NO. 81 | SPRING-SUMMER 2022

SOURCE

THE JOURNAL OF THE ATA'S LITERARY DIVISION

Pechersk Lavra
(Monastery of the Caves),
Kyiv, Ukraine (1889)

FEATURING

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITORS

First and foremost, echoing the message of ATA's President Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo in March this year, we stand in solidarity with our Ukrainian colleagues and the Ukrainian people. We acknowledge the deep suffering arising from the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, and our hearts go out to the families of the war's many casualties and to the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. We also commend all those abroad and in Ukraine lending their aid and support to tackle this tragedy and bring peace.

Our cover art, a colorful lithograph dating back to 1889, depicts the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves (Pechersk Lavra), with its Great Lavra Belltower and the golden domes of the Cathedral of the Dormition, now a world heritage site but initially famous for the small cave that the Ukrainian-born ascetic and hermit St. Anthony (983-1073) chose to live in around 1011. This vast hilltop compound with its monasteries and monuments, under which runs a network of tunnels, corridors, and historic caves, housing three churches, burial vaults, and living quarters for monks, is just a fraction of Ukraine's many architectural wonders, now under threat. To bookend our issue, we have Kandinsky's 1898 painting *Odessa Port,* to celebrate the Black Sea transport hub and terminal that has been the target of air strikes and shelling from offshore Russian warships, paralyzing trade and the flow of supplies since the very start of the conflict.

This edition of *Source* begins with Erik Camayd-Freixas's detailed account of his work as an interpreter for Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20, 2021, focusing in particular on his instantaneous, albeit highly polished, translation into Spanish of an often-quoted excerpt from Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney's poem *The Cure at Troy* (recited by Joe Biden and Lin-Manuel Miranda at the inauguration) and reflecting upon the complexities of our "sedentary trade."

Sue Burke takes us on a tour of speculative fiction and explains how translation has led to greater inclusiveness and the wider dissemination of different voices in the genre. This issue also highlights several books and their recent translations into English: from China, poet Yan An's collection *A Naturalist's Manor*, translated by Chen Du and Xisheng Chen (who were awarded a fellowship in 2021); from Argentina, Daniel Guebel's novel *The Absolute* translated by Jessica Sequeira; from Lebanon, Najwa Barakat's novel *Mr. N*, translated by Luke Leafgren (with an excerpt and a translator's note); from Barcelona, Eva Baltasar's *Boulder,* translated by Julia Sanches (with an interview of the translator); and from Morocco, Malika Moustadraf's *Blood Feast: The Complete Short Stories,* translated by Alice Guthrie (with an interview of the translator). In our *Words, Words, Words* column, Patrick Saari explores the translation of three Ancient Greek words and how they provide insights into suffering, art, and tragedy.

On our In Memoriam page, Loie Feuerle, former Chair of ATA's Honors & Awards Committee, pays tribute to Margaret Sayers Peden (1927-2020), one of America's top translators of works from Spanish into English, whose career spanned more than half a century. In 2010, she was awarded ATA's Lewis Galantière Prize for her translation of the 1499 novel *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas.

On this occasion, we would like to welcome Daniel Dos Santos, our new graphic design and layout artist, who has provided *Source* with a new look and who will also be working with us on our next issue.

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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 members of the ATA's Literary Division and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit articles dealing with translation of literary texts or with literary translators and their work. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.

NEXT ISSUE:

For Issue 82, *Source* is particularly interested in submissions of articles and photos related to the following topics:

- Interviews with literary translators or publishers of literature in translation
- News from you – tell us about your recent and forthcoming literary translations!
- *Words, Words, Words*: a column about a fraught word or phrase

Submission deadline for the next issue: **October 15, 2022**

DETAILS:

- Submit articles between 750 and 2,500 words in Microsoft Word-compatible format (.doc, .docx).
- Please include a brief, factual bio and a photograph.
- Links and illustrations, artwork, etc., are encouraged.
- Submissions may be edited.
- Formatting preferences:
    - Font: Calibri 12, without indented paragraphs
    - Line breaks between paragraphs but no word breaks
    - Unjustified righthand margin
    - Send submissions or questions to source.atald@gmail.com

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LETTER FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Literary Division members,

This issue of Source emerged with the spring, and matured over the warm summer months. Our Division is celebrating some recent successes and looking forward to more. First, please join me in welcoming the newest members of our Leadership Council: Pamela García, Timothy Gregory, Yeddanapudi Radhika, and Melody Winkle. If you attended any of our online events so far this year, you may have already run into them. Assistant Division Administrator Mercedes Guhl and I were delighted to see 96 people register for our two-part webinar on the ABCs of Book Translation this February and March, and we noticed dozens of you on Zoom at the talk on the Authors Guild model contract for book translation which followed. We hope we can continue to offer webinars and less formal online meetups for our division that will help members explore all the nuances of this field, share their work, and learn from their colleagues.

Personally, however, I am even more eager to see you all in person. When this issue goes to press, we will be preparing for the ATA Annual Conference in Los Angeles. I hope to meet lots of Literary Division members at our beloved After Hours Café, our Literary Division lunch, and the Book, Podcast and Blog Fair. This year, shaking hands and talking over a meal seem like real possibilities again, and I can't wait to take part. We'll share more information about Literary Division activities at ATA63 in future announcements.

The last few months have been a time of turmoil in the countries whose literature I happen to translate. Literary translation is an act of empathy, so when protestors are shot in Kazakhstan and apartment buildings are bombed in Ukraine, I tend to take that pain to heart. But literature can also help us to heal and move forward. I've attended some inspiring readings by Ukrainian poets, translated some heart-wrenching poetry, and been encouraged by news of colleagues around the world who are interpreting for refugees and keeping the world up to date on current events. I have the feeling that once the immediate crisis is over, there will be more interest than ever in translated literature from that part of the world. And I know that this cycle of crisis, empathy and translation has played out many times before, affecting colleagues working in all languages. Our work is so important. Let's keep it up.

Best wishes,

Shelley Fairweather-Vega

Shelley Fairweather-Vega translates literature from Russia and Central Asia to English. She most enjoys translating poetry and prose exploring the intersection of culture and politics.

Mercedes Guhl translates English into Spanish for publishing houses in Mexico. She specializes in children's and young adult fiction and graphic novels.

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MEMBER NEWS

Mark Herman and **Ronnie Apter** have been commissioned to translate into English an epic Latin poem written during the Renaissance by an Italian. *The Emiriad* (1471-76) by Giovanni Mario Filelfo (1426-80) is a poem about the life and deeds of the poet's contemporary, Mahomet II (1432-81), Emperor of the Turks (1444-46 and 1451-81), and conqueror of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) in 1453. The work, semi-historical and semi-mythological, consists of about 5,000 lines and is written in the style of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The translation is being done in conjunction with a project headed by two professors at the University of Ankara in Turkey, which will result in a tri-lingual, Latin-English-Turkish, edition of the poem.

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Chen Du and **Xisheng Chu** have won the 2021 Zachary Doss Friends in Letters Memorial Fellowship for their English translation of a set of five poems by one of the most famous contemporary poets in China Yan An. The poems are "Plane Descending in Raging Mist and Snow," "Flight," "Snow's Language Awakens in the Tenebrosity," "At the Back of All Things," and "North North." (https://heavyfeatherreview.org/2021/10/15/2021-friends-in-letters/?fbclid=IwAR2GXw6KyVDQfNFrByzE0eelYy9i3fqWOBj6_BBYJBCMvkvR-sL6zuqu7lY)

A collection of Yan An's poetry, *A Naturalist's Manor*, also translated by Chen Du and Xisheng Chen, has also been published by Chax Press: https://www.chax.org/product-page/a-naturalist-s-manor-by-yan-an-trans-by-chen-du-xisheng-chen

Chen Du is a voting member of the American Translators Association and a member of the Translators Association of China. She revised more than eight chapters of the Chinese translation of the biography of Helen Snow, *Helen Foster Snow: An American Woman in Revolutionary China*. In the United States, her translations have appeared in *Columbia Journal*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Pilgrimage*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and elsewhere. She is also the author of the book *Successful Personal Statements*. Find her online at ofsea.com.

Xisheng Chen is an ESL grammarian, lexicologist, linguist, translator and educator. He has worked as a translator for Shanghai TV Station, Evening English News, as a Lecturer at Jiangnan University, Wuxi, China and as an Adjunct Professor at the Departments of English and Social Sciences of Trine University (formerly Tri-State University). As a translator for over three decades, he has published many translations in various fields in newspapers and journals in China and abroad. A set of three poems co-translated by him and Chen Du was one of six finalists in the 2020 Gabo Prize for Literature in Translation & Multilingual Texts.

Yan An is one of the most famous poets in contemporary China, author of 14 poetry books including *Rock Arrangement*, which has won him the sixth Lu Xun Literary Prize, one of China's top four literary prizes. He is also the Vice President of Shaanxi Writers Association and the head and Executive Editor-in-Chief of the literary journal *Yan River,* one of the oldest and most famous literary journals in northwestern China. In addition, he is a member of the Poetry Committee of China Writers Association.

IN MEMORIAM

Margaret Sayers Peden (1927-2020)

Margaret Sayers Peden
at the 2010 ATA annual conference

It was with sadness that we have learned of the passing of Margaret Sayers Peden, the winner of the ATA's 2010 Lewis Galantière Prize for her translation of Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina*, a novel written in 1499 and consisting entirely of dialog. During her professional life, Dr. Peden, a very active translator of works from Spanish into English, translated more than 60 books written by an impressive variety of authors from both Spain and Latin America, including Carlos Fuentes, Isabel Allende, Octavio Paz, Pablo Neruda, Antonio Muñoz Molina, Arturo Pérez-Reverte, César Vallejo, Claribel Alegría, Juan Rulfo, Alfredo Castañeda, Fernando de Rojas, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. She handled a wide range of genres, time periods, and geographical areas with equal skill and sensitivity.

Like many of us, Dr. Peden began translating almost by chance: while working on her dissertation on Mexican playwright Emilio Carballido, she ran across a short novel he had written. While telling her husband about the novel, her husband pointed out that he couldn't read Spanish and asked her to translate the book for him. She did, and it became her first published translation.

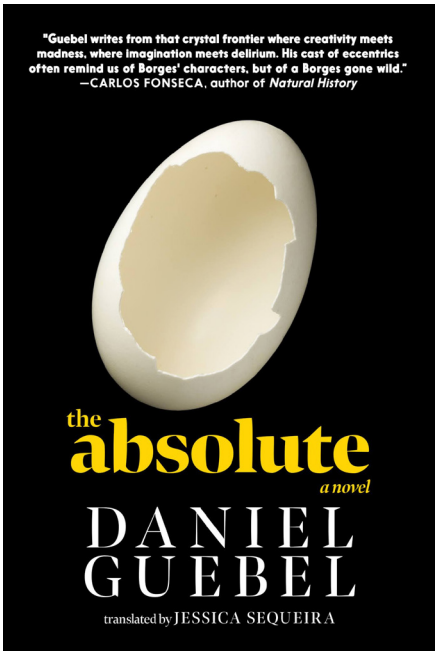
Dr. Peden was the recipient of numerous prizes and awards both before and after she received the ATA's Galantière Prize. She was selected as a resident scholar at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in Italy and was honored both at the Feria Internacional del Libro in Guadalajara and by ALTA (American Literary Translators Association) at its annual conference. She received PEN awards on three separate occasions: PEN's Gregory Kolovakos Award in 1992, the PEN Translation Prize in 2004, and in 2012 culminating in PEN's Ralph Manheim Medal for Translation, an award recognizing a lifetime of achievement in the field of literary translation.

