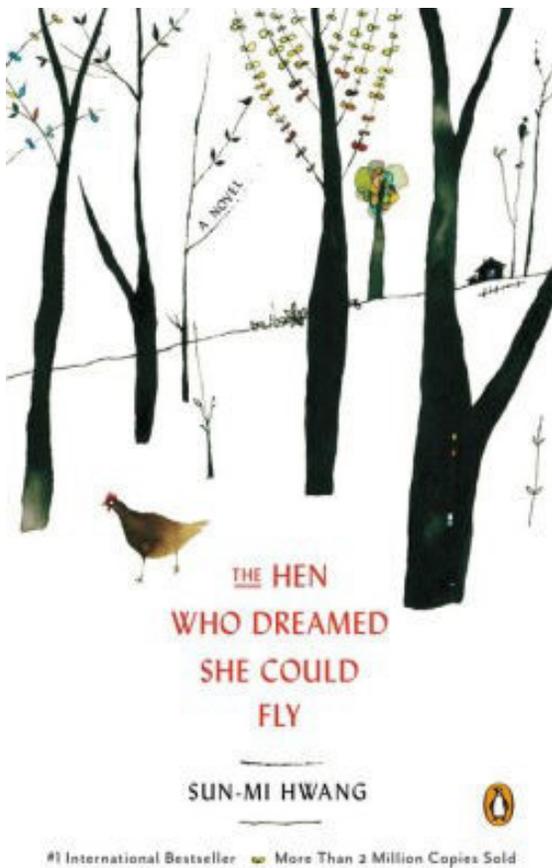
Raekyong (Rae) Kang is an experienced Korean->English translator whose past and current work includes creating online content for social media and extensive translations in business, sociology, and human services. She has an M.A. in Linguistics with Literary Studies from Benedictine University in Illinois, and her current endeavors and research interests focus on examining diverse linguistic features pertaining to translation studies and foreign language learning and teaching. She is now teaching Korean at the College of DuPage, also in Illinois.

Literary translations are not merely written texts translated into another language. They also engage in the aesthetic and expressive functions of literature, as well as interpret, preserve, and convey semantic and emotional meanings and messages. Because a literary text, especially in children’s literature, often contains the representation of sounds—onomatopoeia—it inevitably involves certain specific challenges and difficulties for translators. Onomatopoeia is defined as a distinct word or set of words that phonetically mimics a sound associated with the thing, action, or being (such as an animal or human) that emits that sound or from which that sound is produced.

For the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), a language system is an interplay of signs consisting of “sound-images,” that is, *signifiers*, and their corresponding “concepts” as represented in one’s consciousness, that is, the *signified*. In other words, language is a social

semiotic system whereby meanings are shared and expressed among people in a same linguistic community (1966).¹ Take the word *meom*, for instance: it is a sound or an orthographic code that mimics the sound of a specific animal, a cat, linking that sound-image to what we typically know of that animal's voice, mode of expression, way of calling out, etc. As a kind of "symbolism of sound," onomatopoeic expressions carry stylistically significant meaning-potentials in literature, emphasizing and intensifying the liveliness of what is being illustrated. Because of the animated effects that are added through these sounds, onomatopoeias are one of the distinct literary elements frequently found in children's literature.

Animals Personified Through Onomatopoeia



Onomatopoeias are particularly rich in African and Asian languages.² Korean literary texts are no exception. With a myriad of sound and mimetic expressions, knowing how these expressions are rendered can help translators render expressive literary texts into another language. This article introduces some of the methods used to translate onomatopoeic expressions by highlighting various examples taken from the translated children's novel, *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*.³

Published in 2000 in South Korea, the book was written by Hwang Sun-mi and later was translated into English by Chi-Young Kim.⁴ It is about an egg-laying hen called Sprout whose dream is to hatch her own chick. In addition to being a tale of adventure recounting Sprout's tumultuous escape from her coop to fulfill her long-held wish, it is the story of profound life lessons about friendship, sacrifice, resilience, and the pursuit of one's dream in spite of hardships and barriers along the way. The main characters are animals who talk and act like

humans. Readers are reminded that they are, in fact, animals because of the distinct sounds each animal makes, for instance, ducks quacking and birds chirping. Below I discuss how onomatopoeic expressions were translated from Korean into English, despite the different syntactic structures and language systems of the two languages, and how the simple sounds of animals are made to exert deeply embedded emotional impacts.

Linguistic Variations and Translation Methods

Classified as an adverb, onomatopoeia in Korean often modifies either a verb or an adjective. In English, however, it is regarded as an interjection to express emotions by standing apart from other parts of speech, accompanied by a comma or an exclamation mark as in *The rooster crowed, cock-a-doodle-doo!* Unlike English onomatopoeias where sound words are dominant, the onomatopoeic system in Korean can be further divided into two subcategories, depending on whether it indicates a sound or a movement/shape/descriptive condition of objects or living creatures. *아장아장*, for example, describes the slow and tottering movement of babies when they crawl or walk. Another major difference in onomatopoeic expressions between Korean and English lies in the word form and pattern of occurrence. Korean language usually prefers a recurring sound pattern with a variation created by alternating vowels or consonants as in *쿵쿵쿵쿵, 으르렁*, and *싱송생송*. As a result of differences in onomatopoeic expressions and language systems between Korean and English, any decision regarding linguistic choices or translation strategies adopted by a translator, therefore, becomes critical when attempting to produce similar, albeit not identical, emotional effects when translated into another language devoid of an equivalent linguistic unit or expression. Based on specific translation methods introduced by Do-hun Kim⁵—professor at the Busan University of Foreign Studies—I will illustrate how the translator effectively grasped and translated several onomatopoeic expressions from Korean into English. The examples below are excerpts from *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*. Literal translations provide a reference to the syntactic structures and linguistic conventions of the source language.

One of the characteristics of English onomatopoeia is the extensive use of a verb with expressive onomatopoeic meanings embedded. Compared to Korean where the sound of a hen materializes through the consecutive repetition of the word *꼬* as *꼬꼬꼬* in the text, the expression was translated with a simple verb in the past tense: *she clucked*, shown in Example 1.

Example 1.

Source Text	Literal Translation	Target (Translated) Text
“이제 나간다, 닭장에서! 꼬꼬꼬.”	“I’m leaving the coop! Cluck Cluck Cluck.”	“I’m flying the coop” she clucked.

This strategy can be especially useful when a translator finds no direct equivalent(s) in the target language. Example 2 describes the dog who expresses his discontent at the sight of the mallard and Sprout. *크르릉* in Korean can be described as a thick, growling sound of animals. Because there’s no direct expression in English, the translator chose the verb *growl* to indicate the disgruntled dog’s mood and feelings.

Example 2.

Source Text	Literal Translation	Target (Translated) Text
“크르릉, 지독한 냄새를 풍기는군!”	“(Onomatopoeia), What a terrible smell!”	“What a terrible smell!” the dog <u>growled</u> .

