

# Notes from International Translation Day 2012

## State of the Nation

Christopher MacLehose  
Jonathan Ruppin  
Alexandra Büchler  
Boyd Tonkin  
Daniel Hahn

How can we measure progress? Is the Anglophone landscape still hostile to translated literature? The opening panel of this, the third International Translation Day, set out to evaluate the success of new programmes and initiatives now in place and also to look forward and ask what should/will happen in the future.

The changes implemented over the past three years have drastically improved the working lives of translators on a personal and professional basis. Daniel Hahn spoke of a mobilised and energised translation community thanks to new initiatives such as the BCLT mentoring programme, Emerging Translators Network and Translators Association Industry Days, to name a few.

Alexandra Büchler from *Literature Across Frontiers* talked about the ongoing research her organisation has done to find out how many books are published in translation today. The latest figures suggest that the number of translations has risen yearly but is far outstripped by the number of books being published on the whole. It is thought that translation actually makes up 2.5% of all publications but perhaps more promisingly 4.5% of literature, by which she meant fiction and poetry etc. Büchler called for a more rigorous assessment of how we collect this data and also the importance of knowing *what* is being published in translation and by *whom*.

What languages are being translated? Boyd Tonkin, literary editor of the Independent, talked about his experiences working with the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize and the different types of works that have been submitted over the past fifteen years. Although there has been an increase in the number of languages from which novels are translated, regrettably there are still those which are significantly under represented - particularly those of the Indian subcontinent.

Why have things not moved as quickly as expected? Christopher MacLehose talked about the difficulties faced by publishers in sourcing quality fiction from these under represented languages. The call was put out to find a Susanne Sontag for every region – in other words, someone that had an intimate understanding of the area to bridge the gap between foreign and UK based publishers. The Writers in Translation programme at English PEN currently dedicate small grants for a sample translation combined with a reader's report of work in foreign languages and are keen to support lesser translated languages that publishers may have limited access to. This will hopefully help broaden the selection of works available.

Has the market changed for the better? It would seem that the simple answer to this question is no. The majority of booksellers are unable to take risks with their buying, especially with competition from major online retailers such as Amazon who are able to cater to niche buyers. The book review sections in newspapers and magazines, which once championed writing in translation, are shrinking and in some cases disappearing altogether. So how are we to move forward?

Jonathan Ruppin, bookseller at Foyles, is optimistic. He sees this as an opportunity for booksellers to be more creative and called for individual branches to cater for a local market. His team at Foyles employ a number of strategies to promote writing in translation and spoke of a genuine passion for this type of literature amongst buyers and staff. The success of theme tables of books - Japanese fiction alongside Haruki Murukami's 1Q84, for instance - shows a genuine interest from buyers to explore the world around them. An experience which is often denied to them when shopping online.

# Getting Started in Translation

With Amanda Hopkinson and Rosalind Harvey.

## Introduction:

Amanda Hopkinson is a translator since 30 years. She translates from Spanish, Portuguese and French. She's the director of the British Centre of Translation. She is also a visiting Professor in Literary Translation at Manchester University and at City University, London.

Rosalind Harvey translates Spanish and Latin American fiction. She was a Translator in Residence at the Free Word Centre in 2011. She is one of the movers and shakers in translation and creating new spaces for new translators.

## Chair:

Could you first tell us who you are and how you got into translation?

**Amanda:** I've been a translator 30 years. I translate from Spanish, Portuguese and French. I've had positions as visiting Professor in Literary Translation at Manchester University and at City University, London. I'm also the director of the British Centre of Translation.

**Rosalind:** I'm a literary translator. How did I get there? Well, I did a BA in Spanish at UCL. After graduating, I took part in a foreign language workshop at SOAS.

There are Summer Schools for translation, where you do group translations. There's a lot of networking, and it's a lot of fun.

There I first met Anne McLean, who is a respected Translator from Spanish. We were working on translating short stories together, and our friendship and relationship as translators formed from that. I have now collaborated with Ann on translating three novels. I think collaborating really is the best way to do translation, no matter how experienced you are.

I did an MA in Literary Translation in Norwich, which gave me the theoretical basics. Doing an MA helps to make you really feel like you're a translator. It's also a way of backing up the decision to become a translator. It's a great way to make contacts as well.

It's a snowballing effect really, the more people you meet, the more people you meet.

I'm currently translating the second novel by Juan Pablo Villalobos.

**Amanda:** Things have changed a lot since I started. How did I become a literary translator and novelist? The first thing: I became a reader. I've been in three different Departments of Creative Writing, and it's astonishing how many people want to be writers without being readers. A translator is a book's closest reader! My advice is: read read read. It's YOUR work that's on the page.