Dr. Peden attended the ATA annual conference in 2010 to receive her award in person, attending conference sessions and joining the members of the Honors & Awards Committee for lunch, where we enjoyed her lively conversation, replete with insights into translation and working with such a variety of authors.

— Loie Feuerle

NEW TRANSLATION

On May 17, 2022, Seven Stories Press published *The Absolute*, the first of Argentinian author Daniel Guebel's many books to be translated into English. (https://sevenstories.com/books/4374-the-absolute)



The Absolute is a sprawling historical novel about the Deliuskin-Scriabin family, spanning six generations of geniuses and madmen. Beginning in mid-18th century Russia, unfolding across Europe, and ending in late 20th-century Argentina, the characters play out their lives in different branches of art, politics, and science in such radical ways that they transform the world and its reality. The narrator's ancestor, Frantisek Deliuskin, invents a new form of music in the 18th century; his son, Andrei Deliuskin, makes some marginal annotations to the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola that are later interpreted by Lenin as an instruction manual to carry out the Russian Revolution of 1917; Esau Deliuskin, following the course of his father, creates a socialist utopian society; and so the story continues down through the generations to the narrator himself, whose creation takes him back in time and space to the moment of the Big Bang.

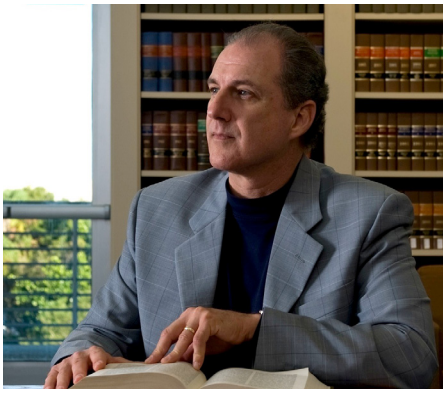
The Absolute is a monumental work about the creation of art and about family, about spiritual traditions and about throwing oneself into the world not to capture life but to create it, in and through words.

Daniel Guebel *has published over 25 books, including novels, short stories and plays. He won Argentina's National Literature Prize as well as the Argentine Academy of Letters' novel prize.* The Absolute *was chosen by* La Nación *newspaper as its book of the year, and* The Emperor's Pearl *won the Emecé Prize. His autobiographical book* The Jewish Son *also won the Buenos Aires Book Fair's award for literary criticism. Guebel is a lover of Japanese literature and owns a sushi restaurant, and his latest novel is* A Japanese Crime.

Jessica Sequeira *is a writer and literary translator. She is the author of the novel* A Furious Oyster, *the story collection* Rhombus and Oval, *the essay collection* Other Paradises: Poetic Approaches to Thinking in a Technological Age, *and the hybrid work* A Luminous History of the Palm. *She has translated over 20 books by Latin American authors, and in 2019 was awarded the Premio Valle-Inclán for her translation of Sara Gallardo's* Land of Smoke.

Dr. Camayd-Freixas *is a professor of Hispanic Studies and Translation and Interpretation at Florida International University. A Harvard-trained literary critic, communications analyst, social theorist, and expert linguist at federal and state courts, he has appeared on hundreds of criminal and civil trials, testified before Congress, contributed as amicus curiae to the U.S. Supreme Court, and received numerous academic and human rights awards. He has interpreted for twelve heads of state, including Presidents Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden, as well as Pope Benedict XVI.*

Dr. Camayd-Freixas has lectured on linguistic, literary, and cultural studies, immigration, labor, ethics, and human rights in colleges and universities, law schools, bar associations, and professional organizations nationally and internationally. Dr. Camayd-Freixas specializes in cultural studies, literature, and historiography of the colonial and contemporary periods of Latin America and the Caribbean. He has published eight books and numerous articles, many of which are available online. See https://fiu.academia.edu/ErikCamaydFreixas.



President Biden's *versos favoritos* from *The Cure at Troy*

by Erik Camayd-Freixas

The world of translation and interpretation is full of surprises. On January 20, 2021, I was part of the simulcast interpreting team covering the Biden-Harris inauguration for Univision, the Spanish-language media network in the United States. In the aftermath of the January 6 insurrection, that day of ceremonies and events around the fortified stronghold of the Capitol and White House, with the oath of office taken by the new leaders of the nation and the high-security parade down Pennsylvania Avenue, had been long and tense. After a welcome rest, however, we still had the evening television special *Celebrating America*, the last post-inaugural event. We received the rundown for *Celebrating America* directly from the Presidential Inaugural Committee shortly before the five-minute countdown to the start time of 20:30 ET. The letterhead bore a heraldic seal of the Capitol highlighting the words "Inauguration 2021" provided by BIDENINAUGURAL.ORG, and right below, the caption *STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL EVENTS HAPPEN*.

The program was divided into eight acts, beginning with Bruce Springsteen and Tom Hanks as host, and followed by several stellar performances. Still, nothing could top the astonishing revelation of talent the morning of the Inauguration by National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman and her poem "The Hill We Climb."

In a conference call with the producers, our four-strong Spanish-language interpreting

team hashed out a division of roles for the different speakers with an eye on consistency and contrast. All the while, we prepared as always for the unexpected (last-minute changes, pop-up speakers not on schedule, variations in the order of the different acts, and numerous interpreting challenges, from rapid exchanges and sharply different accents and idiolects to prayers, invocations, scriptural quotes, and of course poetry—not to mention the technical challenges of a five-way remote interpreting simulcast). We had worked out that one of the segments I would cover from Act VI bore the caption: "Lin-Manuel Miranda 'The Cure at Troy' poem reading." That was the first surprise.

I immediately recognized the title as the play by Northern Ireland's Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes*, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 1990. Interestingly, the work is not only a verse adaptation of the Greek tragedy, but also, in part, an interpretive translation. I quickly searched online to find some indication as to which verses of Heaney's play Lin-Manuel might have selected. I found a poem-length excerpt that included some of the most cited stanzas. I copied, pasted, and printed it, and proceeded to scribble a quick translation, side by side on the page, as a way of preparing for the fearful moment when I would be required to interpret a masterful poem at high speed, live for an audience of a million viewers, in the middle of a high-profile show. Well, it happened that the version I found was not quite the same as Lin-Manuel's selection—no surprise there—but was similar enough to be of great help and ultimately to pull me through.

The performance was changed without notice from Act VI to Act VII. It might have been switched because one of the presenters in either act was not ready or because the producers had changed the sequence to keep the momentum or to respond to the dramatic flow of emotions as it unfolded in real time. As a television event, the entire show was timed to the second. Running over the scheduled time was not an option, and it seemed they were running a bit behind, because Lin-Manuel hit warp speed for the latter two thirds of his recital. Even with my scribbled translation on hand, I had to leave out the last tercet in Lin-Manuel's recitation in order to keep to the time. Fortunately, in this masterful work, the last tercet I rendered was indeed the true, original, and powerful ending, with its last verse being, "Of new life at its term." In an original poem composed of five sextets and one tercet, Lin-Manuel's selection had added another tercet as an emphatic refrain: "It means once in a lifetime / That justice can rise up / And hope and history rhyme" –inferior in style to the original poem.

The real surprise, however, came when I searched further online. As it happens, President Bill Clinton had cited the famous verse, "And hope and history rhyme," in a 1995 speech.[1] Since then, these key verses have been cited every so often by public figures, but never the full sequence of stanzas as a stand-alone poem. And finally there it was: a video of Joe Biden reciting the poem, which became a powerful campaign ad that went viral, especially in Ireland.[2] The selection had been Biden's, not Lin-Manuel's, and I have to say that Biden's rendition was far superior, more expressive and heartfelt. The new President has recounted how he overcame his stutter by reciting poetry, and there it was, a masterful rendition of a masterful poem. I understood that I had to do full justice to both Biden and Heaney, and polish up my scribbles into the more thought-out translation that follows.

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1 President Clinton's Remarks in Londonderry (1995). President Clinton's Remarks in Londonderry (1995) - YouTube

2 *The Cure at Troy* by Seamus Heaney / Joe Biden for President.
The Cure at Troy by Seamus Heaney | Joe Biden for President 2020 - YouTube

The Cure at Troy

Human beings suffer
They torture one another,
They get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.

The innocent in gaols
Beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker's father
Stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
Faints at the funeral home.

History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave…
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing:
The utter, self-revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.
[It means once in a lifetime
That justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.]

by Seamus Heaney[3]

La cura en Troya

Los seres humanos sufren,
Se torturan entre sí,
Se hieren y endurecen.
No hay poema ni drama ni canción
Que corrija una injuria
Infligida y soportada.

Inocentes en galeras
Golpean juntos en sus rejas.
El padre de un huelguista de hambre
Se planta ante las tumbas mudo.
En velos, la viuda del policía
Se desmaya en el sepelio.

Dice la Historia, No esperes nada
de este lado de la tumba…
Mas entonces, una vez en la vida
La ansiada marejada
De justicia al fin se alza,
Y riman historia y esperanza.

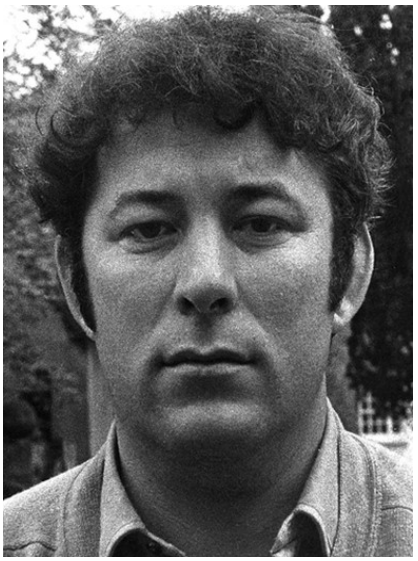
Espera, pues, al gran cambio de marea
En los confines de la venganza.
Cree que hay más costa
Que desde aquí se alcanza.
Cree en los milagros
Y en las curas y pozos de agua sana.

