

BARD TRANSLATION & TRANSLATABILITY INITIATIVE
PRESENTS
THE TRANSLATION SYMPOSIUM
AT BARD COLLEGE

**TRANSLATION
IN CRISIS /
CRISIS IN
TRANSLATION
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS
APRIL 24 2020**

PANEL 1 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

PANEL 2 12:00 PM-2:00 PM

PANEL 1

Moderators: Peter Filkins and Thomas Wild



SOUMYA RACHEL SHAIENDRA

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

"TRANSLATING POETRY/
TRANSLATING PERFORMANCE"

Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug* (1954) was written in the aftermath of the Indian partition of 1947. Broadcast on Radio in 1954, published in September that year, but not performed on stage until 1962, the play is a classic working belonging to the "new poetry" and "new drama" wave in Hindi literature. *Andha Yug* was translated by Paul Jacob in 1972, Tripurari Sharma in 2001, and Alok Bhalla in 2007. My translation asks a key dramaturgical question: why another *Andha Yug* now? In light of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests of 2019-20 and intense militarization of the Hindu nationalist state, the translation project interweaves the vocabulary of the contemporary Hindi reader with the lyric poetry of the play.

Soumya Rachel Shailendra is a student of literature and politics at Bennington College, Vermont. Her literary interests are centered on resistance literature, migration studies, and performance theory. She is the student leader of the Bennington chapter of the Consortium on Forced Migration and Displacement (CFMD) and has previously worked with the National School of Drama, New Delhi. She is currently translating Dharamvir Bharati's verse play *Andha Yug* (1953) in English.

PANEL 1

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MEGAN HALM

BARD COLLEGE

"SOFT BURIAL: TRANSLATABILITY
AND UNTRANSLATABILITY
ACROSS CULTURES"

My translation project is a book I am translating a portion of for my SPROJ called *Soft Burial*. This book, published in 2016, is a significant work of Chinese literature that deals with issues of censorship in history and the impact of it. This book initially was very popular and won awards, but was banned in China. This translation project is a culmination of over six years of studying Chinese language, culture, and history. Prior to this project, I have had experience translating poetry and news articles, and in Peter Filkins' *The Art of Translation* course.

My presentation would be dealing with the difficulties of translating across cultures, and the challenges with words that are specific to a certain culture. It would be titled "*Soft Burial: Translatability and Untranslatability Across Cultures*." The title of the book, *Soft Burial*, is difficult to translate directly into English. It refers to the practice of burying someone without a coffin or ceremony, which would not put their souls to rest. In the story, a landlord family commits suicide to avoid a "struggle session" of the land reform movement. They are "soft buried," and their souls are not put to rest. With censorship, a government can try to bury events and details, but in the end these things will come to light. While this novel deals with issues that are specific to mainland China, since it was banned there, it can only be read outside of China. I hope that by translating it, I can bring more awareness to these issues to the world outside of China.

Megan Halm is a senior at Bard College double majoring in Music and Asian Studies. She has been studying Mandarin Chinese for over six years as well as studying Chinese history and culture. She began her translation of *Soft Burial* as her senior project at Bard College. Megan lives in Burnt Hills, New York.

PANEL 1

Moderators: Peter Filkins and Thomas Wild



CALEB SABATKA

BARD COLLEGE AT SIMON'S ROCK

"RAW TALES": ON TRANSLATING JUAN TOMÁS ÁVILA LAUREL AND POST-COLONIAL WRITERS IN EXILE"

For my senior thesis, I am writing about writers from post-colonial nations who live in exile in the land of their former colonizers. As part of my discussion I have translated several short stories from "Cuentos Crudos" a collection by Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel, a writer from Equatorial Guinea living in Spain, as part of a larger conversation about the ways in which literature can be used to bring awareness to the unfortunate circumstances which brought exiled writers to "seek refuge in the metropolis." I would like to focus my presentation on the politics of translating African literature into European languages, the challenges of translating afro-hispanic literature, translation as a form of activism and as a way of highlighting the voices of vulnerable populations, and my positionality as a translator. The short stories in my collection "Raw Tales" touch on topics such as corruption, geopolitics, gender, neocolonialism, and violence. I encourage readers to read more works by indigenous writers and especially those living in exile and work on producing more translations of their work to bring awareness to their often silenced voices.