However wonderful the original, if your translation is literal without being literature, then the original will not benefit from it.

You can approach a publisher, or a website or a blog, and say: Well, I discovered this book and I want to be its ambassador: I want to get it into the target language. Most publishers are receptive. You as an individual can target the publisher.

There is, for example, the International Short Story Award. The winner this year was Bulgarian writer Miroslav Penkov. He also wrote a book before that and there's a really different reception. It was turned down in the US, and found a publisher here in the UK.

Networking is really important! Publishers hold events, for example book launches. Familiarise yourself with the people. The more you do in person, the better. Everything personal makes a world of difference!

Don't ignore the cultural Institutes. France and Germany have them. Spain has the Cervantes Institute. These Institutes get substantial state funding. Finland also got on board. There has been a rise in Finnish translation, and also from Baltic countries. Be aware! Check their websites.

There are University courses now. These were not there when I started. I'm a history graduate and I co-opted for French. I did my PhD thesis about the French Revolution. Then I started translating history books.

In Warwick I piloted Military Translation.

There are Summer Schools now. There are courses in Manchester together with UCL, and courses in Edinburgh and Hong Kong.

Pick something, find a programme and ask yourself: Do you want to commit to it?

There are of course shorter courses as well. The Summer School at UEA brings in writers and translators. There are different languages. For example, one workshop is for translation into Italian. There are predominantly women in Italian translation, by the way.

A course was set up at Birkbeck 2 years ago. There are more languages, mostly fiction and some non-fiction, lots of hands-on practise.

There are also poetry translation competitions.

There is a wonderful paradigm: Condense language and all its meanings into the target language.

The European translation association do academic translations.

The Guardian also runs literary translation days. The Arvon Foundation does weekends and weeks away in the countryside, where you can focus on what you want to do.

RECIT (Réseau Européen des Centres Internationaux de Traducteurs Littéraires) is the European translation centre. They want to promote translation and interpretation. Go to their website.

If you want to have time away for translation, focus on translation! If the source text is Norwegian – maybe you can go to Oslo. Consider giving yourself the space to start work.

However, for most translations, you want to have at least an expression of interest from the publisher.

Don't ignore interpreters. Some interpret for VIP's, for the prime minister, for cultural figures. This gets very well paid. There are jobs available in Brussels, at the UN in Geneva, and in De Hague. They all use interpreters and translators.

**Rosalind:** You can get involved in events. There is also a residency in the Free Word Centre, and they are running events, to get more people interested in translation. Some events that we've done are a treasure hunt, speed book clubbing, straight talks. There are events for how to balance work and life. We are running events with kids and with adults.

**Amanda:** What level are we pitching at? There are now more MAs and PhDs in Literary Translation. The field is really wide open. At City University, students supply a sample translation and a commentary.

There are many more events and conferences organised by independent centres, like Free Word. For example the Europe House has a good program of discussions about European Culture. I also teach a Translating Popular Culture course at City University.

I started with Latin American culture, and received a scholarship when I was in Mexico. After my graduation, I went back to work at Amnesty International in Mexico.

### **Questions from the Audience:**

**Question:** How are people promoting translation through events?

**Rosalind:** The Free Word Centre runs events and I've been a resident there. It's a great place. We run all sorts of events, not just translation events. There are two more residencies there now, and they put up lots of events, with food, music and dance and lots of other things.

**Question:** I've gone to several events. Those are more focused on the English language, and I feel lost. Everything that's catered for is translating into English. I translate from English and German into Spanish, and I don't know how to promote myself.

**Rosalind:** Yes, but there are certainly similar events in Spain.

**Amanda:** It is recommended to translate into the mother tongue.

**Rosalind:** I suggest nonetheless meeting English writers, going to talks and publishers events. It is probably difficult to talk about something specific, but many general things are the same. Things that you can try: check the Colombian embassy, there may be events. Also the Cervantes Institute, they have a huge library, which might be helpful. You could contact the Colombian Cultural attaché, and suggest doing stuff.

**Question:** Picking up from the previous question: Is there any hope for somebody who translates into their second language? Many people spoke about translating into smaller languages, e.g. community languages. Many people who have a special relationship to the language could be translators. They may not be able to translate everything, but they can be translators for some topics.

Is there any leeway, or do you not get anywhere? Many people also have more than one native language.

**Rosalind:** People get hung up on 'native language'. There are two paths. Firstly, the Poetry School. And SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies). There is an Anglophone poet who works with bilingual speakers, and provides gloss. He then creates poems out of this gloss.