Apart from being a system of words that imitate natural sounds, onomatopoeia sometimes involves a translator’s stylistic choice, based on the target culture’s writing conventions and linguistic systems. Compared to the Korean onomatopoeic expression “Quaaaaack!!” followed by silence expressed as a short dotted line, the target text focuses on the smooth, uninterrupted flow of the story and underscores the situation by using a highly expressive adjective with a noun, “*a piercing scream*,” to convey a sense of urgency.

Example 3.

Source Text	Literal Translation	Target (Translated) Text
잎싹이 들판을 지나서 짚레덤불로 거의 다 갔을때였다. 난데없이 외마디 비명소리가 났다.	Sprout was almost upon the briar patch past the field when she heard an abrupt screaming sound.	Sprout was almost upon the briar patch when she heard a piercing scream. Her feathers stood on end.
“꽤애액!”	“Quaaaaack!!”	
“……?”	“……?”	
순간, 털이 <u>쭈뼛</u> 곤두섰다.	The feathers stood on end.	

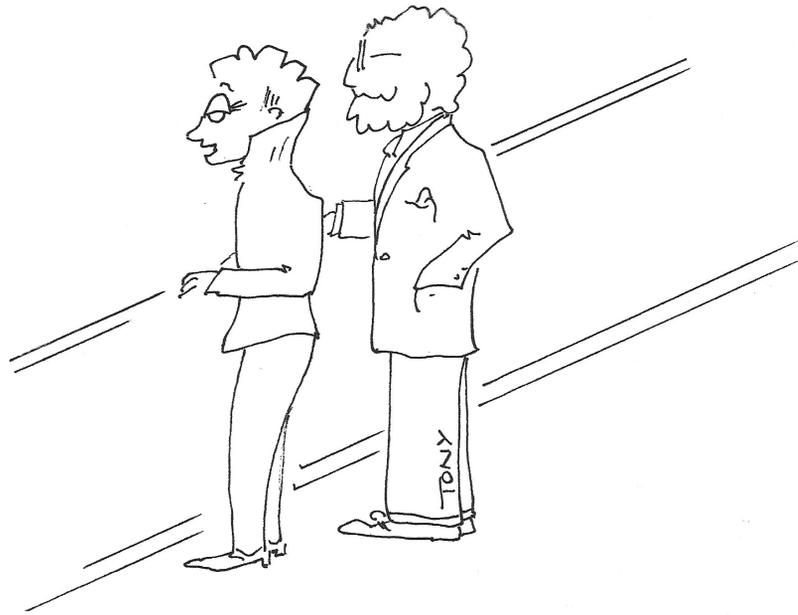
By the same token, 꼬꼬댁 꼬꼬꼬 and 삐악삐악, which are the sounds of the hen and chicks, were translated as: “The hen clucked, and the chicks kept up a steady chatter of cheeps.” Here the translation strategy used for the onomatopoeia involves a phonetic scheme to create a sense of rhythm, thereby eliciting feelings thanks to the repetitive sound patterns of /tʃɪ/ and / tʃæ/. Adopting and utilizing a phonetic strategy to create a pattern of sound is therefore another effective way of capturing and transmitting meanings that are already implicit in the sound words.

Translators are constantly encountering different options in terms of translation methods and schemes to convey the messages intended by the source authors and must make sure the emotional impact of the messages remains largely unaltered. Because of the difficulties inherent to working with and translating onomatopoeic expressions from one language into another, distinct sound patterns and word classes are alternative ways of reproducing literary texts that resonate with emotion, especially when there are no direct equivalents available in a target language.

NOTES

1. Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. Translated by Wade Baskin, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966.
2. Casas-Tost, Helena. “Translating Onomatopoeia from Chinese into Spanish: a Corpus-Based Analysis.” *Perspectives*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2014, pp. 39–55., doi:10.1080/0907676x.2012.712144.
3. Penguin Random House: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com>
4. A Korean>English literary translator whose works include translations of contemporary Korean literature by Young-ha Kim, Kyung-ran Jo, and Kyung-sook Shin, to name a few of the authors she has worked with.
5. Kim, Do-hun. “Comparison between Korean-English Onomatopoeia and Translation of Korean Onomatopoeia into English.” *The Journal of Translation Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2014, pp. 25–50.

BTW



“Oh-oh. Looks like the elephants are picketing the ivory tower.”

Confessions of a Translator of Children’s Poetry

By Lydia Razran Stone

Lydia Razran Stone is a first-generation American who has worked as a technical and literary translator from Russian into English. She earned an MA in Russian language and literature and a PhD in cognitive psychology and spent 10 years working for NASA, tracking and writing about Soviet biomedical research relevant to space flight. She is the editor of SlavFile, the quarterly publication of ATA’s Slavic Languages Division. After retiring from technical translation, she has concentrated on poetry and other literary Russian works. In addition to individual pieces in journals, she has published five bilingual volumes of poetry. Her translation of Ivan Krylov’s *The Frogs Who Begged for a Tsar and 61 Other Russian Fables* was published by Russian Life Books in 2010 and Pyotr Yershov’s *The Little Humpbacked Horse* in 2014, also as bilingual editions. Both these books and others are available on the publisher’s website <<http://www.russianlife.com/books/fiction/>> and on Amazon.com.



About 25 years ago, I started translating Russian children’s poetry. Counting the fables of Krylov (the Russian Aesop, or, if you prefer, La Fontaine), I have so far amassed more than 200 children’s poems, ranging from 4 lines to 2500+ lines. I am drawn to these poems because:

- 1) They are so good (see below for more on this).
- 2) I prefer to work with rhymed metered poetry and do my best to reproduce the original sound. Virtually all Russian children’s poems are in meter and rhyme, and even those who believe sophisticated English-speaking audiences consider regular meter to be sing-songy and doggerel-like make an exception for children’s verse.

Note: Examples are presented below in a three-column format. In each the left column is the original, the middle column a literal translation and the right column the poetic translation.

Не надо грязные носки Забрасывать под шкаф! Они черствеют от тоски, В такую глушь попав	You shouldn’t dirty socks Toss under the dresser, They will grow stiff from grief To find themselves in such a desert	Beneath the bed don’t toss soiled socks, My children, it’s not fair. From grief they’ll turn as hard as rocks To find themselves stuck there. Formal features identical to original
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3) If you try to reproduce sound, you frequently have to compromise slightly on the details of the meaning and, in order to do this responsibly, you need to understand the meaning and exactly what the poet is trying to do, so as to prevent compromises from becoming betrayals. The meaning and certainly the poet's intention (mainly to delight) are easier for me to understand in children's poetry.

<p>Жили в квартире Сорок четыре Сорок четыре Весёлых чижа: Чиж-судомойка, Чиж-поломойка, Чиж-огородник, Чиж-водовоз, Чиж за кухарку, Чиж за хозяйку, Чиж на посылках, Чиж-трубочист.</p>	<p>In an apartment there lived Forty-four Forty-four Merry finches. A dish-washing finch A floor-mopping finch A gardening finch A water-carrying finch A kitchen finch A housekeeping finch An errand-running finch And a chimney-cleaning finch.</p>	<p>On our building's fourth floor There live forty and four There live forty and four Merry finches. Not more! There's one finch to do mopping, And one finch to go shopping, And one finch to clean rooms And one finch to use brooms. There's one finch to bake breads. And one finch to make beds. And one finch to shine brass And one finch to mow grass.</p> <p>Formal features and overall meaning preserved, but not details of meaning.</p>
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4) Minor deviations in proper pronunciation and grammar (à la Ogden Nash) add to the humor of children's poetry and thus, in small doses, may be considered acceptable.