Llama milagro al sanarte:
La manifiesta, autorreveladora
Segunda mirada del sentimiento.
Si hay fuego en la montaña
O rayos y tormenta
Y un dios desde el cielo habla

Quiere decir que alguien escucha
El clamor y el grito de nacer
De una nueva vida a su término.
[Quiere decir que una vez en la vida
La justicia al fin se alza
Y riman historia y esperanza.]

por Seamus Heaney

3 Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990) 77-78. Excerpt of the poem reprinted with the kind permissions of the publishers Farrar, Straus and Giroux (New York) and Faber and Faber Ltd. (London), granted under a one-time, non-exclusive, non-transferable licence to use a specific selection from the above-mentioned poem in both the English language and its translation into Spanish by Dr. Camayd-Freixas throughout the world in issue No. 81 of ATA's literary magazine *Source*.



The poet Seamus Heaney in 1970.

Just as telling as Biden's selection are the verses he left out, those of the entire second stanza. Just in case, I had scribbled a translation for this sextet as well, whose polished version appears above. All the while, I was actually holding on to my chair, cringing at the thought of having to interpret this dark stanza, with mourners and a policeman's widow, being recited after the shameful and deadly insurrection at the Capitol, incited by the ex-president on Three Kings' Day, January 6, 2021, a day, as many have said, that will live in infamy. Yet, Biden's selection and video dated back to months before, toward the end of his campaign for what he called "the soul" of America. The stanza was left out, ostensibly because it pertained more to Heaney's Northern Ireland during the violent conflict known as the Troubles (1969-1998) than to Biden's America today—that was until that January 6. Now the stanza was an eerie fit. Fortunately, in a prophetic turn, Biden's message of national unity had won the day, and I was relieved. Similarly, where Heaney wrote "a god" in keeping with Sophocles' Greece, Biden recited "And God speaks from the sky." Lin-Manuel, working from the written original, kept it as "a god." The broadcast included a shadow video clip of Biden reciting this final additional tercet together with Lin-Manuel,[4] evocative—it seems to me—of a prophetic refrain sung by a Greek chorus. Sophocles' tragedy and Heaney's verses—most often quoted as a graveyard poem—became a statement of historical hope and rebirth, a celebration of new life for one nation, under God, indivisible.

Over the past few years, as a literary critic I have enjoyed translating, in my academic articles, difficult Spanish Baroque and Latin American colonial and avant-garde poetry into my second language, English. I confess it took me more than two decades of fluency and reading to actually begin to acquire a poetic sense of the English language, which I had known for its prosaic practicality, succinctness, and technological neologisms. My conversion began with the study of Shakespeare. In writing English criticism of Spanish classics I was forced to produce my own translations, not because published translations were not readily available, but rather because they totally missed the critical meaning and analysis of the work. I have often found the same problem in translated novels. Particularly in textual analysis and rhetorical criticism, the critic must often scrap existing translations and produce a new one that supports, and is supported by, the analysis. The takeaway for translators is the need to research critical viewpoints about the work or conduct a careful analysis and interpretation, for the translation to preserve the deeper meaning of specific words, phrases, and concepts associated with particular literary and artistic movements, in keeping with the context of both when the work was written and when it is read.

It is humbling for me to think that, academically speaking, the best English translation of *Eugene Onegin*, the Romantic verse novel published in 1825 by Alexander

4 Lin-Manuel Miranda Recites Poem by Seamus Heaney in Biden/Harris Inauguration 2021 (January 20, 2021).
Lin-Manuel Miranda Recites Poem by Seamus Heaney in Biden/Harris Inauguration 2021 - YouTube

Giotto, *Spes* (Hope) (fresco, 1306)

Pushkin (aka the Russian Shakespeare) was neither the "lexical" or literal one produced by Nabokov in 1964—so close to the lexicon and syntax of the original that it preserves the meaning, allusions, and some of the wit but sacrifices idiomatic usage, meter, rhyme, and poetry—nor the "paraphrastic" version popularized by Charles Johnston (1977), which takes great liberties with the original to allow for modern usage, meter, and rhyme, but rather the felicitous compromise attained by Walter Arndt (1963, rev. 1978) despite relentless attacks by Nabokov. An accomplished scholar and polyglot translator, Arndt (1916-2011), a German, was actually translating from his fourth to his second language, with faithful meaning and adept meter, rhythm, and rhyme. Like I said, a humbling feat, although the principle was clear and simple: compromise.

In my case, I was translating into my native language after years of studying Hispanic and comparative literature. Easier? Of course. Easy? Not so much. A commonplace among poets since the Renaissance holds that language is a material harder to mold than the sculptor's stone. This is particularly true of the sonnet, whose strict structure imposes many constraints on both poet and translator. Seamus Heaney's verses, however, bear the mark of contemporary poetry: euphonic but flexible prosody (versification, rhythm and cadence, or patterns of stress and intonation), as well as free or semi-free verse, with flexible meter and a seemingly spontaneous formation and dissipation of rhyme, together with a reflective, quasi-conversational tone. This translates into fewer constraints and clears the way for more impactful ideas and images. Before the blank page a poet may still experience doubt, anguish, and even writer's block but also encounters fewer constraints and a higher degree of freedom. Not so the translator, for whom doubt, anguish, and block are mitigated because the source text is already someone else's completed creation, which in turn can become a source of great pressure and responsibility.

When translating contemporary poetry, I focus first on achieving a euphonic prosody, counting on meter and rhyme being more forgiving—and the reader hopefully more indulgent. Nonetheless, a prosody that sounds good in one language may not be so euphonic in another, as each language has its own natural rhythmic patterns. It bears noting that the *Oxford* online gives the following example: "The translator is not obliged to reproduce the prosody of the original"; that is, she must create her own. To begin with, English accentuation is based on vocalic quantity, that is, the stressed vowel is elongated, and a word may have a primary and a secondary stress. Spanish, on the other hand, has a tonal accent, meaning that the stressed vowel, while remaining short, receives a stronger illocutionary force. As a result, English meter is measured in feet of two, three, or four syllables, covering all twenty-eight possible

combinations of short and long vowels, with iamb, trochee, spondee, dactyl, anapest, and ionic among the most common. Spanish meter is measured by syllabification, simply counting syllables. English is more legato while Spanish is more emphatic and staccato. Yet stress patterns, always organized into feet, form the basis for rhythm and prosody in virtually all languages. In contemporary poetry, the strict meter of old has been superseded by prosody, the making and breaking of rhythm. Variations in stress patterns are achieved by word choice, phrasing, and syntactic flexibility.

In my translation of Heaney, I was able to capitalize on the ability of Spanish syntax to begin the sentence with a verb. Thus the strongly emphatic "*riman historia y esperanza*." I also inverted the terms "hope and history" for the sake of prosody, but also to induce a rhyme with *venganza*, *alcanza*, and *alza*, all a matter of choice. I could not preserve the alliteration of "hope" and "history," which Heaney turns into rhyme, a masterful poetic irony, which is at once a self-reflective commentary on contemporary poetry, where rhyme itself is a choice, as in his consecutive end-of-line rhymes: "self-healing," "self-revealing," and "feeling." I had to settle on placing my rhymes in a different stanza. I would like to say I had a reason: Heaney's rhyme pattern would not have been the most elegant in Spanish, which is true, but in all honesty I simply did not have much choice. In terms of images and concepts, I really struggled with the verse, "Of new life at its term," because of its great ambiguity and irony. "Full term" is of course the end of pregnancy and the beginning of a new life, but also, perhaps more so in Spanish, the word "*término*" alludes to the end of life. I tried various options without success—"*una nueva vida que germina*," "*que ha llegado a término*," and several others—in an attempt to emphasize the beginning and not the end of life, something more in keeping with the inaugural celebration, but eliminating the ambiguity would have only impoverished the poem's deeper meaning. As a rule, whenever

Goya, *La Verdad, el Tiempo y la Historia* (History witnessing Time revealing the Truth) (oil on canvas, 1814)

I find myself in such predicaments, I simply go for the literal option, sticking as closely as possible to the original. A technique perhaps, but in truth I just do not want to be held responsible for the change, as if I were saying: "Blame it on the author. I'm just the translator." Above all, I was afraid to unfold the full meaning of "new life at its term," that is, a new life at the end of life. A new chapter in history is certainly a new beginning. At the same time, the hope that "rhymes" is the universal hope for an afterlife. I was hesitant to put words in Biden's mouth, namely that his new Administration was like life after death. Although, come to think of it, that might just be exactly what he meant. In any case, I was literal, and Biden for the most part was too. There is no choice but to blame it on the author.

A final commonplace, this time owed to Robert Frost, declares: "Poetry is what is lost in translation." The translator would disagree. Translation is re-creation. It is surprising to see just how much translation and politics rhyme. Ultimately, both are irreparably based on tense and reluctant compromise.

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SPECULATIVE FICTION: The Future Happens Everywhere

By Sue Burke

Last year, award-winning Spanish author, editor, and friend Cristina Jurado asked me to translate her short story "Abrazar el movimiento" into English [Embracing the Movement]. As soon as I read it, I enthusiastically said yes: an intense science fiction story whose beautiful images hide horror.

Like any translation, at least one word caused problems, and it came in the first sentence: *No somos tan diferentes, forastera*. "We are not so different…*forastera*." That word was used throughout the story, and I had to get it right.

It means, more or less, stranger or outsider, specifically a female one, and the female sense mattered in the story. After some research, I selected *sojourner*, a female name established by Sojourner Truth, born Isabella Bomfree, who chose it because she felt called to travel and testify. Better yet, Sojourner was the name of a Mars rover, and the character in Cristina's story is also exploring space.

The next step took a satisfying turn. Cristina submitted the story to science fiction magazines, and *Clarkesworld* published it in the June 2021 issue. We were ecstatic to have it in an award-winning venue (which also paid us nicely), but not entirely surprised. Like many science fiction and fantasy publications, *Clarkesworld* welcomes and even seeks out translated works.

Several years back, the community of speculative fiction (the genre that includes science fiction, fantasy, and horror; confusingly, it often refers to itself simply as science fiction or SF) made a commitment to be more inclusive of works from around the world, including translations. There is a close-knit SF community. One way it meets is at the World Science Fiction Convention, or

*"*The Pillars of Creation*" of the Eagle Nebula*

Worldcon, held somewhere around the globe each year. Its highlight is the presentation of the Hugo Awards, science fiction's most prestigious prize, chosen by readers.

The awards have reflected this inclusive interest. The Three-Body Problem by Liu Cixin, translated from Chinese by Ken Liu and published by Tor Books, won the 2015 Hugo Award for Best Novel. "The Day The World Turned Upside Down" by Thomas Olde Heuvelt, translated from Dutch by Lia Belt and published by *Lightspeed Magazine*, won the 2015 Hugo Award for Best Novelette. "Folding Beijing" by Hao Jingfang, translated from Chinese by Ken Liu and published by *Uncanny Magazine*, won the 2016 Hugo Award for Best Novelette.

Last year's Worldcon emphasized a global view. Called Discon III, it was held in Washington, D.C., from December 15 to 19, 2021, with 2,300 (masked and vaxxed) members in attendance and with more members attending on-line. Panels included "Sin, Sine and Cosine in African SF," "Solarpunk: A Positive Future" (solarpunk originated in Brazil), "Non-European Vampires," and four panels on translation.