The second one: wait for the next generation. There are many languages spoken in London. They use work that comes from their home languages. Just as an illustration. A well-known publisher said at one occasion: I would love to publish Arabic, but they don't write good novels, do they? That's a pretty outrageous remark. And the main question that I would ask is: And why should they publish novels? There are other genres!

**Question:** How do I find out whether I have the ability to be a translator? I think some things that I wrote 20 years ago are good. Should I do a course? What's the best way to find out?

**Rosalind:** The best way to get a taste of translation is through Summer School! You never get to read a text as close as in Summer School. You work with a translator, and you get a taste for what the nitty-gritty work is like.

In the morning, you work in a group of 10 people, and then you have lunch, and talk to other groups. There is a seminar about publishing and about editing. It's an intensive immersion. Publishers also take translations from less experienced translators, so just try it out.

**Question:** Referring to the previous question, this is my story as well. My other language is Kurdish, and I want to translate into English. I know no other Kurdish translators. What's there for me? Of all the programs and mentoring schemes, there are none that provide Kurdish.

**Amanda:** The Kurdish community is extensive. The only translator that I've come across is Hardi. The BCLT runs a mentoring program but not for Kurdish. Most courses are non-language specific. Learning how to translate is an art and skill. Practise makes

perfect. So, I would say, carry on regardless. There are quite a few options where you can learn things.

**Rosalind:** Try co-translation. If you work with a Turkish or English translator, as a joint project, you get a finished product.

**Question:** There's a big hurdle: Time is money. I couldn't do the work that publishers expect in the small amount of time.

**Rosalind:** You can apply to them to produce readers' reports and samples. Reports should be paid but often aren't. They are nonetheless good practise for summarising books. It's good for getting your name out as well.

**Question:** Networking is important. I was thinking about joining the Institute of Translating and Interpreting, or the Translators Association. The drawback is that there is a big membership fee. Are they worth doing? Which one would you recommend?

**Rosalind:** The Translators Association is definitely worth the fee. Usually, you must have at least one work published in order to join. About a year ago, I set up the Emerging Translators Network, with a few others. This is free to join! It's an online discussion group with real world meet-ups. The institute of linguists doesn't overlap with the Translators Association. They only once in a while want a translation injection.

**Question:** I have the opposite issue. I'm an English translator and I live in Belgium, in Brussels. Are there any distance learning courses?

**Amanda:** Manchester might have an online course. I think most people study part-time anyway. So, if you live in Brussels, you could get the Eurostar every now and then. It's possible. Do part-time, get time off. Most universities try to be flexible. The Metropolitan University has an interpreting and translation course as well. They are even more flexible. Some supervisors are also using Skype nowadays.

**Question:** I've done a summer school. How can I approach publishers?

**Rosalind/Amanda:** The best approach is to join an Emerging Translators group or the publishers directly. If you have a text, do as much research as possible into the publishers in Britain. Approaching as many publishers as possible is a stab in the dark.

**Question:** Is there a list of publishers available?

**Rosalind/Amanda:** Check the London Book Fair, check booksellers and the Writers Yearbook! Have a look at the books on your shelf! Who are the publishers? The English Pen website has a page about who publishes translation.

**Question:** If you fall in love with the book, do you need the authors' ok, before doing the translation?

**Rosalind/Amanda:** It's the publishers' job to sort it out with the publisher of the original work. I would say don't translate the whole book before that is sorted out. Let the publisher do their work.

**Question:** When I contact a publisher there is often the quite bland question: What is the translation rights situation?

Is it a good idea to approach the writer directly as a non-published translator?

**Amanda:** No, usually not. You have the publisher and professional channels, contact them. You can of course check with the author whether the rights are already sold. But don't waste their time. I have to also say that many translators don't get personally along with the writers – but they love the work.

José Saramago said: I can only do Portuguese. Making the work accessible worldwide is the work of the translator.

But don't get on authors' nerves. If you want to do it, don't approach established authors but people on the cusp of getting known, young people.

**Question:** You have talked about academic translation. What is academic translation?

**Amanda:** The School of Science and Politics may publish all kinds of works. This is a whole field where you can get paid for translating. The more you know the jargon language the better. You can get paid jobs.



## Funding Translation

### Speakers:

Christoph Jankowi  
Koen Van Brockstal

### Summary:

Publishing writing in translation can often be expensive. This seminar looked at alternative funding for translation and how the publisher can make the most of what is currently available.

The EU cultural programme offers a grant for translation, with the aim of enabling the widest possible dissemination of European literature. Grants from 2,000 to 60,000 EUR are available for publishing houses or publishing groups for the translation of fiction in all its forms including novels, short stories, comic strips, plays and poetry. Christoph Jankowi talked us through the application process and invited all present to attend the next workshop to take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2012.