<p>Но слухи ползут, что Гиппо живет Под новой фамилией – Бегемот!</p>	<p>Yet rumors go round that Hippo still lives Under a new name Behemoth</p>	<p>Yet rumors now claim he is not dead in truth But lives under an alias—Tsar Be-he-muth.</p>
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5) Because children are the audience for the poetry, it is considered admissible to alter culturally specific details to make them easier to understand. This is more debatable in translating serious adult poetry. While some might argue that footnotes are enough to explain such references, this is certainly not an adequate solution when children are the readers or listeners.

И к полосатым Бежит он тигрятам, И к бедным горбатым Больным верблюжатам, И каждого гоголем, Каждого моголем, Гоголем-моголем, Гоголем-моголем, Гоголем-моголем потчует.	And to the striped (ones) He rushed to the little tigers And to the poor humpy ones The sick little camels And to each he treated to a gogol To each a mogol A gogol-mogol* Gogol-mogol He treated.	Next, to the tiger cubs he hurried And shook his head and looked quite worried. Then to the suffering dromedaries, Whose little throats were red as cherries, And to help the fever break He gave each one a chocolate shake, Chocolate shake, chocolate shake. He cured the sick with chocolate shakes.
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* A *gogol-mogol* is a rich milk, egg, and sugar drink believed to have restorative powers, and traditionally fed to the sick.

Why is Russian children’s poetry so good? To understand why relatively modern Russian children’s poetry is so good, one has to realize how much of Russian/Soviet history took place during periods of severe censorship and repression—under the tsars, during virtually all of the Soviet era, and undoubtedly now. It was deemed that poetry in children’s literature, often based on existing folklore, with talking animals, for example, did not require much censorship. In addition, as far as I can determine, throughout most of the nineteenth century, there was no distinction between children’s poetry and adult poetry. For example, Russia’s classic nineteenth-century poem now read to children, *The Little Humpbacked Horse* (see the 2015 Fall edition of *Source*, pages 33-42), is so beautifully written and witty that many people (including me) believe it was written by the language’s most beloved and unquestionably world-class poet, Alexander Pushkin. Because this poem contains a ridiculous tsar, it was banned for many years, despite its surrounding fairy-tale trappings.

This brings me to the Russian (although not exclusively Russian) concept of using Aesopian language to avoid partial or complete censorship. Krylov (the Russian Aesop, though most of his poems are original) adopted Aesop’s use of animal fables to teach moral lessons. Unlike Aesop, however, he used fables even more frequently to poke fun at and disparage authorities and those in power he did not approve of and abuses of power in general. Since his foolish, hypocritical, arrogant, self-promoting, or nefarious characters are mainly lower creatures, and sometimes even inanimate objects, they were evidently not interpreted as satirizing the power structure and were never censored. Indeed, virtually all of Krylov’s fables have been in continuous publication since he wrote them, starting in 1806. I have translated nearly 100 of Krylov’s rhymed fables and I firmly believe he was quite conservative, against the complete liberation of the serfs, and in favor of a rigidly stratified society, similar to the clear-cut differences between animal species and phyla. Nevertheless, in the Soviet era and possibly up to the present day, the idea of using Aesopian language, that is, animal analogies, to implicitly poke fun at those in power, was applied to selected Krylov verses, which were taught to all schoolchildren and construed as satirizing representatives of the capitalist system. The following is Krylov’s moral for a poem about whether it is acceptable

to appoint a fox to be the ruler of a flock of sheep on the basis of a referendum at which, by some “oversight,” the sheep were not invited to voice an opinion or vote.

<p>Какой порядок ни затей, Но если он в руках бессовестных людей, Они всегда найдут уловку, Чтоб сделать там, где им захочется, шноровку.</p>	<p>Whatever the procedure or system, If it is placed in the hands of people without conscience, They will always find a ruse To cleverly do what they want.</p>	<p>However just the rules and laws, In unjust hands or beaks or paws They can be bent to serve the goal Of leaders loath to lose control.</p>
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After the brief period of relative freedom following the 1917 Revolution, censorship and draconian repercussions for anything written that could be interpreted as undermining Soviet power or leaders returned. A number of poets, who otherwise would have been recognized as brilliant serious poets, chose to become children’s poets and, in some cases, translators of poetry instead. This was true especially if they were Jewish and thus subject, in those times, to additional scrutiny. Because of this, the quality of twentieth-century Russian children’s poetry at its best is wonderful. This is not to say that even the best poets did not, in the course of their careers, write bland propagandistic children’s poetry—but I never have to translate it, except occasionally as a counter example. Although some children’s poets used Aesopian language to extol the desirability of freedom and decry oppression and abuses of power, at least in the storybook world of talking beasts, many of them managed to live, even comfortably, on their earnings as poets well into old age. The following is an example of such a poem, by Zakhoder, who also translated *Winnie the Pooh* into Russian.

ЛЕВ	The Lion	The Lion
<p>Считался ЛЕВ царем зверей, Но это было встарь. Не любят в наши дни царей, И Лев - уже не царь. Душил он зверски всех подряд, Свирепо расправлялся, А правил плохо, говорят. С делами не справлялся. Теперь сидит он присмирив, И перед ним - ограда. Он недоволен, этот Лев, Но так ему и надо!</p>	<p>The Lion was called tsar of beasts But that was long ago. In our days we don't like tsars And Lion is no longer tsar. He oppressed everyone, one by one, And treated everyone brutally. And they say he ruled poorly, Couldn't cope with his job. Now he sits meekly, Behind bars of a cage. He is not pleased, this Lion. He has gotten what he deserves.</p>	<p>The Lion is a haughty beast, The king of beasts of yore. But then regard for tsars decreased: Now Leo rules no more. For one and all he did oppress, He treated them most cruelly, And left his kingdom in a mess, He was no statesman, truly. Now, sitting meekly in his cage A prisoner day and night, He must be choking on his rage! By God! it serves him right.</p>

This brings me to a confession about the audience I envision for my translations. It would, of course, be practical to translate for people who do not know any Russian, but few of them love the Russian poems the way I do or are knowledgeable enough to appreciate the “brilliance” of my translations. I really translate for those who speak Russian, who love the original text as deeply as I do, and who expect translations to sound exactly how they hear them in their own heads (as I do). Now, I also translate adult poems that appeal to me, but to Russian native speakers who love poetry, they are objects of quasi-religious devotion, causing them to quibble about any inaccuracy. This is considerably less often the case with the children’s poems they read and virtually universally memorized as children.

Here is the refrain of one of the most beloved twentieth-century children’s poem. When some who knew it as children hear the translation, I am gratified to see pleasure beaming from their faces.