Apex Book Company and *Apex Magazine* have been publishing translations for years. Francesco Verso, an award-winning Italian author and publisher, offers a strong argument in favor of translated SF in a guest editorial for the December 2021 issue of *Apex Magazine*. The power of English-language authors around the planet can drown out voices in other languages, he writes, even in their own countries. He asks:

> What happened to all the other futures? What happened to representations of the world that do not conform to current standards, to stories that are different at their roots because they express customs and traditions that are historically distant, alien, and not aligned with the needs of global publishing?

Science fiction drawn from a wider global context, Verso says, can "explore the elusive contours of all those futures that have been denied and neglected, ignored, and forgotten, to try to improve our present."

While all venues for SF accept translations, some explicitly say so, and others even seek it out. The magazine *Strange Horizons* founded the quarterly magazine *Samovar* in 2017 to publish fiction and poetry in both their original language and English translation. "We showcase the work both of writers and also translators, whom we have to thank for opening doors to new worlds," the magazine's guidelines say.

Constelación is a quarterly bilingual Spanish-English speculative fiction magazine "with the goal of amplifying the voices of Latin America and the Caribbean."

Future Science Fiction Digest seeks translations and stories by authors for whom English is not their first language or who reside outside primarily English-speaking countries. Its editor-in-chief, Alex Shvartsman, an author and translator himself, says he's seen a surge of interest in translated fiction, both short- and long-form. "Readers are eager to discover fresh voices and perspectives from across the globe," he says, and science fiction readers are used to thinking differently:

> A good speculative story often demands flexibility of thought; it asks the reader to accept complicated what-ifs and unusual worlds; to embrace alien settings and intricate magic systems. Fortified with that training, readers have far less trouble understanding concepts and naming conventions from another contemporary human culture. As such, there's less pressure to over-explain or oversimplify, less need to rely on a footnote or another editorial intrusion. The reader is capable of—and eager to—do more of the heavy lifting.

Shvartsman's biggest challenge, however, is sourcing material from languages he doesn't speak:

> To solve this, I've developed a network of international editors, critics, and translators. We strive to keep each other informed of the exciting developments in our respective language spheres: award nominations, new stories and authors generating buzz, etc. I ask translators to provide brief synopses of the stories they're pitching, and I'm always open to considering unsolicited translations. I also pair our international selections with at least one story per issue from a well-known author (be they an Anglophone or international writer) to help generate excitement about the issue and draw readers to material from the authors they don't already recognize.

He says the appetite for translation is voracious, and he hopes to see many more

translations in the near future. "It is more a matter of logistics and funding to bring translations to light. Thankfully, crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter and Patreon are helping prop up independent projects, and we're seeing some increased interest in corporate sponsorship as well."

Rachel S. Cordasco is a little less sanguine but no less enthusiastic. She has a PhD in literary studies, is an editor and translator, and in 2016, Cordasco started SFinTranslation.com, which tracks all translated speculative fiction available in English.

Despite the commitment to being more inclusive globally, she contends:

> From what I can see based on what's being published in English translation these past few years, nothing has really changed. The Anglophone genre awards have opened up just a little bit to SF in translation (SFT), but they're still dominated by English-language fiction. Smaller publishers are still the main sources of SFT.

After a peak in 2017-2018, the number of works published has been falling slowly, but she doubts it will return to the low levels of the pre-2000 era. "Despite this, SFT is being discussed more in genre circles—at conventions, in magazines, etc.—and more markets are encouraging submissions of translated genre texts."

Cordasco also points out:

> Interestingly, some places that publish mostly translated fiction (Open Letter, New Directions, etc.) are the same places that publish SFT, though the latter are usually not marketed as such. Unfortunately, literary fiction and genre fiction in the US, specifically, seem to suffer from the same problem: the fact that American readers don't seem as interested in translated books.

Lanternfish Press is a small publisher whose editorial director, Christine Neulieb, says is considering a venture into translation because that would fit well with its literary goals:

> Lanternfish searches for fiction of the 'rare and strange.' In more practical terms, that means literary fiction with strong speculative elements or speculative fiction with tone or structure that's unusual for the genre. This kind of genre-blending was rare in American fiction until recently, but it's been common outside the US for a long time. Elements of the surreal or magical occur with high frequency in international fiction.

Neulieb has faith in readers:

> I think that the work we and many other small presses have done to build a readership for not-wholly-realist writing has paved the way for more translations of such works. Personally, I have a ton of love for the Latin American magical realist tradition, and I always have it in the back of my mind as I'm building my list. How can I create more space in my own language for that kind of magic?

Cordasco is also hopeful, and praises magazines like *Clarkesworld*, *Future: Science Fiction Digest*, and *Samovar* for offering translators fair payment, which should encourage more translated submissions:

> It's great to see publishers like Luna Press, Rosarium, Restless Books, Angry Robot, Apex, Twisted Spoon, and others bringing out exciting SFT over the past few years. And though the two major publishers of Japanese SFT (not including manga and light novels) have closed this past year, hopefully others will spring up to fill the void.

Based on experience, however, I can add that, while US-based publishers and editors will accept translations, they might not understand how overseas payments work. I've also had to explain that translators often hold the copyright to the translation and must grant permission for its use, and that they should be credited in the same way as the original author. Still, editors seem happy to learn.

Cordasco remains optimistic:

> In terms of future interest in SFT, those of us who read, translate, and review it should continue doing so and writing about it whenever we can. We should propose these books for our libraries and suggest panels at conventions. We can add SFT to little free libraries and recommend these books to our friends. Eventually, more people will see the richness that SFT offers and become obsessed like we are!

Neulieb has hopes, too:

> I look forward to seeing a more globally interconnected literary world. Variety of perspectives is one of the greatest gifts fiction has to offer. Taking the time to read a book in translation means seeing life for a while through the eyes of someone immersed in a culture, landscape, language, and history different from your own; that kind of seeing builds empathy like nothing else. It's a fundamental part of the straying across boundaries that Lanternfish Press strives for.

I share their enthusiasm, and so do my Spanish friends Cristina Jurado and Sofia Rhei, whose writing I've also had the pleasure to translate. We're working on a project, *Todos los demás planetas* [All the Rest of the Planets]. We've put out a call for speculative fiction stories whose theme and language explore and move beyond binary gender roles in a creative, nonconforming way. Some of those stories will be chosen for publication in the Spanish magazine *SuperSonic*, and we'll choose one for me to translate into English.

Then we'll shop it around to try to bring English-language readers a boundary-crossing story that comes from elsewhere in the future.

Luke Leafgren *is an Assistant Dean of Harvard College. He has published five translations of Arabic novels and received the 2018 Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation for his English edition of Muhsin Al-Ramli's* The President's Gardens.

Najwa Barakat *was born in Lebanon in 1961. After receiving a degree in theatre at the Fine Arts Institute in Beirut, she moved to Paris and studied cinema at Le Conservatoire Libre du Cinéma Français. She has hosted cultural programs produced by Radio France Internationale (RFI), the BBC, and Al Jazeera, and is the author of seven novels as well as the Arabic translator of Albert Camus's notebooks. She lives in Paris.*

EXCERPT: *Mister N* by Najwa Barakat

Translated and presented by Luke Leafgren

When Sa'id came in and greeted him, Mr. N's hair was still wet, and he was still wearing his white, short-sleeved undershirt. Miss Zahra let Sa'id in after knocking lightly on the door and leading the way. Once inside, she hung a large plastic garment bag in Mr. N's wardrobe. She was still wearing Thurayya's scent, thought Mr. N, and for the first time, he felt a kind of hatred for her, a violent desire to kick her and push her out of the room. But she quickly withdrew without such encouragement, which was a good thing.

Sa'id was as tall as ever. He kissed his brother's head from above and remained standing over Mr. N, frowning. His face was wan and stubbly, which was unusual for him. He looked around at the room and put his hands into his pockets. "I hope being here is making you happy," he said. "Do they treat you well? You know your stay is costing me a considerable sum."

Mr. N nodded and was about to reply, "Which you're paying out of our father's estate!" But he checked himself. Oh well. Let Sa'id flex his muscles to show how important and influential he was.

"You'll have to get dressed," Sa'id went on. "I brought your suit from the apartment. I hope it still fits."

What did he mean? Get dressed for what? Didn't he know that Mr. N refused to leave the hotel these days? And that he hadn't done so for a long time now? Whenever Sa'id came by, he offered to take Mr. N out to lunch or dinner, and Mr. N refused the invitation just as consistently as it was offered. Sa'id didn't insist, and Mr. N didn't need to repeat his refusal. It happened once a year at most. Whenever Sa'id came to visit, he would never stay longer than an hour. The two of them spent half their time together watching television; the other half Mr. N spent listening to Sa'id talk about himself.

Mr. N blinked his eyes at his brother a few times before saying, "You know I don't go out. Why do you insist on inviting me somewhere every time you're here?"

Sa'id said, "Thurayya . . . She died the day before yesterday, and I've come to bury her."

Mr. N leapt from his chair, knocking it back, then tripped over it and nearly fell on top of it. He felt as though his spinal cord had been cut. He wanted to ask how and why and whether she had been alone. But Mr. N's mouth was dry, his tongue stiff as stone, and he was unable to move his lips, not even to utter a single syllable.

Sa'id went to the wardrobe and swung open its double doors. He took out the garment bag that Miss Zahra had brought in and threw it on Mr. N's bed. Silently, efficiently, like an automaton, he opened the zipper and removed a jacket, followed by some pants, a white dress shirt, a black tie, and finally a leather belt. Setting everything to one side, he returned the hanger and the bag to the wardrobe. Then he took a pair of socks out of a drawer, and pulled a pair of black shoes with laces from underneath the bed. That done, he took off his own jacket and slung it over a chair. He reached over and opened the window because sweat had started running down his temples and his armpits. A sour odor filled the room, the kind that would invade the apartment whenever Sa'id came back dripping from one of his workouts, muscles gleaming with perspiration. Thurayya would hurry to dry him off with a towel, calling for Mary to drop whatever she was doing and draw a bath for him. Yes, Thurayya, Sa'id's mother: she was the one who had died the day before yesterday, alone in the old folks' home, without any friends or family around her.

Sa'id took in the sight of Mr. N frozen in the middle of the room, staring at the floor. Then Sa'id checked his watch. If he allowed his little brother to move at his own pace, they'd be late for the burial. He took charge and began dressing him, just as he used to do when N was a child—and Mr. N let him do it, just as he'd done when he was that child. Sa'id threaded one of Mr. N's arms through a shirtsleeve, then he crossed behind his brother to do the other. Satisfied, he started on the buttons, moving from the top down.