Koen Van Brockstal of the Flemish Literature Fund was keen to share his ideas on alternative funding opportunities, such as crowd funding and co-investment, taking examples from other industries.

The Flemish Literature fund is an external government agency for the promotion of Flemish literature with a budget of 5.7 million EUR.

They offer grants for:

- Translators/authors
- Literary magazines
- Poetry, theatre, graphic novels
- Writers in residents programmes
- Production
- Travel expenses

They are currently experimenting with a number of ideas, namely:

**Crowd funding** which sees the minister of culture matching any donation made to a particular book/project.

**Pre-financing** of authors/agents/publishers and then recuperating costs once a project has broken even.

**Sponsorship** from private public sectors such as banks and financial institutions.

## Reader engagement

### Speakers:

Claire Shanahan (Booktrust)

Antonia Byatt (IFFP)

Anne Morgan (freelance writer/editor)

### Topics to discuss:

Particular types of readers.

The history of the IFFP

Anne's project: reading one book from every country.

### Antonia:

Readers are very important in translation.

Books can come out and yet remain hidden. How do you promote books?

Prizes can be a good method.

The prize ethos: £1000 to writer and £5000 to translator. Translator's name and recognition.

Selection of judging panel is very important.

In the case of the IFFP over the years;

They've seen a rise in entries

The role of small independent publishers has become more important.

There's been a rise in the range of languages – although French/German/Spanish are still dominant.

How good a tool is this prize?

There's a correlation between money spent and the number of readers you can reach.

Long/short list function (the judges act as curators).

Coverage: increases media/press attention.

The translation world is better networked now; you can stage events around the prize

How do we get the prize to a wider audience?

Libraries

Book festivals

Building a community of readers in the virtual world too. E-lending commission has been announced..

### Anne:

<http://www.ayearofreadingtheworld.com> - A project to read international literature

- Read a book from every country in the world.

- An Anglocentric reader until now.

- Asking the world's readers what she should be reading.

- Blogpost, 300 words explaining project

- An amazing response

- Problems come across, such as in the case of countries like Andorra,

which are very small. In the end found - Albert Salvado 'The teacher of chops'

- Books that aren't available, or were more difficult to track down in Portuguese, African countries.
- Recruited her own translation team.
- 3500 followers

Why has it engaged readers so effectively?

- It's been a global year for the UK. Olympics, etc. Building links with the world.
- Followers are simply curious to see if Anne will succeed or fail!
- Asking, not telling (crucially) about world literature.
- Importance of dialogue.
- All suggestions made visible on her website.

Missing books, Mauritania/Palau/San Marino

### **Discussion:**

How to draw new readers in?

Publisher engaging with people – this is why blogs are crucial.

Is it possible to track sales of the books Anne had chosen?

Suggestions on expanding the idea, marketing the books/the concept more within the travel industry? Airport bookshops?

But this project does not rely on space (on small bookshop space, for instance) because of its virtual nature.

Ebooks – Anne could only read some of the books in this format, not available in paper form. Endorsing what we can do in this virtual world.

What is national literature? Reading literature by authors of different countries, but their books do not necessarily have to be ABOUT their own country...

# Translators in Schools

with Sarah Aridzzzone & Sam Holmes

SH: Over the course of the seminar, we hope to answer 3 key questions:

1. What can young people get from translation?
2. How can we interest young people in translation?
3. How can we build better partnerships between teachers and translators?

SH began by talking about **Mother Tongues**:

The project came out of Arvon residential translation week (English-Portuguese) for secondary school students at Lumb Bank.

Translation as a tool for creative writing: *creative writing by stealth*.

In the workshop designed by Daniel Hahn (of BCLT), SH used a Lemn Sissay poem to translate into Portuguese

Experienced the challenge of maintaining rhyme and rhythm, balanced with vocabulary and meaning

Students rarely come across translation as an activity although it's something they're constantly doing.

Out of this came a series of creative writing workshops in secondary schools in Lambeth

There were 5 variations on the workshop model used in Mother Tongues:

Similar to Arvon workshop

With Portuguese and French-speaking students

With speakers of different languages

Similar to Arvon workshop but included parents

Bespoke model developed working with individual schools

The aim was to develop a resource pack so schools can take it and run with it. The framework was flexible for schools to adapt it to their needs.

SH's experience of teaching a year 9 French GCSE class, where:

Students made a Powerpoint presentation of their language background/experience.

They translated a few poems from French to English (i.e. Prévert) - this was a creative, fun activity they loved.