Багаж	Baggage	Baggage
Дама сдавала в багаж: Диван, Чемодан, Саквояж, Картину, Корзину, Картонку И маленькую собачонку.	A lady checked with the baggage office, A sofa, A traveling bag, A picture, A cardboard box, And a (silly) little doggie! The Russian diminutive here implies a certain lack of respect.	A lady checked with baggage claim A steamer trunk A box of junk A picture frame A casket A basket A seat And a teeny And a weeny Doggie — cute and neat.

Complicating features specific to Russian.

1. Russian does not use articles, and a good number of prepositions consist of a single consonant, which is pronounced as part of the following word. This means that it is much easier to write lines starting with stressed syllables (trochees and dactyls). This is the traditional Russian folk meter. What does this mean for a translator into English? It means that all or, in a longish poem, most lines cannot begin with an article or many common prepositions. When driven by the burning desire to translate what is probably the longest Russian narrative children’s poem, I realized I could not reproduce this meter for even the majority of its 2000+ lines. So I decided to use iambs, justifying my choice by arguing that iambs are the predominant meter in English for nursery rhymes (e.g., “Jack Sprat could eat no fat”).

<p>За горами, за лесами, За широкими морями, Против неба — на земле Жил старик в одном селе. У старинушки три сына: Старший умный был детина, Средний сын и так и сяк, Младший вовсе был дурак.</p>	<p>Beyond the mountains, beyond the woods, Beyond the wide oceans. Opposite the sky, on the earth Lived an old man in a village. That old man had three sons. The oldest was a smart lad, The middle son was middling, The youngest was a total fool.</p>	<p>Beyond the hills, beyond the seas Beyond the forests dense with trees, Below the sky, above the ground, In a hamlet near the town, Lived three sons and their old dad. The oldest was a clever lad. The second neither smart nor dumb, The third a hopeless simpleton.</p>
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2. A second feature of Russian-language stress patterns is the large number of words where the stress is on the next-to-the-last syllable or the one before that, making “feminine” and dactylic rhymes easy to achieve. This is not so easy in English. At least in serious poetry so-called grammatical rhymes (e.g., consternation-alternation) are frowned upon if used too frequently. When translating poetry in general and children’s verse in particular, I have frequently been known to sin in this regard by replacing these rhymes by “masculine” ones (i.e., those with a stress on the last syllable).

<p>Есть маленькая травка – О ней я не забуду. Да как о ней забудешь? Она растёт повсюду!</p> <p>На улицах столицы И на глухой тропинке – Везде тебе кивают— Веселые травинки!</p> <p>All feminine line endings and rhymes.</p>	<p>There is a little weed I never will forget How could I forget her, She grows everywhere!</p> <p>On the streets of the capital, And on remote little paths, Everywhere they nod to you— These merry little weeds!</p>	<p>A little weed’s my lifelong friend. I won’t forget her face. She won’t let us forget her, She pops up every place.</p> <p>From gritty, city pavements, From lonely country glades, They merrily salute us By waving their green blades.</p> <p>Rhymed lines have masculine endings.</p>
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3. The Russian language uses diminutives far more often than English, even in adult discourse, and there are different ones with different connotations, particularly affection and disdain. These occur very frequently in children’s poetry, and oftentimes I just ignore them. However, in one poem, all of the verses rely on diminutives and their respective rhymes to transmit much of the poetry’s charm and delight. I decided to create some in English—and I must say that my then-toddler grandson enjoyed them so much he wanted to hear them over and over again.

Ленивая кошка Не ловит мышей. Ленивый мальчишка Не моет ушей. Ленивая мышка Не выроет норку. Ленивый мальчишка Не любит уборку. Ленивая мушка Не хочет летать. Ленивый мальчишка Не хочет читать! Что делать скажите, Добрейшей старушке, Когда завелись У старушки в избушке:	The lazy little cat* Doesn’t catch mice. The lazy little boy* Doesn’t wash his ears. The lazy little mouse* Doesn’t dig a little mouse hole.* The lazy little boy* Doesn’t like to clean up. The lazy little fly* Doesn’t want to fly. The lazy little boy* Doesn’t want to read! What could she do, tell me! The very nice little old lady,* When they all lived there With the little old lady* in her little hut.*	The cat was too lazy To catch him a mousy. The boy was too lazy, To help in the housy. The fly was too lazy To buzz through the airy. The boy was too lazy To comb out his hairy. The mouse was too lazy To nest in a nooky. The boy was too lazy, To read any booky. They lived with old Maisy, Who’d never been lazy, The way they just sat there, Was driving her crazy.
	* indicates diminutives	

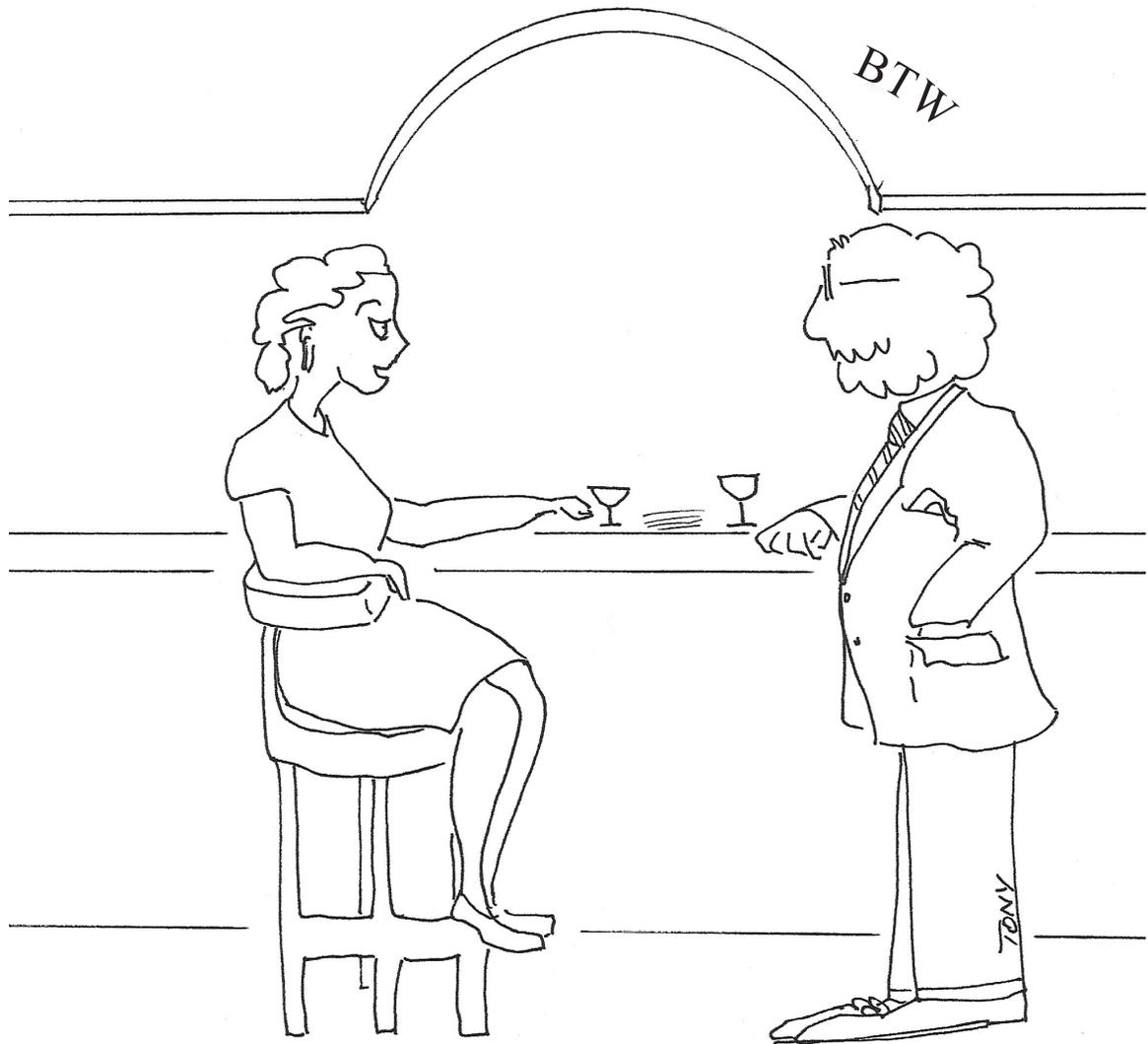
If you can’t translate faithfully, then you must localize. In other words, there are times when a poem cries out for translation, but you cannot both heed the cry and be faithful. The most extreme case I have ever encountered was a poem titled, to translate word for word, “What an absent-minded (fellow) from Swimming Pool Street,” with the word “absentminded” and the address “Swimming Pool Street” rhyming and serving as a refrain for the entire longish poem. The point of the poem is that this fellow attempts to travel from one city (Leningrad) to another (Moscow), but falls asleep in a stopped train car. Ultimately, when he finds himself back where he should have started from, he believes he has slept through a round-trip. Each time he wakes up, he asks if he is at some intermediate stop. None of the names of these Russian towns, however, rhyme with anything in English. To mimic the sound play and make the train (travelling, in lieu of its original route, from Hackensack, New Jersey, to Boston, Massachusetts) stop at what are actual stops along the U.S. east coast route, this is what I did:

<p>Вот какой рассеянный С улицы Бассейной! Побежал он на перрон Влес в отцепленный вагон Внес узлы и чемоданы, Рассовал их под дуваны, Сел в углу перед окном И заснул спокойным сном.</p> <p>***</p> <p>Он опять поспал немножко И опять взглянул в окошко, Увидал большпй вокзал, Удивился и сказал: --Это что за остановка-- Болотое иль Поповка? А с платформы говорят: --Это город Ленинград.—</p>	<p>What an absentminded fellow. From Swimming Pool Street He ran onto the platform And climbed into a decoupled car Carried in his bags and suitcase And stuck them under the seat. Sat in a corner under the window And fell into a peaceful sleep.</p> <p>***</p> <p>He went back to sleep for a while, And again looked out the window. He saw a big station, Asked in surprise, “What station is this? Bolotoe or Popovka?” And from the platform they said: This is the city of Leningrad.</p> <p>Note: The two stations have names meaning “Swamp” and “Wife of a Priest” and are between Leningrad and Moscow.</p>	<p>Absentminded Hector Thwack, From the town of Hackensack, Ran to his platform, went too far Up to a stopped, uncoupled car, Hauled in bags and sacks and cases, Stowed them in outlandish places, Took a seat, took off his shoes, Yawned and fell into a snooze.</p> <p>***</p> <p>So he went to sleep once more, Slept three hours, maybe four. Looked outside and saw a station, Asked in search of its location, “What station have we reached this time? Mystic Seaport? Groton? Lyme?” From the platform they called back, “The station here is Hackensack.”</p> <p>Note: The stations named here are between Hackensack (intended point of departure) and Boston (planned destination).</p>
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I may well be a maverick in my poetry translation procedures at least by twenty-first-century standards. I confess to never having studied contemporary translation theory, which as far as I can remember was not even offered at the time I was in graduate school studying Russian lit. The above is simply about my own practice, which I developed over the years through frequent consultations with native speakers of Russian. If any Russian speaker is interested in reading a 28 page “alphabestiary” of Russian<>English poetry translation that I created jointly with E>R translator Vladimir Kovner for a 2005 ATA presentation, please write me at lydiastone@verizon.net.



Paul Gauguin, *Piti Tiena (Two sisters)*, (1892)



*“Artists’ models who wear skin-colored body stockings
have been denounced as fake nudes.”*

Fighting the Good Fight: Social Justice in (Translated) Children’s Books and Graphic Novels

By Nanette McGuinness

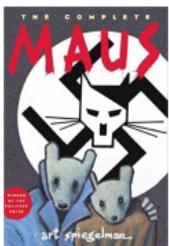
Award-winning opera singer **Nanette McGuinness** is the translator of over 40 books and graphic novels for children and adults from French and Italian into English, including the well-known Geronimo Stilton Graphic Novels. Two of her latest translations, *Luisa: Now and Then (Humanoids, 2018)* and *California Dreamin’: Cass Elliot Before the Mamas & the Papas (First Second, 2017)*, were chosen for inclusion in the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)’s Great Graphic Novels for Teens. With Avery Fischer Udagawa, she blogs at Global Literature in Libraries Initiative for #WorldKidLit Wednesdays.



Nanette McGuinness

Books for young readers help shape children’s minds, attitudes, and viewpoints. Hence, it’s crucial for young readers to have the opportunity to hear diverse voices from around the world. Further, today’s impressionable, thoughtful young minds need to be aware of important issues and acts of historical or social justice. The term “books for young readers” refers to the entire gamut of children’s literature, ranging from picture books to chapter books and from novels for middle grade and young adult readers to graphic novels.*

Graphic Novels

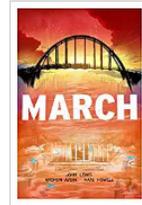


From their inception, graphic novels have lent themselves to addressing serious issues in the realm of social justice, such as one of the early, stellar exemplars, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* by Art Spiegelman (2 vols., Pantheon Graphic Library, 1986/91, originally serialized in 1980). While not a translation, it explored issues of historical injustice of the worst kind—oppression, genocide, racism, xenophobia, and the Holocaust—for hundreds of thousands of readers, using a very personal authorial lens.

More recent graphic novels, such as the award-winning *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir* by Thi Bui (Abrams ComicArts, 2017), *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (First Second

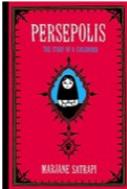


Books, 2007), and *March* by Georgia Congressman John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell (3 vols., Top Shelf Productions, 2013-2016) serve to deeply enrich their avid young readers’ worlds and world views of North Vietnam and Vietnamese immigrants, Chinese Americans, and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, respectively.

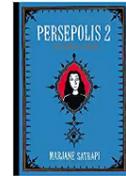


Maus, *The Best We Could Do*, and *American Born Chinese* are already multicultural in their perspectives. When one adds graphic novels *in translation* to the mix, one also increases the potential for shining a spotlight on issues of social justice in far-off cultures, letting these concerns enter into the narrative shared by the more “mainstream” local culture.