When their father left them, so to speak, this was precisely how Sa'id had positioned himself to do up N's necktie. N was nine, Sa'id sixteen. Thurayya had been too preoccupied with the ideal forms her own grief might take—what to wear, how to do her hair, and whether to put a black scarf over her head or not—to pay much attention to her boys. Her stylist, Isa, hurried to find her, as did her tailor, Angel, and many of her friends—those she felt she could trust with the news of her widowhood, and who she thought would behave well under the circumstances. N sat alone in his room, not wanting to see anyone. Mary kept looking in on him from time to time, afraid for him. She brought him water to drink and used some to wipe his face. "God protect you, my dear," she said, concerned. "How could he not think about you . . . " And then, with tears, she added, "What have you done, poor Doctor!" N—though he was not called N at that time—had been sitting in the office with his father when it happened. It was a Sunday, one of those depressing Sundays that neither adults nor children know how to use. His father was behind his desk, his eyes

glued to a book lying open in front of him, and N's eyes were glued to his father.

At first, he thought his father was playing a game. He sometimes pretended to be a statue, then moved as soon as N came near, making N jump in fright and run away, squealing. N had snuck through the door and was sitting on the leather sofa in the corner, holding in his laughter with both hands and pressing his back into the cushions. The leather was smooth, soft, and cool on his bare legs below his shorts. It took some time before N decided that his father wasn't playing with him but was entirely absorbed in whatever he was reading. The waiting made N sleepy, and he dozed off for some seconds or minutes—he didn't know how long—until he was woken by the noise his father made by standing up and scraping his heavy chair over the tiles. N looked at the clock on the wall; the hands pointed to 10:25.

His father said nothing. Didn't sigh or hold his breath. He wasn't panting and his chest didn't heave. All he did was get up on a chair, open the window, and go through it. He stepped forward confidently, as though the air itself would hold his weight and let him walk through the void. He stepped and fell, just like that, fast and easy. N heard him hit the ground, and he went over to the window to look. His father was lying on the sidewalk, his face pointed up, eyes half-open, a thread of blood running from his nose and mouth. His right leg was folded inward; the left was straight but twisted at the ankle, broken. His arms too looked both straight and twisted. How had he managed to step out as he had and land on his back rather than his stomach? Had he twisted around in midair because he was afraid to meet the ground head-on? Or because he wanted to be found with his eyes open? Or because he wanted to give a farewell glance to where Thurayya was sleeping in the next room? In any case, with his exit through the window, N's father had left his life. He'd left Thurayya, Sa'id, and N. He had left his pain, his disappointment, his failures, and his sickness of heart. He had treated the ill and taken away their pain until his own blood went bad.

When the doorbell rang, and he heard movement and muffled shouts, N knew that someone had come to inform them. He ran to his room and locked the door. He didn't want to receive the news confirming that what he had witnessed wasn't a dream. His father hadn't hesitated for a second. He hadn't spent a single moment thinking about N, caring about the presence of a child on the sofa in the corner of the room. It was as though he had departed some time earlier, and all that remained was for his body to catch up. The doctor had been depressed for years, it was true. Thurayya went on shining brilliantly while her husband hesitated and faded. She felt compassion for him and treated him well, but she had begun living where he was not.

The people came in waves to offer their respects to the deceased. Thurayya extended her hand to those she knew and recoiled from shaking hands with those she had always shunned—which is to say, the ones who used to come to see her late husband, doctor to the poor. They came in wearing their cheap clothes and their worn-out shoes and offering generous prayers for the soul of the departed. Men in red, black, and white kaffiyehs; women, veiled and unveiled, carrying their children, some suckling their babes in full view of the other visitors. Porters, villagers, day laborers, refugees, and foreigners: they came timidly and left with eyes streaming.

Thurayya's cheeks reddened and her blood pressure rose. She gave a signal for Mary to get on with bringing out the coffee so that the masses might "get off my imported carpets and my velvet couches" as soon as possible. Then she made up her mind that, for the funeral on the following day, she would put out chairs on the landing, which was large enough to hold any number of people. The mourners would be many, and the apartment

Aerial view of Beirut, 4 June 1970

wasn't big enough for all of them. In the early morning, wooden and wicker chairs arrived in a truck that stopped at the entrance to the narrow street. They were carried up just four flights of stairs and arranged in rows, side by side, in front of small, low tables bearing ashtrays and boxes of white facial tissues. Thurayya directed Mary to greet new arrivals in front of the apartment at the top of the stairs, and to seat "those people" outside, on the landings, while respectable people of any standing would be brought into the salon. She summoned two waiters to take over Mary's normal role of preparing and serving coffee.

N went out to the landing, and no one in the salon called him back. He sat beside Mary, not talking and not telling anyone that he had witnessed his father's suicide. He hid the matter for a long time; he was still hiding it now. For his father to have killed himself in N's presence was too much to endure. For his father to have let go of N's little hand forever and jumped; for his father to have left N sitting in the corner, just like that, and jumped; for his father to know that N had no real family but him and yet still to jump; for his father to know that he was forever abdicating the role of N's father, ensuring that N would never again be a son to anyone for the rest of his life.

It wasn't that Thurayya treated his father badly, though it was very likely that she had a lover. After the doctor's death, however, Thurayya refused to marry her other man in order to spite the one who had dared to leave her, her and the two children—and also so it could not be said that the doctor had done himself in because of her, and so that no one could possibly find fault in her performance as a widow. She cried for days and looked good in mourning. She chose a black dress that left her

neck exposed, revealing its slender profile. She was splendid in her sadness, like some actress from the golden age of Hollywood. That's how she saw herself, and that's how others saw her. She kept her head held high. You could see the two tendons on the sides of her neck, long and taut, looking as though they alone were keeping her head from rolling off in sorrow.

Thurayya would always say that the war was what killed her husband. She would tell how he had escaped a terrible massacre, and how he made it home and told her he had seen the face of the killer, knew his name, and that even so, the man had not opened fire upon him. No! cried Mr. N in his heart: you are the one who killed him with your neglect and your betrayal. You are the one who sparked a war inside him.

Mister N is a literary psychological thriller that gradually reveals clues about the identity of the suffering protagonist. As Mr. N struggles to pick up the threads of his confusing reality and put some order into his life, the reader follows his journey through his mind and the various neighborhoods of Beirut. Mr. N believes he is living in a luxury hotel. Yet the hotel is a strange one, with peculiar neighbors and a maid who might be stealing his papers. Locations blur; time moves in a circle. Words have begun congealing into slime in the throat of Mr. N, a former novelist, and on top of everything, he somehow runs into Luqman, a violent character from one of his own novels, now flesh and blood and wandering the streets of Beirut as yet one more mystery to terrify Mr. N.

The passage excerpted here comes from the first third of the novel, shortly after the reader observes Mr. N's initial encounter with Luqman. In this passage, Sa'id, Mr. N's elder brother, arrives at the hotel and informs him of their mother's death. Without yet knowing much about Mr. N, we gather clues from their interaction, and we follow Mr. N's thoughts

back to the most formative moment of his life, when, at age nine, he sees his father calmly climb out the window of their fifth-floor apartment and fall to his death. Young N's eyes move from the open window to the clock. It is 10:25, and for the rest of his life, it will always be 10:25 for Mr. N.

N's mother Thurayya attributes her husband's suicide to the Lebanese Civil War, thinking in particular of a massacre the man witnessed at his medical clinic in one of the refugee camps. Mr. N sees things differently. "You are the one who killed him," he tells Thurayya in his mind, now that she too has died, "with your neglect and your betrayal." Mr. N sees the pain inflicted by family as being even greater than the horrors of war, and he believes his father was driven to his death by the very things that have caused N's wounds: Thurayya's neglect and betrayal of a mother's duty to love. Sa'id's visit rubs salt in the wound, for Sa'id's perfection is the reason Thurayya rejected Mr. N, and this elder brother is the one who received the extra love N was being deprived of.

Another theme of the novel is contemporary Beirut, a choking, dysfunctional city that continues to draw masses of the poor and refugees who can barely find a foothold for survival. Mr. N remembers Thurayya's disgust with the poor people who come to their apartment to pay their respects to the deceased doctor who spent his Saturdays treating them for free. "Outskirters" is the disparaging term that Thurayya formerly used for them, as Mr. N remembers in an earlier passage. Mr. N feels an affinity for his city's outskirters. He possesses the empathy that Thurayya and Sa'id lack, acquired perhaps through his own experience, his mother's disgust, or else through the love of Mary, the poor family servant who, for Mr. N, plays the role his own mother would not. The novel reflects a tension between the privilege of Mr. N's relatively prosperous circumstances and the pervasive suffering of poor laborers, immigrant women enslaved by their pimps, and refugees from the civil war in Syria.

To conclude on a translation note: *sukkan al-dawahi* is the transliteration of what Thurayya says in the novel, and "outskirters" is how I translated it. A more literal rendition, such as "suburb-dwellers" or even "suburbanites," would have been laughable due to the vast disparity between the upper-middle-class connotations of "suburb" in English and the reality of the slums, informal settlements, and camps that formed around Beirut to house the poor and refugees who have been pouring in for decades. When translating the term, I was excited to think I was coining the perfect word for Thurayya's disdain. The disappointment I felt, however, when discovering that several other writers had used it previously was mitigated by the pleasure of knowing that one of them was Richard Adams. I even enjoyed speculating about whether or not that word had left a faint mark on my mind when I read his prize-winning children's adventure novel about rabbits, *Watership Down,* some twenty years ago—which is the kind of question about language and the mind that Mr. N wrestles with throughout this novel.

— Luke Leafgren

Julia Sanches *translates from Portuguese, Spanish, and Catalan into English. Indie press And Other Stories has published her translations from all three languages—from the Portuguese,* Now and at the Hour of Our Death *by Susana Moreira Marques; from the Catalan,* Permafrost *by Eva Baltasar; and from the Spanish,* Slash and Burn *by Claudia Hernández, for which she won a PEN/Heim award. She has also translated works by Noemi Jaffe, Daniel Galera, and Geovani Martins, among others. Sanches's translation of* Boulder*, by Eva Baltasar, will be published by And Other Stories this August. She is a founding member of the Cedilla & Co. translators' collective, and currently lives in Providence, Rhode Island.*
http://juliasanches.com/

NEW TRANSLATION

An interview with Julia Sanches, translator of *Boulder* by Eva Baltasar

You were an agent for several years at The Wylie Agency, representing authors from around the world. How does that experience inform the work you do now as a literary translator?

I worked as an assistant, first for Jacqueline Ko, and then for Cristóbal Pera, where I kind of functioned as the US agent for our Spanish-language authors, with Cristóbal handling rights in Spanish-speaking countries. Wylie is where I learned almost everything I know about navigating the publishing industry, as well as the nitty-gritty of rights and contracts, enabling me to be a better advocate for myself and my fellow translators. I've also worked as a reader for editors and scouts and as a bookseller, which gives me a global view of the multi-step process of getting books into the hands of readers.