They talked about translation choices (compared with Google translate)

They chose a poem they liked (in another language), to translate.

Many chose to translate a childhood song or nursery rhyme from memory - this allowed them to bring something personal in an academic context and see it as a skill.

SA talked about **Translation Nation** in Primary Schools

We watched a short video of TN at a Lambeth Primary School

Thoughts on TN :

'Kids love to have their language valued – they feel proud to be experts amongst their peers (kudos).

Many children are already experts in translation.

Translation can provide a route into creative writing (through thoughtful editing etc).

It gives students a whistlestop tour in translated literature.

These are the translators of the future.

Translation Nation takes place over 3 days, usually over 2 weeks in a primary school (hoping to also move it into secondary schools in 2013, depending on funding). This period of time gives schools time to harvest oral stories from home and/or the community, so students can either talk to adults at home or in the community – i.e. a neighbour, shopkeeper etc (for English-speaking students).

Once the stories are harvested, they are translated.

The third stage is to adapt them for performance – they are recorded and the favourite one is chosen.

[We watched a short video of Michael Rosen talking about his visit with Translation Nation to a primary school: he talked about the confidence and enjoyment of the children, and how the programme says to these children, 'we value your language and experience'].

SH: We don't do enough talking about words in school – translation does this by working at how exactly to *express* something.

TN is not only valuing children's experience, it's very important academically, as a cognitive tool: the process of crafting, honing drafts etc is very valuable.

It's valuable for honing skills in English, vocabulary – i.e. by using Google translate as a foil.

Translation can build on existing school activities such as 'synonym mats' etc.

The benefit of translation is very wide:  
It can help newly-arrived children;  
Teamwork/group work  
Valuing their skills/abilities in their mother tongue  
Roots

Q: How can we interest children in translation?

*By get them enthused about language in advance of them choosing GCSE subjects.*

Q: How can we build better partnerships between teachers and translators?

*With any event/project in school, go in before the event to talk to the teacher – this will make a huge difference.*

## Poetry in Translation

with Clare Pollard & Stephen Watts (replacing Sarah Maquire), introduced by Nia Davies

SW: Works with poets from other countries living in the UK  
"I translate because I'm a poet"

In his case it's an imperative – to know what's being written in languages he doesn't speak.

Writing poetry and translating poetry is a personal/solitary act but also rooted in a community setting, whether small or wide.

When he lived in Whitechapel he got to know Bengali cultural activists, some of whom were poets – wanted to know what they were writing about, especially as many came from trauma/war.

Poetry is very close to the surface of people's lives in places like Bangladesh and Somalia.

He wanted to translate from languages he didn't speak.

Some poets came to him and wanted to work with him – they were frustrated at not being understood. There was a strong need in the request so he said he'd try.

How they began:

- Sitting together at a table with the poet providing a literal translation;
- Hearing the poem in the original language and then also the literal translation provided many cues – so he was able to ask very specific questions;

SW: Worked on a project 10 yrs ago in a hospital: as a poet he worked with translators and interpreters

- In times of trauma, patients needed to express themselves in their mother tongue;
- 'translation is a vital art pumping life blood through our hearts' – that's why I translate

CP: Existing poetry readers are the readers of poetry in translation - but some poetry readers believe that 'poetry is what's lost in translation'

Q: How do you make poetry in translation appeal to poetry audiences in the UK?

- It has to absolutely work as a poem in English on the page
- They have to enjoy it

'Versions': where a poem that **works** is more important than the original

**But** this works when there is already an English translation to put beside it – If you are the only translation it is more important to be humble and true to the poem

The ideal is a poet-translator – i.e. Susan Wicks' translation of Valérie Rouzeau from French

Poetry Translation Centre:

- Billed as co-translators
- Puts together a literal translation
- Hear original, see literal translation, talk to poet and try and craft a translation

Problems of translation from a language you don't speak: more likely to stay closer to the original poem.

A poem really requires a poet to make it work in English.

CP feels it energises her poetry.

- The English poetry scene is very parochial – can be inward-looking
- i.e. 'show don't tell' is a very parochial, cowardly rule

From the floor:

Question of hybridity... sometimes through translating a person discovers they have a poetic well-spring – they may not have come to this without coming from translation. So a 'poetic translator' rather than a 'poet translator'.

CP: Poetry as a craft – skills and tools needed to do it well.

(form as a personal choice of translator: Ted Hughes never wrote in form – he always wrote free verse translations, focussing on content and meaning).

Choosing an 'equivalent' form in English can be difficult to sustain and lead to padding the poem – best to leave form aside.