Caleb Sabatka is senior at Bard College at Simon's Rock double-concentrating in Cross-Cultural Relations and Literary Translation. He is from a rural town in Wyoming and came to learn Spanish after falling in love with translations of Pablo Neruda. His senior thesis is titled "Raw Tales": An Anthropology of Post-Colonial Writers in Exile. As part of his thesis, he translated a collection of short stories by Equatoguinean writer-in-exile, Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel. Caleb's work centers on the intersection of literature and anthropology, and translation and activism.

PANEL 1

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SILVIE LUNDGREN

BARD COLLEGE

"THERE IS NO NATIVE LANGUAGE:
THE PERPETUAL QUESTION OF
"HOW WOULD YOU SAY THAT?""

For my senior project in the Russian program I am translating several Russian-language Soviet children's stories. Throughout this process I have been struck again and again by the apparent relativity of "native" language and how this connects to a person's sense of what is "correct". What seems natural to one speaker of a language may seem strange to another, and what a native speaker says colloquially often does not match the standards a newcomer to the language has been taught. People's individual concepts of what feels natural depend very much upon their contexts and are likely to drift from day to day. What's more, few people are intimately familiar with the full details of their native languages' standard lexicon, idioms, grammar, verb conjugations, spelling, or orthography. These realities lead to interesting questions (and sometimes bunny trails) when attempting to translate something into one's native language. I will explore a few of these questions and how the effort of translating and communicating between languages has affected my perspective on language in general.

Silvie Lundgren is a dual-major senior in the Biochemistry Program and Russian and Eurasian Studies Program. She is an amateur poet and has published several short translations and original works in Bard's translation journal *Sui Generis*. She spent the Spring 2019 semester studying at Smolny College in Saint Petersburg, Russia. After graduating from Bard, Silvie hopes to work as a biomedical research assistant while preparing for medical school exams, and to develop her skills as a writer. She adores cats, the moon, wide-open spaces, music and the Russian language, which—although it will never be her native tongue—feels native to her at heart.

PANEL 2

Moderators: Melanie Nicholson, Olga Voronina and Éric Trudel



JACOB SZEPESSY

BARD COLLEGE

"THE TRANSLATION OF THEORY INTO FICTION"

My presentation focuses on the translation of theory into fiction. This is an idea I've been personally interested with for some time. Why am I (a written arts major) so engaged with theory, and to what end am I using and including it (intentionally) in my work? Bearing in mind Proust's comment that including theory in fiction is like leaving the price tag on a gift, and that the final 300 pages of *Time Regained* is primarily theory, I am interested in exploring the question through two contemporary novels which engage with theory as a premise and a means: *The Seventh Function of Language* by Laurent Binet, and *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess* by Stewart Home. Reading these novels in conjunction with Malcom Bowie's *Theory as Fiction* (primarily the chapter "Proust, Jealousy, Knowledge") I hope to formulate a sense of how, why and when fiction explicitly engages with theory, and what the translation of theory (itself a sort of fiction from fiction) back into art achieves. Finally, I would like to touch upon psychogeography (principally through Stewart Home) to explore the idea of theory manifesting itself into art.

Jacob Szepessy is a Junior at Bard College, majoring in Written Arts.

PANEL 2

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RAYO VERWEIJ

BARD COLLEGE

"USING MACHINE
TRANSLATION IN MOBILE
LANGUAGE LEARNING"

For my Senior Project, I am building a smartphone app for learning Dutch from English, Dutch being my native language. The key feature of the app is that instead of using prewritten exercises, it automatically generates translation exercises by tracking which words have already been learned and combining those into sentences. This is hard! Not only do I need to have an algorithm that can combine words or phrases into grammatically correct Dutch and English sentences, but then I also need to generate all correct translations of that sentence in the other language, to check the student's work.