Boulder ***is the second novel by Eva Baltasar that you've translated and published with And Other Stories. What attracts you to Baltasar's work?***

Permafrost and *Boulder* are very different books; the former has a playful, chaotic energy, while the latter is much more restrained, simmering. Both novels are clearly still the product of a single author, though. Several things draw me to Baltasar's work—her sensibility, for example, as well as her unusual, poetic imagery. I also

appreciate the topics she writes about, and the angle she chooses to tackle them from. As far as I'm concerned, there can't be enough books about a woman's desire to not be a mother.

What challenges did you encounter while translating* Boulder? *Were you able to discuss these challenges with the author or the editor?

It takes a village to translate and publish a book, and I called in a couple of favors with this one. For a while, my colleague and friend Charlotte Whittle and I Zoomed every week over lunch to talk through translation conundrums, both mine and hers. I also Zoomed with Eva to discuss sentences or images I felt I didn't fully understand. What most people may not know about translators is that, unlike readers, we have to know exactly what's happening in a particular sentence/book; we can't gloss over anything, or nod off mid-sentence. Sometimes we have to know what something means more than the author herself.

With *Boulder*, I think I may have struggled most of all with brevity. Each paragraph reads a bit like an airtight stanza, and I had to make sure none of the words I chose spilled over of the seams.

How did you come to translate several books for And Other Stories, and what's it like working with the same publishing house over time?

I started translating for And Other Stories after winning a small translation competition held at a now-defunct translation summer school in London. For the competition, we had to translate a small sample of Susana's book. And Other Stories went on to acquire the book through one of their reading groups, which is how they sometimes scout new projects. So I guess it was kind of a matter of being in the right place at the right time, plus a smidge of talent?

It's been interesting to translate multiple books for a single press. I think we've grown

Eva Baltasar

to understand each other better, like you do in a long friendship. I hope that by now they've warmed to some of my translation quirks.

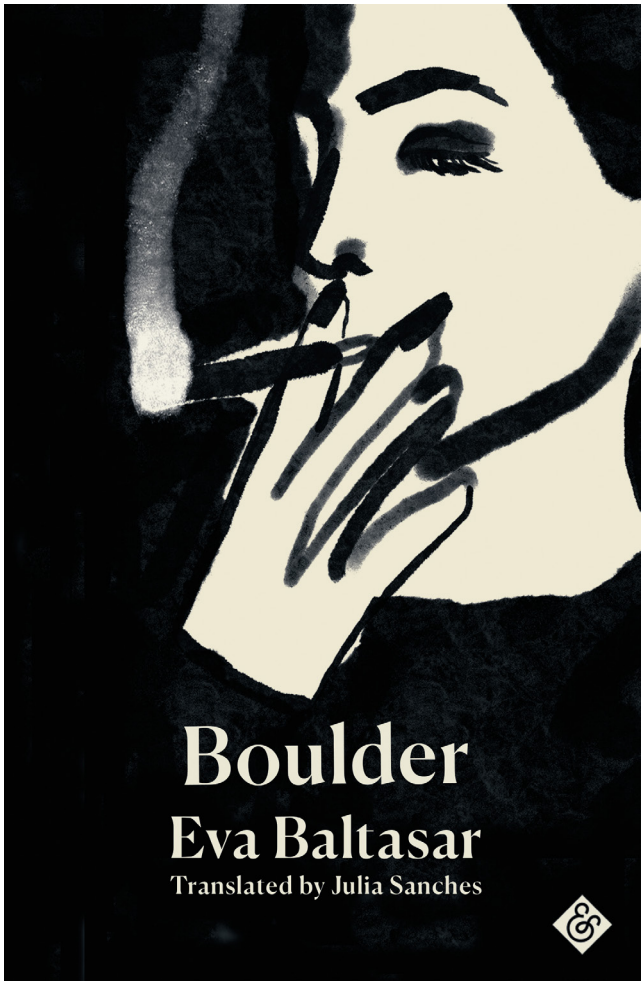
You're a strong advocate for literary translators through your participation in both the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) and the Author's Guild (AG), where you helped create the AG Literary Translation Model Contract. Can you tell us about this work and why it's so important?

It's important for uninteresting reasons: as things stand, it's incredibly difficult to make a living as a literary translator. This is the case anywhere in the world, even more so in the United States. Some of the issues we face are specific to the profession of the literary translator; others are systemic. It's not only translators who are suffering—writers also make less than they did decades ago. In my work with the Authors Guild, I try to focus on issues that are specific to literary translation. For example: there is no industry standard for the terms that translators should be entitled to, which means we often have to negotiate from the ground up, when not from below ground.

I could go on, but then I'd go on . . . For now, instead, I'll mention Jennifer Croft's campaign to get publishers to credit translators on the covers of the books they translate, which is proving successful. It's easy and free. Who knows, maybe it will even help dispel the myth that English-language readers don't buy translated literature, that they need to be duped. People the world over read books in translation. What makes English-language readers so special?

You spent several years living in Portuguese, Spanish, and Catalan-speaking areas, but you now live in the US. What do you do to maintain your fluency?

I was born in Brazil and moved a lot growing up. With my family I lived in the US, Mexico, and Switzerland. On my own, I lived in Scotland and Catalonia. I maintain my fluency by reading a lot, which I should be doing anyway, staying in touch with friends and family, and watching TV and movies. All this said, maintaining my fluency in English is more important, I think. That's the language I need to know better than the palm of my hand.



Alice Guthrie *is an independent translator, editor, and curator, specializing in contemporary Arabic writing. Widely published since 2008, her work often focuses on subaltern voices and activist art. Her translation of Gazan writer Atef Abu Saif's 'The Lottery' won the Jules Chametzky Translation Prize in 2019. She is currently compiling a major anthology of LGBTQIA+ Arabic writing, and teaches literary translation at the University of Exeter and the University of Birmingham. Her translation of Blood Feast: The Complete Short Stories of Malika Moustadraf was published by Feminist Press in February 2022.*

NEW TRANSLATION

An interview with Alice Guthrie, translator of *Blood Feast: The Complete Short Stories of Malika Moustadraf*

How did you get started in translation?

I became fascinated by it as an undergraduate, and managed to tweak my course into forming a unique degree with a substantial focus on translation, which is usually not available in the UK. Then gradually from that point on I began to get things published.

What made you decide to focus on the writers you have translated?

For those that I have chosen, it's been some quality in their writing and / or their subject matter that appeals to me, usually right from the very first exposure. Often this is some element of unconventionality or nonconformity (perhaps they are both the same thing?) — queerness or queering, linguistic experimentation, hybridity, slang and dialect, good politics, feminism, and questioning the status quo are some of the things that tend to catch my attention, although none of them alone will necessarily be enough to make me want to translate a given piece. But I am by no means always choosing writers to translate, as in reality much of the translation I do is commissioned pieces that are proposed to me. Of course I'd say no if I didn't like the text, but accepting someone else's suggestion is not the same as seeking something out myself and

Malika Moustadraf *(1969–2006) is a feminist icon in contemporary Moroccan literature, celebrated for her stark interrogation of gender and sexuality in North Africa.* Blood Feast *is the complete collection of Moustadraf's published short fiction: haunting, visceral stories by a master of the genre. A teenage girl suffers through a dystopian rite of passage, a man with kidney disease makes desperate attempts to secure treatment, and a mother schemes to ensure her daughter passes a virginity test. Delighting in vibrant sensory detail and rich slang, Moustadraf takes an unflinching look at the gendered body, social class, illness, double standards, and desire, as lived by a diverse cast of characters.* Blood Feast *is a sharp provocation to patriarchal power and a celebration of the life and genius of one of Morocco's preeminent writers.*

proposing it. I don't mean that in a negative way, as such — Malika first came into my life as a commission, and without that perhaps I wouldn't have ever found her.

Tell us about your personal journey of discovering Malika Moustadraf's work and then tracking down Moustadraf's peers and personal friends in order to find the original publishers.

I began working on Malika Moustadraf when I was asked to translate one of her stories for a Words Without Borders feature on Moroccan writers put together by Emma Ramadan. I was smitten by Malika's work from the start, but it was all out of print at that point. So I initially worked from these low-grade scans, which were actually kind of beautiful artefacts in their own right: whoever had made them had included their own painted fingernails in the image, which felt poignant. The disembodied hand of an unknown woman lingering in the text… Eventually I met the original publisher, Abdel Majid Jahfa of the Moroccan Short Story Research Group in Casablanca, and he very kindly gifted me his own copy of the book, since there were so few of them in circulation. Gradually I came to meet more of the people who had known Malika, and to work my way through their various versions of her life, and all the sources online, and piece together a version of her story. That narrative was unfolding for me alongside the work of translating her actual published work, which is why I dedicate so many pages to it in my translator's note in the book. I cannot claim to offer the definitive version of who she was and what happened to her, but I do at least offer a careful and thoroughly researched synthesis of what we know at the moment, which doesn't really exist anywhere else. So I'm proud of that. It's an act of friendship and memorial to her, and it's also activism, in a sense, as it's an act of resistance against the erasure of inconvenient women by the patriarchy.

What translation challenges did you face in translating* Blood Feast*? Were you able to

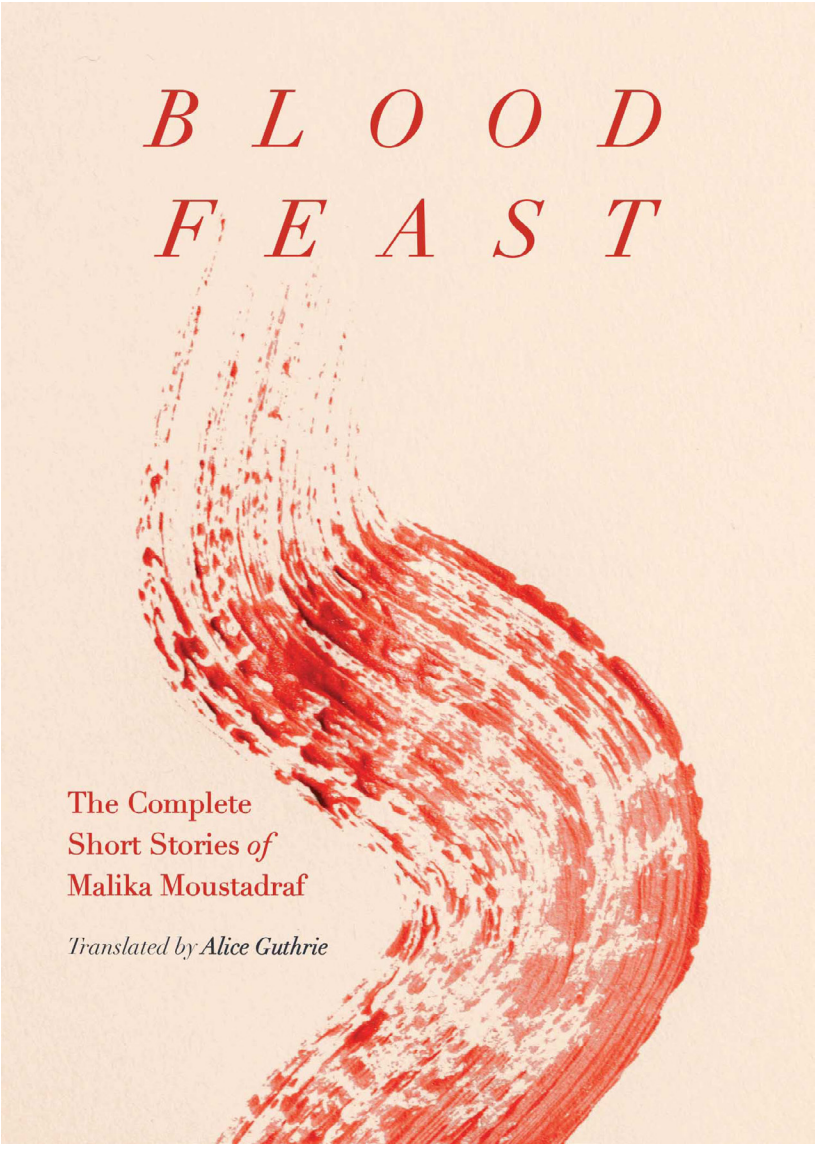
discuss these challenges with your editor or with other translators?