SW: Sometimes you're being very unfaithful to a poem if you stay too close to it, or sometimes you're unfaithful if you stray too far... It depends – you take it on a poem by poem basis and poet by poet.

It's important to work towards as good a poem as possible in English, which doesn't stray too far from the original content and meaning.

Poetry journals are increasingly looking for translations – i.e. Poetry London and Poetry Review are looking for more translations.



## Promotional Strategies

### Speakers:

Rosa Anderson, co-ordinator at Fiction Uncovered

Bethan Jones, publicity director at Harvill Secker.

The landscape of book promotion has completely changed in the modern era with the use of online space, blogs and other internet resources.

There is a space within this for the promotion of literature in translation. It requires a reassessment of promotional strategies in order to best profit from them.

The two speakers are: Rosa Anderson from Fiction Uncovered, an initiative to promote the best of British Fiction, and Bethan Jones, a publicity director from Harvill Secker, a branch of Random House which specialises in translated literature – over 50% of titles published in the UK are translated works.

Rosa has a background of working on literary prizes. Fiction Uncovered is a promotion sponsored by the Arts Council. It is focused on UK fiction; uncovering authors who deserve a bigger audience and should be better recognised. Fiction Uncovered's slogan is "discover the best of British fiction". The promotion is run like a prize, with a panel of judges who select 8 books. There is no overall winner.

These winning books are then taken to bookshops for promotion. The initiative has received a lot of support this way, from Waterstone's, Foyles, and also from e-book shops.

The Fiction Uncovered website is used as a forum to bring together interesting and interested people. The Reviews page is consistently updated with new content. Social media is also a useful tool – Fiction Uncovered has over 5,000 followers on Twitter and runs games and competitions through it. They also use Facebook.

Fiction Uncovered has built a presence both in magazines and online, e.g. the We Love This Book website.

In 2012, the promotion launched a pop-up website, Fiction Uncovered FM. It broadcast live for 4 days from Foyles bookshop on Charing Cross Road. Altogether over 20 hours of live content were produced. The shows consisted of readings, interviews and a 4-part drama. There were over 40 participants in the project, and 32 authors. There was also a panel on translated fiction.

The radio station was a success because it captured people's imagination. Participants were very keen to do the project again next year. It built on an existing community and audience, but really took off once in the shop. It could also be streamed live from the website and the shows were turned into podcasts. These featured on iTunes' "New + Noteworthy" column on iBook Store.

Overall the project got over 5,500 listens, of which 1,800 were directly from the website. The project cost around £3000 and relied on the help of volunteers and writers who were prepared to give up their time for free.

Another promotional strategy used by Fiction Uncovered is the Book Barge. This was a canal boat moored at Broadway Market for a promotional day.

Next Bethan talks about her experience of promotional strategies, particularly in relation to translated fiction.

An international Writing Blog has been established on the Vintage Books website (a sister of Harvill Secker). It is updated weekly with a 'featured read', whether old or new.

There is also an Armchair Traveller blog which has contributions from translators, travellers and so on with their experiences of international literature.

Twitter is used to stir up interest. There is a hashtag, '#translationthurs' to encourage people to talk about translation literature on Thursdays. The Harvill Secker twitter account has over 3,000 followers and tweets about reviews, interviews, new books, authors, redirections to blogs, etc.

The Vintage Books podcast is a 30 minute long arts programme released every month. As it is very difficult to get live air time on, say, Radio 4, to publicise translated works, the solution is to create your own airtime through podcasts which people then download. Vintage are the first publisher to partner with Apple on iTunes. Individual features can be downloaded from the different podcasts. This podcast has brought 37% more traffic to the Vintage Books website.

A successful promotion was Dial-A-Story. This was a 24-hour promotion during which people could call a number to hear a short story recorded on an answerphone. Apple then made this feature their Story of the Week.

Another promotion was that of Norwegian writer Jo Nesbo. Outdoor marketing was used in the form of posters on bus shelters and so on. Twitter was used to generate excitement and allow followers to create their own publicity slogans, the best of which were then mocked up in the style of the hard copy posters online. The idea behind this was to create lots of retweets and spread the word about the new release.

The Haruki Murakami campaign was all about building hype around the release of his novel, *IQ84*. An online countdown was launched. Different prizes could be won on different days. The Observer then ran a piece about it. Foyles then took an interest. It then ended with a midnight store opening for the release of the book – the first one since Harry Potter.

For the Olympics, competitions were launched where books from the countries that had won medals on particular days, or who were performing well overall, could be won. The Independent on Sunday and the Bookseller both picked up on and publicised this. Bethan believes that the use of current, topical events like this is greatly successful. It creates an engaged dialogue with an online community which responds to constant updates and attention.