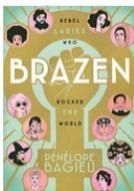
For example, we encounter *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*



by Marjane Satrapi, translated into English by her husband, Mattias Ripa (Pantheon Graphic Library, 2004/2005), which tell of growing up in Tehran during the Islamic Revolution. The two-volume work allows young readers to vicariously live through another child’s experience of oppression in recent history from across the globe.



A more recent graphic novel, *Josephine Baker* by José-Louis Bocquet and Catel Muller, translated by Edward Gauvin (SelfMadeHero, 2017), addresses deep-seated discrimination and racism that the famous African-American dancer, resistance fighter, and Civil Rights activist encountered throughout her life in Europe and the United States.



While women’s rights, discrimination, and feminism are subtexts in *Josephine Baker* and *Persepolis*, they come front and center in *Brazen: Rebel Ladies Who Rocked the World* by Pénélope Bagieu, translated by Montana Kane (First Second Books, 2018). Graphic novels in translation also address issues of gender identity and LGBTQ discrimination in other cultures. Two recent examples are *My Brother’s Husband* by Gengoroh Tagame, translated by Anne Ishii (2 vols, Pantheon Graphic Library, 2017/18), which

provides a fascinating glimpse of Japanese life and attitudes towards homosexuality in both Japan and Canada, and *Luisa: Now and Then*, by Carole Maurel, my translation, adapted by Mariko Tamaki (Humanoids, 2018), a coming-of-age fantasy about sexuality and closeted identity in which a mother’s prejudice merges with her desire for her child to have what she considers the easier life path.



Is there something about graphic novels that makes them a friendlier home for challenging issues? Perhaps so. A book in which visual art carries part of the narrative may well allow readers to identify and empathize with the characters and their problems more readily and to see beyond those characters’ “otherness” with greater immediacy than in a “regular” novel. Images

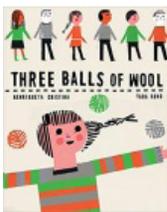
immediately show how different the characters may be from the reader; yet we respond differently to faces and facial expressions than we do to “mere” words, regardless of the language.

“Traditional” Children’s Novels

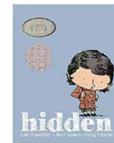
In the past generation, traditional children’s novels—and by extension, those in translation—have moved more deeply into the territory of addressing difficult issues of social justice than ever before. As perhaps befits a more direct and difficult world, today’s children’s books delve into topics that would have been *verboten* outside of a history textbook during my own childhood in the 1960s and 1970s.

One example from non-translated YA novels is Laurie Halse Anderson’s groundbreaking *Speak* (Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1999), which shatters previous norms in American children’s literature by dealing with high school rape. *Max*, a more recent work of historical fiction for YA readers by Sarah Cohen-Scali, translated by Penny Hueston (Roaring Brook Press, 2018), is chillingly groundbreaking in the way it addresses the Nazi *Lebensborn* eugenics program.

Children’s Picture Books



Picture books—literature written for the youngest readers—also now treat hard topics. A marvelous picture book in translation, *Three Balls of Wool (Can Change the World)*, by Henriqueta Cristina, illustrated by Yara Kono and translated by Lyn Miller-Lachmann (Enchanted Lion Books, 2017), is a beautiful story that puts its important historical context of oppression, persecution, and exile into the front and back matter. Another is *Hidden* by Loïc Dauvillier,



illustrated by Marc Lizano and Greg Salsedo, and translated by Alexis Siegel (First Second Books, 2014). Like *Max* and *Maus*, *Hidden* also deals with the Holocaust.

Words and Social Moeres

Much like translators of adult literature, those who translate children’s books must deal with social justice in each and every word. For example, when translating from a Romance language into or out of English, they must deal with gendered nouns and pronouns, just one of the many ingredients that create each language’s rich stew of gender-related idiosyncrasies. Historical use of language compounds the puzzle. Does one choose to use the historically and grammatically correct third person masculine singular (he) in English to refer to someone of an unknown gender? That practice is slowly but surely changing in English—thank goodness, in my opinion—but as a translator, one’s decision of whether or not to impose modern moeres and one’s personal, political preference on another writer’s words can be a fraught discussion and may make a book sound quaint rather than timely and timeless.

A much bigger topic to tackle is finding the level of cursing that might be appropriate for the target reader and culture. Cross-cultural cursing standards vary greatly. So, too, do attitudes

towards behavioral issues such as bullying, name-calling, bigotry, and racism. Should these be bowdlerized, sanitized to match the target culture's view of appropriate language for children? Sometimes that language is the point, and removing it defangs the author's social commentary. Other times, the terminology creates a distraction, one that nonetheless shows a true glimpse of a culture and/or a different historical time. Yet leaving the problematic language intact may prevent the book from ever reaching any children's hands in the target culture at all.

The best children's literature in translation offers young readers the ability to turn mirrors into windows—to see “the other” with the same familiarity as readers see themselves. Children's books in translation help broaden and shape the minds, politics and future policies of the voters, leaders, activists, and adults of tomorrow. Translating children's literature, therefore, can be considered a near-sacred duty. Where else can one have such great influence and wield such a mighty sword?

NOTES

* To “translate” these terms for those unfamiliar with children's literature: picture books (which can have few or no words and are generally intended for an adult to read to a child) are generally for ages 0-8; chapter books (which include graded readers) are roughly for ages 5-8; middle grade readers are approximately ages 8-12; and young adult readers are 11-15. One can also talk about “upper middle grade,” which tend to be books for ‘twens’ (young teens who are, literally, in between) and upper YA, books for ages 14-18, and there are increasingly fine divisions and distinctions. But we need not go any further. Graphic novels, of course, can be intended for readers at any of the above levels, as well as for adults.

Curious about how literary translators can work together to hone their craft? The American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) is highlighting regional literary translation groups in a blog series called “Collective Conversations.” The April edition featured the Northwest Literary Translators, a project of the Northwest Translators & Interpreters Society (NOTIS), the ATA chapter based in Seattle, Washington. Here's the link: <https://tinyurl.com/NOTISinterview>

BTW



“My fortune cookie says: She who die laughing have last laugh.”

At the Translation Crossroads: To Tread or Not to Tread the Beaten Path

By Mercedes Guhl



Mercedes Guhl

Mercedes Guhl jumped into translation while working in the book industry in 1990. Since then, she has been involved in different parts of the publishing process (e.g., editing, copyediting, proofing), but translation (English>Spanish) remains her main activity. With a degree in philosophy and literature, an MA in translation studies, and over sixty published translations, she has also gone into teaching, training translators at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Colombia and Mexico.

Do translations of a literary text have an expiration date? Many contend they do. What about the original text? Does it expire over time? The obvious response is “no.” But the truth is it does expire in some way. Our early-twenty-first-century approach to a text is different from that of a reader a hundred years ago. Although the text is the same one, the reading is different. Old texts come back to life through fresh readings.