The main challenges I faced were around specifically Moroccan linguistic or cultural references, since Morocco is not where I studied my Arabic; I have never lived there, and I don't really speak Derija, the main spoken language there. Although Modern Standard Arabic is what Malika wrote in, like many writers in places lazily labelled by outsiders as 'Arab' or 'Arabic-speaking,' she also incorporated elements of the main spoken language into her writing, particularly in her later work. So I needed help with those, and with many of the cultural references. I've been spending lots of time in Morocco in recent years, and I have a strong network of trusted friends and colleagues there, so I was able to turn to them throughout the process. I actually did that formally, paying a friend of mine to work through the entire text with me, looking for any allusions and connotations I might have missed. That was a wonderful experience in its own right, and taught me so much about Morocco. If I hadn't already had that strong connection to Morocco (and specifically to Casablanca, where Malika was from and her work tends to be set) and the ability to work in that way, I would not have taken her work on. It would not have been appropriate. Without being hyperbolic, I do consider that way of working to be a move towards decolonizing the translation process.

Then later in the process I was super lucky to work with the outstanding editor Lauren Hook at Feminist Press (and stellar team): with Lauren I was able to have successive rounds of collaborative edits and input, almost more like a seminar at points. The text and I both benefited hugely from that. What was also so great was that I felt totally in control, that my work was being respected, but that it was being engaged with and lifted up by someone with a serious skill set. This was not just on a linguistic or stylistic level, either: when faced with sensitive issues around rendering pejorative terms, or the sometimes rather opaque language around gender nonconformity in the original, without access to the writer, it was essential to have a trusted ally in my editor, someone to work through the decisions from a solid and well-informed ethical position. This is by no means a given in all presses, as we know. I think the Feminist Press are a wonderful example of practical feminism, in their whole approach to publishing. The feminist nature of the content is just one part of what makes the press feminist.

Tell us about the anthology of LGBTQIA+ Arabic writing that you are editing. How does your work as a translator inform your work as an editor (and vice versa)?

I have been working as an editor of other people's texts for years now, both monolingually (on English original texts) and bilingually (comparing a translation to the source). I find it very rewarding, and it has massively improved my own work as a writer and translator, and enhanced the experience of being edited myself. But editing in the other sense, the curatorial and commissioning sense, is not something I've done on this scale until now. I've programmed lots of literary events at a high level, which is similar to anthology compilation in many ways — putting texts into conversation with each other, framing them, offering them to an audience. And I've selected and presented various smaller compilations of texts, for places like Words Without Borders. So in that sense it feels like a natural progression to research and present a whole book. I'm hugely enthralled by the project: I've been building it slowly for years now, and I have an incredible list of diverse writers and translators from



across the South West Asian and North African (SWANA) region and diaspora making such a range of wonderful work in many different languages. Some of the texts I have are real underground stuff that's never been seen before outside of very small queer circles, which has been particularly exciting to translate and edit. What's also thrilling is that the book will be published simultaneously in English and Arabic. The idea of this expansive collection reaching people far and wide in various languages is important to me. I think it will be a solid advocacy tool, and a welcome addition to the global queer conversation, as well as a new window into contemporary Arab(ic) nonconformist culture in general (since queer people are often part of the vanguard in other ways, too). It's going to be a fantastic book, inshallah.

Suffering, tragedy, art, and the translation of three Ancient Greek words: *pathos*, *katharsis*, and *ekstasis*

By Patrick Saari

La douleur est la noblesse unique

Baudelaire

Grief and bereavement (*pathos*), Käthe Kollwitz, *Woman with a dead child* (1903)

The Greeks of Antiquity believed that the expression of emotion (*pathos*) could lead to physiological reactions of purgation and purification (*katharsis*) that cleansed the body, brought peace of mind, and heightened consciousness. The art of tragedy could trigger this *pathos,* which in itself had a morbid, disease-like element to it, unless it was released through *katharsis* to secure psychic health. It is misleading to refer to "pathos" as if, over the centuries, it had kept its original Greek meaning, because the word in English now means "evoking pity or compassion," which is part of the process from *pathos* to *katharsis,* but is neither the one nor the other. Likewise, the words "emotion" and "emotional" are now understood to mean, or at least denote, a powerful feeling, expressiveness, and extroversion, as well as melodrama, flamboyance, and histrionics, not to mention mawkishness.

In the word *pathos* (***πάθος***), however, the Greeks brought together not concepts, notions, or ideas, let alone attitudes, reactions, or personality traits, but the universally lived experiences of sorrow, fear, pain, illness, agitation, commotion, confusion, clouding of the mind and reason, as well as passion and pleasure. The English words "pathology" and "pathological," and even "pathetic," as well as the suffix *–path*, as in sociopath and psychopath, where it means disease, disorder, or suffering, better embody what was originally meant by *pathos*.

According to the twenty-first century's preeminent reference work for the translation of key European philosophical terms, the *Dictionary of Untranslatables,* the translation of the Greek word *pathos* into English is "emotion, feeling, passion," as it is in Italian (*emozione, passione*) and French (*passion, émotion*). By contrast, in Latin, a language closely connected to Greek civilization, the translations for *pathos,* in addition to *emotio* and *passio,* include *morbus* and *perturbatio,*

Love and desire (*pathos*), Camille Claudel, *Vertumnus and Pomona* (1903)

which highlight all that is morbid, diseased, and disturbing about *pathos*.[1]

In the classic dictionary *A Greek-English Lexicon* by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (first published in 1843), the first translation of *pathos* is "that which happens to a person or thing," followed by "incident, accident" and also "what one has experienced."[2] In that sense, it is the contrary

1 Giulia Sissa, "Pathos," *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 745 (see full entry pp. 745-749).

2 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940). Definitions drawn from Plato (*Theaetetus*), Herodotus (*The Histories*), and Aeschylus (*Agamemnon*), respectively. Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University: https://tinyurl.com/w42k2uk

of what one does actively in life, reacting consciously and purposely. *Pathos* has a passive element to it, the first experience of which is being conceived and born, in other words, constant unrelenting exposure to life and the inevitable vulnerability, perceptions, and sensations that come with it. It is therefore universal, which is maybe why it is so closely connected to art: it does not leave anybody behind. It encompasses all that is endured as a result of being born into the world rather than what is tackled intentionally, with free will, drive, agency, and freedom of choice. *Pathos* comes not at our bidding, but from the experience of life itself.

Herodotus encapsulates well Greek understanding of *pathos* in this passage describing one of the customs of a Thracian tribe, the Trausi: "When a child is born, the kinsmen sit around it and lament all the ills that it must endure from its birth onward, recounting all the sorrows (*pathos*) of man."[3]

Although Christianity and Buddhism believe suffering has different causes and propose different approaches to ending it, both religions agree on its inevitability and its pivotal truth for humankind. Less has been said, however, about how pivotal suffering was to the Ancient Greeks. In her chapter for the book *Perspectives on Human Suffering,* the classicist Edith Hall notes that, in Greek: "There is a large range of words traditionally translated into English as 'suffer' or 'suffering'—certainly more than available in English, as a glance into any Ancient Greek-English dictionary will demonstrate." She then provides a score of frequently used Greek words for suffering, including *pathos* among those at the top of the list. She also reminds readers of the centrality of suffering to the Athenian mindset of the Classical period (fifth century B.C.) when the Persian and Peloponnesian wars were being fought, bringing with them, as all wars do, added intensity to life's pain and sorrow. She points out that Hippocrates, Socrates, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides confronted "very directly, the problem of suffering in human life":

> [A]ll three media [Socratic philosophy, Hippocratic medicine, tragedies] are unanimous that suffering is regrettable, largely random, has nothing whatsoever to recommend it, and needs to be cured or prevented altogether. Ancient Greeks did not believe that suffering ennobled the sufferer. They did not believe that suffering was distributed providentially.[4]

As for *katharsis* (***κάθαρσις***), apart from its specific salubrious function in tragedy, it was used in many different contexts. In politics, it meant the elimination of enemies or elements contrary to good governance, oftentimes requiring banishment or assassination (akin to our own words "purge" and "cleansing" of not too distant memory). In education, it meant ridding the mind of preconceived notions, prejudices, and opinions to allow the assimilation of ideas and facilitate learning. In religion and philosophy, it meant separating the soul from the body to attain elevated spheres of spirituality. But, in very concrete terms, it originally meant any type of daily bodily discharge:

> In Hippocratic medicine, *katharsis* was connected with the theory of the humors and names the process of physical purgation through which harmful secretions are expelled,

3 Herodotus, *The Histories* (Hdt. 54.), trans. A.D. Godley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920). Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University. https://tinyurl.com/uezyjfd See Greek original in *The Histories of Herodotus,* parallel English/Greek translation, G.C Macaulay (1890) at https://tinyurl.com/u3p3dem

4 Edith Hall, "Ancient Greek Response to Suffering: Thinking with *Philoctetes,*" chapter 13 in Jeff Malpas and Norelle Lickiss, eds., *Perspectives on Human Suffering* (Springer: New York, 2012), 156. https://tinyurl.com/t7oq95a

> naturally or artificially, through the upper or the lower orifices: the term can designate not only purging as such, but also defecation, diarrhea, vomiting, and menstruation.[5]