Random House shares a lot of content internationally between Random House UK, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa respectively.

The difficulty of promoted translated literature is how to conduct interviews with authors and their translators. Few media outlets or events are receptive of this – the big exception being the Edinburgh Festival which has been hugely successful in running events, interviews and Q&As with authors and translators.

For recorded interviews, there has been success with prerecording and then editing interviews. This formalises and ‘polishes’ the finished interview, making it more professional and giving the authors an equal voice.

A huge amount of readers are interested in the work of translators. Research was conducted into the ‘Scandinavian crime’ genre after the success of Jo Nesbo, and most people did not even know what Scandinavian crime was as a genre. However they were very interested by the fact that the text that they had ultimately read had been a translation.

Translators are often invited to events in the book promotions industry. At the Edinburgh festival this year the translators were the stars of the show.

# Doing it for yourself – The rise of the small press

## Introduction:

Sophie Lewis – Editor of 'And Other Stories'.

Marek Kamierski – OFF\_PRESS

### 1. Sophie

- "And other stories" are publishers of translated fiction.
- A publisher with crucial differences.
- No office: a lack of structure that is actually enabling.
- Collaboration is a key concept.
- Reading groups – sharing.
- Subscribers – revived this old fashioned idea.

The books themselves:

- 6 translated
- 2 English

They focus on literature that is ignored or neglected because there is something in them that is harder to market.

The advantage is having their circle of readers.

Publishing few books means they each get enough attention.

### 2. Marek

- OFF\_PRESS is a nonprofit organization focusing on contemporary Polish writing.
- There's a sense of quality/academic approval

-Not much money/return, because of the publisher's existence in a 'perfect storm' on three fronts: 1. Conservative govt. 2. Recession. 3. Spending in Olympics.

Is the '3%' figure of translated literature representative of a fatalistic attitude – do we not *want* a success story?

What to do in this storm?

Stop. Think.

## Questions/Discussion

- There are other forms and models of economy. Exchange of goods and skills, for example.
- A Lack of literary magazines.
- There are more translators/translated works in Poland – and therefore more criticisms of them
- 'Down the rabbit hole' Prize winners. Authors that will sustain the publishers?

## Translation Live! Touring and live literature events

Hosted by Philip Cowell from English PEN – [Philip@englishpen.org](mailto:Philip@englishpen.org)

Speakers: Sarah Sanders – a pioneer in live literature events with ‘Speaking Volumes’

Speaking Volumes is a live literature company, who work with writers from all around the world making events for the UK, such as “Free the Word” at Poetry Parnassus.

They were set up because they wanted to introduce international writers to UK audiences. These are writers who often aren’t translated, don’t have book deals or publishers.

One of their favourite events is ‘International Futures’, where 1 well-known writer introduces 4 unknown writers and their translators.

Sarah says she isn’t going to talk about familiar challenges like budgeting and fundraising, but rather focus on some key things that Speaking Volumes does which can be replicated by other organisations:

Building an Audience: They’ve had great success programming translated literature in unexpected formats, like their ‘Insulting Cabaret’, which emphasizes the performance element of literature.

Online trailers: How do you sell poets from all over the world to a skeptical festival? They incorporate a filming element to every event to make sure they have interesting footage to pique interest.

Print trailers: They pooled all their marketing money to create free, beautiful postcards – they found concentrating marketing efforts in this way produced a great result.

Grand Gesture: You can’t always drop poetry from the sky, like at Poetry Parnassus, but any opportunity to make a grand gesture makes such a great impact, it’s almost always worthwhile.

Brilliant chairs: Essential to provoking a dynamic discussion audiences will be interested in. Pay the chairs extra, and expect them to thoroughly research their panel, and meet each writer beforehand if they can.

Use translators: they’re geniuses! Having the translator as an adjunct isn’t good enough. Audiences are *interested* in great translators, who might be great speakers or writers in their own right, too. At our events, writers and translators are presented on an equal footing and paid the same.

Matching presentation to audience: Every venue is different and each audience will have different expectations – work with them to match the event you provide to the event they want.

Poems on paper & screen: A big thing NOT to do – don’t ask people to read-along to poetry, as it rarely works and undermines the magic of reading aloud.

Big names: Get the audience in with a big name. But don’t mismatch the celebrity to the genre of writers – don’t just get any old face. Make it an good fit.

Ideas-based marketing: Focus on what people will find interesting, or be interested to see. 'The 3 best poets from Turkey' won't be enough to sell tickets. What are they writing about? It denigrates writers to simply focus on their nationality.

Digital: Whatever you do, don't wing it: use someone who knows *exactly* what they're doing!