Every translation springs from a reading. Therefore, a re-translation can account for things in the text that had been overlooked before, as well as deem others to be marginal. A re-translation can be considered a chance of “getting things right,” but you cannot forget the path already taken and you must choose either to follow that path or to find the reasons not to do so, while carrying the burden of measuring up to the author and previous translations.

When I was asked to translate an unpublished book by Mark Twain, the task seemed insurmountable. I had had some previous acquaintance with translating this author, as I had supervised the research of two students working on a collection of short texts by Mark Twain for their graduation project. The project presented a theoretical framework to support the translation and the choices they had made, along with the translated texts with notes. It was all fine, but I couldn’t help feeling that something about Twain’s witty twists and turns had been lost in translation. From my point of view as a translation teacher (and translation editor), when you

are grading a translation, marking a word or a passage that is not on a par with the original is not enough: you have to find a better option for that word or passage if you want to correct it. Stating that the translation is not good is never enough. You have to prove it by coming up with a better option, and sometimes you simply can't find one. With this new Twain translation, I wanted to avoid that feeling at all costs.

The book I was to translate had an interesting background. The book's title is *The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine*. Readers and scholars have never heard of this work by Twain, because the story was never completed. He just left a few pages scribbled with notes.

A scholar was doing research in the Mark Twain Papers archive, in search of texts about food for compiling a Twain's cooking book, when the term "oleomargarine" caused this bunch of scribbled notes to surface from the archival pond. But the notes had nothing to do with cooking. They were the seed of a story, the notes from a particularly entertaining tale Twain had spun for his daughters, so entertaining that it had lasted for several nights. According to the book's "Note from the Editor," it seems that, from the countless tales he told to his daughters, this is the only one that moved him to write notes.¹

As a translator, I was at a crossroads when starting this project: Was it going to be a fresh reading of Twain or would I walk along the path already taken by previous translators? I decided I'd let the book speak to me. I read it, searching for clues. It felt distinctively



Johnny with his animal friends on a quest to rescue the prince

Twainian. But the story was not only by him. As the editor explained in the final note, having a "set of rough notes for a fragmentary and unfinished story told well over a hundred years ago"² is not enough to make a book. Another author was contacted to work with the notes: Philip C. Stead along with his wife the illustrator Erin Stead, winners in 2011 of the Caldecott Medal awarded by the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC). Stead imagined a conversation between himself and Twain in a log cabin on an island (Beaver Island) in the middle of Lake Michigan, where Twain would tell him the story he had written the notes for.

As in some experiment involving mirrors, Stead and Twain both took turns being the author, narrator, and characters in this book. Stead tells the reader about meeting Twain in the cabin and depicts him as a character. Twain tells Stead and the reader his tale of Johnny and how he ended up searching for the kidnapped Prince Oleomargarine, while giving us a picture of Stead as a character and storyteller, because they actually discuss the plot turns in Twain's tale. It is Stead who finishes the tale, as Twain disappears halfway through it (a satisfactory fictional way of accounting for the unfinished notes). He sticks to a plot line that resonates with Twain's irony. There is just one element, the subplot of a secondary character, that Stead changes deliberately, because he loves this character. The reader eventually understands that Stead's intrusion is well grounded. Because he is working on an unfinished story, he has earned his right to insert a marginal subplot and do with it whatever he wants.

I could recognize Stead's voice and narrative rhythm from one of his picture books, *Ideas Are All Around*, which I had translated previously,³ but I had to pay close attention to the way Stead constructed Twain as a narrator and character, so that I could follow his lead, whether to re-create a new Twain from today's point of view or to draw from the one we all know. From my vantage point, translators have to distill the rules of the game set by the author in order to organize that same game in the translation. Stead's Twain was a very recognizable image of the Twain we get from his writings. Stead managed to tread Twain's path, re-enacting Twain's persona and writing style. He got the right vocabulary, the humor, the turns of phrase to make his fictional Twain a credible one. I concluded that Stead had decided that Twain, as an author and a reference, had not expired and that we could still use the old image and language available in his books, popular culture, and the many translations of his work into other languages, in this case Spanish.

Bearing in mind these rules of the game from the author himself, Philip Stead that is, I decided not to approach this book from a new point of view but to arm myself with currently available translations of Twain's work before reading and translating this new story. I started looking for sources and beaten paths to him, so that my translated Twain would be recognizable to my readers in the same way that I recognized him in Stead's text. My first acquaintance with Twain had been a graphic version of Tom Sawyer's adventures made in Spain, which I had read so many times when I was a child that I still know a lot of passages and retorts almost by heart. I could trust my memory for this foundation of vocabulary. The story of Prince Oleomargarine involved more sarcasm than Tom Sawyer's and had a touch of wickedness that made me think of Roald Dahl's pictures of grownups and spoiled brats, along with some absurdities rampant in the world today. In my personal library, I was lucky to find two different collections of short texts by Twain: one of them a Spanish translation, *Un reportaje sensacional y otros cuentos*, published in Madrid in 1947⁴ (my book was the fourth edition from 1966); the other, a Colombian translation of *On the Decay of the Art of Lying* (*Sobre la decadencia del arte de mentir*) dating back to 1999.⁵

I read the two collections from cover to cover. I didn't go as far as to compare any of them to the original. I just wanted to read them in order to draw some of Twain's essence from both for my translation. It was remarkable to discover that most of the time there was a common ground,

a shared connection between the two, despite the differences in word choices or stylistic turns. Although there was a gap of half a century and an ocean that stood between the two books, both versions felt distinctively Twainian.

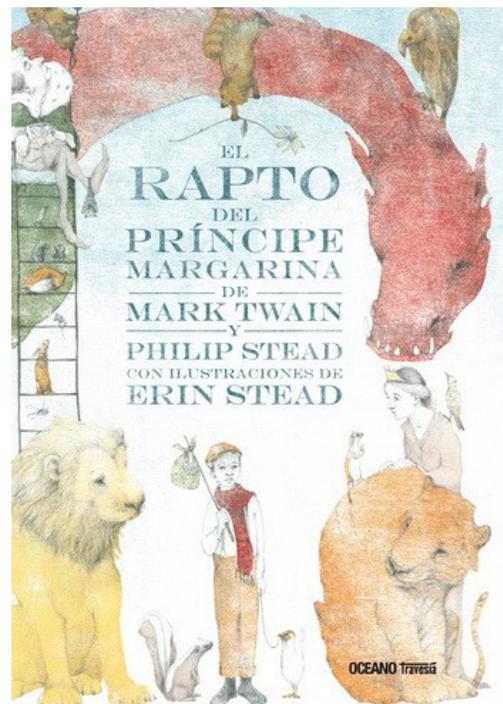
I went back to my initial crossroads and decided that my own reading of *The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine* should arise from my previous readings of both Stead and Twain, if I intended them to be utterly recognizable. My plan was to use the collections as models for rhythm and word choice so as not to step away from the use of dated language for Twain dialogue and his telling of the tale. Although I would be reading Twain from a different time and geography, the existing common ground connecting the two collections I read made me think I would be able to reach that “Twainian space” too.