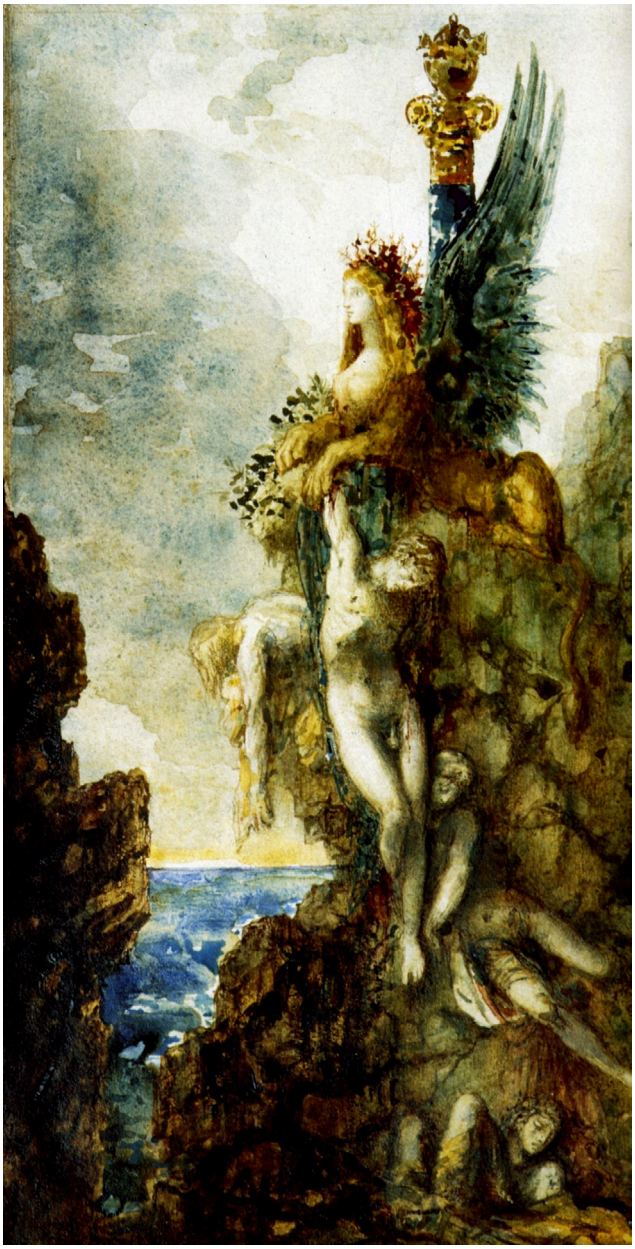
In life, *pathos* as defined by the Greeks can lead to disease, death, and destruction, thus preempting the possibility of transcending experience through *katharsis*, but in art both *pathos* and *katharsis* can function at a far remove from the risks and dangers of life itself while exerting a beneficial impact. In *Oedipus Rex, King Lear*, and *Romeo and Juliet,* no actor or spectator is ever injured, killed, poisoned, jailed, or blinded, nor is anyone falling so madly in love they will commit suicide if unrequited in their passionate need to be together.

Greeks of the Golden Age could still remember the tribal rites of sacrifice their ancestors had performed to appease gods, kings, and demonic beings, usually involving lambs, rams, bulls, calves, boars, and goats, but also humans: Agamemnon sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia, Athenian youths periodically devoured by the Minotaur, and the suicide of Menoeceus sacrificing himself so that his father King Creon of Thebes would win the war of Argos are the most salient examples in the literature. But they had come to perceive the failings of that archaic system, imbued with fear and violence, as well as the self-defeating loop in which it trapped all, both individually and collectively. Through the art of tragedy, the harshness of life and death is transcended and sublimated, without being repressed, forgotten, or sanitized and, of course, without any real blood ever being shed. The Ancient Greeks provide a clear record of that "transition" from chthonic dreads and dangers to the potential enlightenment that art can afford us, a sort of rite of passage into maturity, understanding, and, above all, survival.

5 Barbara Cassin, Jacqueline Lichtenstein, and Elisabete Thamer, "Catharsis," *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, 126 (see full entry pp. 126-129).

Scheherazade promises her husband, the King of Kings, to tell him a story if he spares her life. He responds: "Okay, let's hear it!"

And that is the beauty behind the Arab epic *One Thousand and One Nights,* whose frame story can also be found in Indian, Persian, and Turkish sources, as well as Ancient Greek ones. It is Scheherazade's artful storytelling that destroys the old tribal order of a virgin bride being sacrificed every night and breaks the vicious circle of the Persian king's paranoia and cruelty, repeated deaths, and the impending annihilation of his kingdom by the death and flight of his own people (familiar echoes of current affairs). Scheherazade's steadfast dedication to art and stories is far more than just clever. Apart from the deep satisfaction gained from a good tale, a benefit never to be slighted, it also brings love, forgiveness, peace, and stability. Above all, it leads to liberation and survival of those targeted for sacrifice, their families, the kingdom, and by extension survival of the species.



Gustave Moreau, *The Victorious Sphinx* (1886)

The story of the Sphinx, a demonic eagle-winged and snake-tailed lion-woman follows the same pattern. It also involves a besieged city (Thebes) whose young men (instead of virgin brides) are being killed. And its liberator is Oedipus. The Sphinx stands at the threshold of two world orders, one that is predatory, primordial, drenched in blood, the other cognitive, compassionate, and creative. The Sphinx knows deep down that her time is up, but she needs someone to break the spell so that she can devour herself or hurl herself from the cliff on which she stands in a ritual self-sacrifice emblematic of the murky underworld she belongs to. Oedipus is clever, wily, imaginative, as is Scheherazade; they both eschew violence and force. They outwit their adversaries rather than overpower them. Instead of getting caught up in the diseased, chronic cycle of violence (*pathos*) they break away from it by transcending it (*katharsis*).

The Ancient Greeks and present-day psychiatrists would understand T.S. Eliot when he wrote:

> Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.[6]

But psychiatrists would prefer the term "affect" or "trauma" (or even stress, anxiety, disorder) over "emotion" and they would rather speak of "discharge of affect" or "abreaction" (or the catch-all term "therapy") instead of "escape," and the Greeks, of course, would stick to *pathos* and *katharsis*, whereas Dante, for example, opted for *inferno* and *purgatorio*.

Art is closely linked to emotion but it is not emotional. It uses emotion. It elicits emotion. It deals with emotion. It resolves emotion. It understands emotion. Emotion is the fuel for what many believe is art's ultimately redemptive and restorative power. But art is not emotion itself, nor does it promote emotion for the sake of emotion. And here it is not "emotion" as commonly understood in English, but *pathos* that is being referred to. The most that can be said of art, especially good art, all the more so great art, is that it somehow engages with *pathos.*

6 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920), Poetry Foundation website and blog, article originally posted October 13, 2009 https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69400/tradition-and-the-individual-talent

But what comes after *pathos* and *katharsis*? Is it Dante's *paradiso*? Is it just feeling good, relieved, at peace? The Greeks had another word, which has undergone many mutations over two and half millennia. It is *ekstasis* (***ἔκστασις***), which literally means "standing" (*stasis*) "outside" or "aside" (*ek, ex*). In other words, it meant "sticking out" and "movement outwards." It also had its origins in Hippocratic medicine where it simply meant a displacement of the bones of the "ball and socket" joint of the hip,[7] now called a hip dislocation or, in children, developmental dislocation (dysplasia) of the hip (DDH).

But because the term *ekstasis* was hijacked by the Counter-Reformation (1545-1648) to describe the exciting otherworldly experiences of mystics after they had subjected themselves to corporal deprivation and demanding spiritual exercises, "ecstasy" for hundreds of years was understood to mean spiritual ravishment, mystical trance, divine abandonment, as in Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Theresa*. The chemical version of ecstasy, the recreational psychoactive drug MDMA, takes us even further away from what *ekstasis* originally meant.

Long before the emergence of Christianity and Europe, however, when *ekstasis* started being used as a metaphor for a state of mind instead of a hip dislocation, it described not a frenzied removal from reality, let alone a chemically induced hallucination, whether pleasurable or nightmarish, but a slight separation from what is happening, a "distraction" or "entrancement." The more widely used word today might be "detachment" or even "disengagement," but one where there is no loss of contact with either physical reality or mental balance.

And later when *ekstasis* found its way into the New Testament, in the story of Jesus

Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* (1652)

performing a miracle, it was translated into English as "astonishment" or "amazement," carrying with it the added sense of "wonderment":

> Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her… "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they [her parents and bystanders] were overcome with amazement [*ekstasis*] (Mark 5.42).[8]

Although there is no conclusive evidence that *ekstasis* was specifically translated either as "detachment" or as "wonderment" or that it was viewed as the ultimate outcome of being plunged into *pathos* and released by *katharsis* as a result of experiencing a Greek tragedy, *ekstasis* can be construed as that fleeting,

7 Hippocrates, "On the Articulations," Part 56, *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates,* ed. and trans. Charles Darwin Adams (New York: Dover, 1868). https://tinyurl.com/wtamd4w

8 Gospel of St. Mark (5:42), The New Testament in the original Greek. Text revised by Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort (New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, 1885). Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University. https://tinyurl.com/sbhmsaq

modest presence of mind triggered by true art. Of greater interest, however, is the close kinship that the *Dictionary of Untranslatables* has found between *ekstasis* and the term of Latin origin *sublimis* (the sublime) as expounded by the Hellenistic philosopher Longinus (first century after Christ).

> A sublime passage does not convince the reason of a reader but takes him out of himself [*eis ek-stasis*]… a sublime thought… illumines an entire subject with the vividness of a lightning flash.[9]

This brief passage highlights how *ekstasis* and *sublimis* are involved in art's far less modest ambition of transcending the self, of establishing contact with "otherness" as we might now say in the twenty-first century, of breaking away from the boundaries of "persuasive discourse" and sectarianism in order to reach for universal truths, and of cementing its convoluted but necessary role in the survival of humankind. And the Sublime, for centuries a key approach to understanding and creating art, is now in dire need of being reinvented for the complex Baroque times we are living in.

As for the even more ambitious intentions and benefits of art and the humanities, with their promises of enlightenment, peace, and civilization, it was the literary critic and philosopher George Steiner (1929-2020) who coined the rueful term "brutal paradox" to interrogate the capacity of art to "humanize man."

> The spheres of Auschwitz-Birkenau and of the Beethoven recital, of the torture-cellar and the great library, were contiguous in space and time. Men could come home from their day's butchery and falsehood to weep over Rilke or play Schubert. The Jeffersonian, the Arnoldian promise that the spread of education, together with the cultivation of the arts and sciences, would humanize man, would bring with them a civilization of politics had proved illusory. How could this be?[10]

He realized that great art and humanitarian achievements were oftentimes the handiwork of persons not merely flawed and selfish, but barbarically cruel and indifferent, and that the fictions of art could be enjoyments preventing rather than promoting compassion.

Words are always getting conventionalised to some secondary meaning. It is one of the works of poetry to take the truants in custody and bring them back to their right senses.

W.B. Yeats

9 Barbara Cassin and Jacqueline Lichtenstein, "Sublime *ekstasis,*" *Dictionary of Untranslatables,* 1093 (see full entry on "Sublime" pp. 1091-1096).

Gustave Doré, Dante and Beatrice gaze upon the Empyrean (highest heaven), Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto XXI

10 George Steiner, "Introduction," in *George Steiner: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 7-22: 10-11.

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