### **Eleanor Livingstone – Stanza Poetry Festival**

Eleanor runs Stanza – Scotland's International Poetry Festival. In the past, translated poets were treated as a niche interest – but that's changing. It's often seen as solemn and highbrow: she says you need to handle poetry seriously, but not solemnly.

These days international poetry is not so niche. Border crossings features poets from different countries, for example. 'Translated poetry' isn't separate or niche. For Stanza, it's a normal, *fun* part of the festival.

One thing Stanza do is print small books in translation. (very small!). They give them out all over the festival – even with sugar packets when you get your coffee. Again, the emphasis is on fun.

They put a lot of effort into advanced promotion. They have a full page for each participant on the website far in advance of the festival. They do an awful lot of social media work as well to help anticipate the work in many different ways and to introduce unfamiliar writers.

Festivals give poets unique opportunities. They give audiences as much chance as possible to hear poets and translators talking outside of the readings – in the café, the bar, the audience. Give audiences the chance to engage with poets, she says, and mix everyone up together. They have an 'anti-green room' policy. Audiences should be encouraged to meet poets and be interested in them for reasons beyond their work.

Where they can they involve big names.

### Digital

Their work with digital began accidentally, doing things over Skype after some last minute changes. 7 months later they did a digital festival: a day of events from 12 locations worldwide – from Mumbai to Sacramento. The acts Skyped into the theatre and broadcast live. They zigzagged across the globe: acts were often very happy to perform in the middle of the night to make the time difference work. It was called 'Distant Voices'.

It was a big learning curve for them, and there were great variations in the quality of transmission with each performer, but even sitting in the dark, hearing a voice from around the world, with no picture, was an involving experience. They got a huge audience who sat in for the whole day, rather than dropping in and out as they'd predicted. They had a 4 figure audience watching the live feeds. It wasn't perfect quality, but people who understood the challenge of the broadcast really enjoyed it.

If you do digital ambitiously, you get a different experience than a live event. They never suggested Distant Voices as a replacement for their regular events – rather it is a complement and a supplement to their existing festival.

One other event they've had much success with is 'Past & Present' – where a contemporary writer expounds about a forgotten or past writer they're passionate about.

### **Questions from the floor:**

Q - How were Stanza's broadcasts translation specific? What was the translation element?

Eleanor: Some digital broadcasts were in other languages, and sometimes a translation was read alongside an original text. At Poetry International, they use a rolling screen for this.

Sarah: We've worked with writers in exile in a European country. Sometimes they're writing in a language which isn't their native language – so you often have 3 voices once this is translated into English. We haven't even scratched the surface of what is possible with digital media.

Comment – An audience member works for an organization with stable relationships to festivals and publishers. She can offer these writers and translators monetary assistance to get them to these events, but often people don't know about this kind of support – always check online to see what funding is available to you when you're planning your event.

Comment – Often venues will ask for all-singing, all-dancing events, but they forget about their audiences, and this isn't always appropriate. Depth of engagement is important – 40 people having a close connection to one speaker in a small venue like a library is a far better outcome than 800 people skimming the surface of 8 speakers in a huge theatre and then forgetting about it all when they leave.

Q – An audience member asks Sarah to elaborate on her experiences working with film trailers for live events.

Sarah: We've had success with commissioning a professional filmmaker. We share with partners, venues, prospective partners. But what's really missing from the web is a central repository of international literature where all of this stuff can go. Event films, literature films, trailers and so on.

Audience member – It's better to make a concept film around an event than to just film the event. No-one's interested in that, not even the audience that came!

Eleanor – Liveness is important. People will tolerate the technical glitches because of the magic of an event coming from halfway around the world. When it's a recording, people are much less forgiving.

## **My Native English now I must forego – Shakespeare in Translation**

The final session of the day brought together Artistic Director of the Globe Theatre, Dominic Dromgoole, the Globe to Globe festival director, Tom Bird, and Professor of English at Warwick University, Tony Howard.

On the back of the recent Globe to Globe season which saw thirty seven of Shakespeare's plays performed in thirty seven languages, Tom Bird asks: where is the true home of Shakespeare? After seeing the depth and variety of interpretations from around the world, the answer, for him, became less clear.

Performances of Hamlet's 'To Be or Not to Be' were delivered by three actors in three different languages, demonstrating to the ITD crowd the importance of listening to the texture of a language and also how much of a culture can be communicated through performance.

Tony Howard then took the audience on a whistle stop tour of responsiveness to Shakespeare through film clips and stage productions in attempt to shed light on what happens when different cultures translate experiences through the filter of Shakespeare on the big screen.

An excellent end to a very enjoyable day.