In this presentation, I would go over the pros and cons of using machine translation in the context of learning a new language, and then dive into the model I'm building for easy translation between Dutch and English, its strengths, and its limitations. I wouldn't assume any background in computer science or programming; this presentation would purely cover the linguistic philosophy (and controversy!) at the core of my project. The working title of my Senior Project is *Automated Exercise Generation in Mobile Language Learning*, but for this I might use something more tailored, like *Using Machine Translation in Mobile Language Learning*.

This might not be a translation project in the traditional sense, but I think I would have a valuable perspective to add, not just from the Computer Science angle but also from years of learning English and translating Latin and Ancient Greek in high school.

Rayo Verweij is a senior in Computer Science with a concentration in Mind, Brain, and Behavior from Eindhoven, the Netherlands. He is particularly interested in studying language acquisition and representation and is happy both teaching programming languages to humans and teaching human language to computers. One day he'll spend his time with a robot cat, but until then, he also does work for the Memory Dynamics Lab and is an active member of the Bard Debate Union.

PANEL 2

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MAGGIE HOLLOWAY

BARD COLLEGE

"TRANSLATING SENSE IN
MILAN KUNDERA'S *THE
UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF
BEING*"

Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* has a complex relationship to translation that begs the question of *what it is that we translate*. It is a work that is read primarily in translation: in fact, the English translation was published first, a year before the publication of the original Czech. The novel famously relies on philosophical motifs for much of its structure; importantly, these concepts are presented in their original German in all translations. The novel's fluid relationship with language and translation would suggest that its essential character or significance lies outside of language altogether. It ultimately points to the fundamental question of the ability of language to convey the depth of impressions and experience. My paper discusses the use of paraphrase in the process of translating the sense that underlies the language of Kundera's work.

Maggie is a senior in the Human Rights and Political Studies departments at Bard. She is currently finishing a senior project on ideology, populism, and democratic theory. Her research interests lie at the intersection of political theory, rights, and language. After graduating this spring, Maggie plans to attend Central European University to pursue a master's in Human Rights. Writing and poetry are constant sources of insight and inspiration for her work, as a means of connecting the broad world of theory to the experiential and personal level of language. She studied translation with Peter Filkins last year.

PANEL 2

Moderators: Melanie Nicholson, Olga Voronina and Éric Trudel



EVGENIIA MAKSIMENKO

SMOLNY COLLEGE

"SYLVIA PLATH'S TECHNIQUES
OF TRANSLATION OF
MYTHOLOGICAL PATTERNS"

My paper will focus on mythological paradigms translated into poetry by Sylvia Plath. Many writers re-imagine mythological paradigms in their texts, and in poetic works, this imaginative re-working of myth as a character study, a plot, or a linguistic pattern is especially fascinating. I intend to discuss the role myth plays in the formation of texture of Plath's poetry. In my opinion, her methods of appropriating mythological structures and images vary from poem to poem, while remaining the skeleton, the essential framework, of her entire oeuvre. I will address the ways in which Sylvia Plath utilizes mythology to build on mythological associations/imagery in her works. In "Two sisters of Persephone" I am going to describe the birth of a new myth out of the old. Through a close reading of her "In Midas' Country," I will explore myth as Plath's metaphor-building element. I will also demonstrate how the visuality of myth becomes part of Plath's poetic landscape. Finally, I will analyze different ways of the interactions between Plath's narrator and mythological figures in "Ariel" and "The Colossus". My ultimate goal is to unveil the process of translation that continues over centuries between two genres of literature and to reveal how myth can imbibe poetry with new meaning.

Evgeniia Maksimenko is a junior majoring in Literature at Smolny College. Her academic interests include Vladimir Nabokov and his Russian and American writings, the problem of myth-making and authorized folklore, Sylvia Plath's poetry and prose, phonosemantics in Anna Akhmatova's poems, unreliable and omniscient narrators in various texts, speculative realism and the problem of anthropocentrism.