In the Spanish-speaking book industry, it is unusual for a translator to get to see the marks and changes that the editor does to the translation. In this case, because I informed my editor of the strategy I was using, I got the text back and went over the changes. As she was aware of my intentions of treading Twain’s path and the beaten path of other translated Twain texts, her changes and suggestions contributed to giving the vocabulary that patina of time I was trying to build.

Will this text become a children’s classic? I hope so, but I can only speak for my translation here, not the original. Will my translation stand the test of time? Thanks to Philip Stead, *The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine* is part of Twain’s work and not just a mere bunch of notes. Stead “translated” the notes into a story, following the path marked by Twain, both in plot and style. And I walked in Stead’s footsteps, using other translations as a compass to steer my course. As long as Twain continues to be read in existing translations (my translation is an offspring of those), his work will not grow old.

NOTES

- 1 Mark Twain and Philip C. Stead, *The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine* (New York: Doubleday, 2017).
- 2 Op. cit.
- 3 Philip C. Stead, *Ideas por todas partes*, trans. Mercedes Guhl (Mexico City: Océano Travesía: 2017).
- 4 Mark Twain, *Un reportaje sensacional y otros cuentos*, trans. León Mirlas, fourth edition, (Madrid: Editorial Espasa-Calpe, 1966), first edition from 1947.
- 5 Mark Twain, *Sobre la decadencia del arte de mentir*, trans. Javier Escobar and Eva Zímerman, (Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 1999).



What Would I Do?

By Tony Beckwith



Tony Beckwith, a writer, translator, interpreter, poet, and cartoonist, is a regular contributor to Source.

Three of my school teachers were passionate about English literature and passed on to me their love of prose, plays, and poetry. I am eternally indebted to Miss Agnes McCulloch, Mr. Kit Edridge, and Mr. Arthur J. Hobson for the seed they planted in me. A seed of curiosity about words and what words can do when spoken or written by someone who understands that they are so much more than just symbols representing meanings. These teachers taught me how to hear words sing; how to see them dance and slip in and out of different colors. They gave me a love of words.

But what to do with those words? What to write? That was always the question in the early days, and I didn't always have an answer. One day, at the Louvre, I watched an artist copy a painting that was hanging on the wall. She sat in a chair facing the painting, working at a portable easel. People milled around her and sometime stood in her line of vision, but she just kept working on her canvas. As I watched I understood that she wasn't merely recreating the image she was looking at; she was also experiencing how the painter had moved as he worked, how he'd held his brush to apply a particular stroke. She was channeling the painter, repeating his gestures and learning how that felt. She wasn't so much interested in *what* he was painting as in *how* he was painting. How he used his brushes and his colors to express his vision, just as a musician uses his instrument to play

a piece of music. So I copied the copyist and started reading writers and poets to see *how* they wrote rather than *what* they wrote. I found that process to be helpful during the time when I was honing my way with words as I would if I were learning to play a musical instrument. There's a risk, of course, of drinking a little too deeply from a particular well and one must be wary of allowing someone else's style to overflow too strongly into one's own writing. But all that gradually became clear, and somewhere along the way the question of what to write seemed to answer itself as new ideas began to percolate up through an evolving sense of self.

Every poem, in my experience, arrives in its own individual way. This one tumbled into my mind almost complete, in all its simplicity. There was very little to tweak or add as I transcribed it into my notebook.

What Would I Do?

What would I do
if I weren't doing
what I do
when I'm doing what I do?

If I weren't doing
what I do
when I'm doing it
I guess I'd be doing something new

Maybe I could learn
how to do something different
I could do
without further ado?

But what I could do
instead of doing what I'm doing
I confess I haven't a clue

So I think I'll keep doing
what I've always been doing
which is doing
what I'm doing
when I do

At the time, I gave no thought at all to the question of audience demographics. Those considerations came later. First of all when an editor friend said she thought the poem was suitable for young readers, I went back and read it again and saw what she meant. There are stages of childhood and adolescence when one is excited about new knowledge and fascinated by new forms of expression. I remember a phase when tongue-twisters and clever riddles were popular among my contemporaries. And a stage when we knew what we knew and derived a great deal of satisfaction from knowing that we knew what we knew. I'm fairly sure I would have loved this poem when I was that age, about nine or ten.

A week or so later I had another epiphany: the poem was also eminently suitable for translation. Since it is essentially a pretty straightforward soliloquy, with no hidden depths or obscure allusions, there were relatively few of the usual challenges involved in translating a poem. It was more a matter of slipping into a subjunctive mood and approaching the idea from a Spanish point of view. But the same constants still applied. The original poem was a string of meanings, their symbols wrapped in a language. The original language was helpful because without it there would be no poem and because it contributed the sound and the rhythm and the tone I hoped to approximate. But once I'd understood the meaning of the symbols, I had no further use for it. So I held the bouquet of words in one hand and peeled away the wrapping, the original language, leaving just the meanings and their interrelationships. Those primal referents were the inspiration and the guide for the poem I then wrote in Spanish.

¿Qué haría?

¿Qué haría
si no hiciera
lo que hago
cuando estoy haciendo
lo que hago?

Si no hiciera
lo que hago
cuando lo estoy haciendo
supongo que estaría haciendo algo nuevo

Tal vez podría aprender
a hacer algo distinto
que pudiera hacer
sin preámbulos

Pero, ¿qué podría hacer
en vez de lo que estoy haciendo?
Confieso que no tengo idea

Así que creo que seguiré haciendo
lo que siempre he hecho
Que es hacer
lo que hago
cuando lo estoy haciendo

As the translated poem took shape, I kept an eye on the original's structure and rhyming pattern, references, musical quality, register, and general tone. I decided that the rhyming in the original, though appealing and useful, was of secondary importance compared to the phrasing and verb tenses and the narrative quality of the poem. I thought an attempt to create similar rhyming lines in the translation would be disproportionately detrimental to the other elements, so I abandoned the idea. Readers of the translation, therefore, will not have a rhyming pattern to hold the lines together as it does in the original. But I think the translated poem is held together quite satisfactorily enough by the rhythm created by the sentence structure and narrative quality mentioned above. All that notwithstanding, the question is: will monolingual readers of each version experience something similar? To the extent that they do, I believe the translation can be considered a success.



*What would I do
without
books?*

CREDITS

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Bertha Boynton Lum (1869-1954), *Japanese children rolling large snow balls* (1913), woodcut. Iowa-born Lum travelled to Japan and learned traditional Japanese woodcutting and printing known as *ukiyo-e*, which translates as “picture[s] of the floating world.” United States Library of Congress’s Prints and Photographs Division (under the digital ID cph.3g06825). Wikimedia Commons
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Book cover for *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*. By Sun-Mi Hwang. Illustrated by Nomoco.
Translated by Chi-Young Kim. Penguin Random House: <https://tinyurl.com/y26rffbt>

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Paul Gauguin, *Piti Tiena (Two sisters)* (1892), The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Wikiart.
<https://www.wikiart.org/es/paul-gauguin/two-sisters-1892>

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Félix Virgen Guhl, courtesy of his mother and himself.