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Special features:

Identity, opportunity & cultural appropriation Part 1: identity matters

Legal T&I – Part 2: advocacy & forensics

Plus:

< In Touch

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The submission deadline for the Summer 2021 issue is 1 October

Submission Guidelines:
www.ausit.org/in-touch-magazine/

T&I editor
Hayley Armstrong
intouch@ausit.org

Content editor + design and production
Helen Sturgess
editor@ausit.org

Cover image: A relief from the tomb of Horemheb, Egypt. An interpreter (centre) is depicted mediating between Horemheb (left) and foreign envoys (right). Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, NL. See page 3.

AUSIT contacts
Suite 154
16 Beenleigh Redland Bay Road
Loganholme
QLD 4129
Telephone: 1800 284 181
email: admin@ausit.org

www.ausit.org

Access *In Touch* online
www.ausit.org/in-touch-magazine/

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Letter from the editors

This issue has been exciting to put together. We received so many submissions, we haven't been able to include them all. A big 'Thankyou!' to our contributors for volunteering their time and insights.

Our main feature, centred around a theme of identity, opportunity and cultural appropriation in literary translation, was sparked by the controversy around the translation of the work of Amanda Gorman, who recited her poem *The Hill We Climb* at Joe Biden's inauguration.

The Black Lives Matter movement has contributed to scrutiny of many existing power structures, including the publishing industry – and consequently literary translation. As the question of how to increase opportunities for voices of all backgrounds, cultures, identities, abilities and orientations is multifaceted – and so relevant in this day and age, as we strive towards equality in all of its aspects – we will continue to explore this theme in upcoming issues.

It's also thrilling to present Part 2 of our 'Legal T&I' feature, on advocacy and forensics. Cintia Lee and Silvia Martinez's groundbreaking progress in improving conditions for interpreters in court set a precedent for advocating for better working conditions for our profession as a whole.

While our daily lives continue to be disrupted by the pandemic and extreme weather events, there's still much to enjoy and celebrate. Between our special features and regular columns, there's something for everyone in this packed issue. We hope you enjoy it.

Hayley and Helen

NSW Premier's Translation Prize 2021: AUSIT's Kevin Windle a runner up

Congratulations to AUSIT member and past contributor to *In Touch,* **Kevin Windle**, one of four runners-up in this Australia-wide prize.

The $30,000 biennial prize – funded by Multicultural NSW and awarded for a translation into English in book form, any genre – acknowledges the contribution made to literary culture by Australian translators, and the vital role played by literary translators in enabling communication between writers and readers across cultures throughout the world.

Kevin's translation of Artyom Vesyoly's *Russia Washed in Blood* is described by the judges as a 'Herculean translation' of a 'grim but indispensable panorama' of the Russian Civil War.

All Australian translators are eligible to enter the prize – by either self-nominating or being nominated by 'their publisher or another individual' – so why not have a go in 2023?

Kevin Windle gave AUSIT's Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture 2018, and he summarised it in an article: In Touch Winter 2018 (pages 8–10).

Read more about the NSW Premier's Translation Prize here.

Cover reproduced courtesy of Anthem Press, image: *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* poster by El Lissitzky (1919)

Contributions welcome

Don't forget, if you have an idea for an article, we'd love to hear about it. To make a submission:

1) check our submission guidelines and deadline *
2) if you have any questions, email one of the editors or an Editorial Committee member *
3) then … go for it!

* this page, first column

Contents

News in brief

(a review of T&I-related items that have appeared in the media since the last issue of *In Touch* went to press):

Heated debate over the translation of Amanda Gorman's work continues – see pages 6–9.

Another hot topic is the worsening plight of locally hired interpreters and other staff, as foreign troops pull out of Afghanistan – see: **1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10**

14 Apr: Meet the Sign Language Artist Interpreting BTS Songs for Deaf Fans

A Japanese fan of K-pop brings the Korean genre to a new audience via videos that are 'part interpretation, part choreographed performance'. ***vice.com***

24 Apr: Our Health System Is Failing Patients with Limited English

The design of US medical infrastructure precludes improvements in communication that could redress inequities in health care. ***scientificamerican.com***

24 Apr: Poor interpreting having impact on patients, victims of crime and those seeking asylum

Despite laws mandating provision and quality of T&I services, Ireland has no accredited interpreter training or regulatory system, and a 20-year campaign by the Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association has so far failed to improve the situation. ***thejournal.ie***

29 Apr: The Lonely, Vital Work of Medical Interpretation

One immigrant's story reveals unseen trauma experienced by medical interpreters in the US working from home during the pandemic; grossly inadequate provision of such services; and a low bar for entry to the profession there. ***The New Yorker***

13 May: FECCA welcomes Budget support for older CALD Australians

$65.2M pledged for T&I services in the aged care system. ***miragenews.com***

15 May: Translation And Its Cross-Cultural Relevance – Analysis

This detailed analysis describes translation as 'by default ... an intercultural activity' only conceivable by 'imagining the relationship between cultures in a cosmopolitan world'. ***eurasiareview.com***

18 May: First American Sign Language Bible available to deaf, hard of hearing communities around the world

'Nearly 100 volunteers worked for 15 years to produce the world's first complete Bible translation into American Sign Language (ASL) on video.' ***cbs4indy.com***

19 May: Medical interpreters unite

Assisted by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, interpreters for NESB Medicaid patients in Oregon win a 3-year push to unionise. ***nwlaborpress.org***

19 May: A team of 37 Deaf Interpreters ... interpret songs ... for Eurovision

Dutch non-profit DoofCentraal provides an online platform for the International Sign Language interpreters. ***dailymoth.com***

2 Jun: France Releases New Translation of Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'

Supporters say this critical edition of the 'hate-filled manifesto ... could serve as a warning against ... hate and antisemitism today'. ***voanews.com***

10 Jun: Appreciation: Why Luis Zapata's breakthrough gay Mexican novel demands a new translation

While the 1981 version of this seminal late-1970s work into English is valued, it deserves to be tackled by someone who understands the Mexican slang and cultural references. ***sandiegouniontribune.com***

28 Jun: Why bringing 'The Lord of the Rings' to the USSR was a quest akin to a fiction tale

'Independent translators took a great risk spreading Tolkien's fiction' after it was banned by censors. ***Russia Beyond***

29 Jun: The interpreting profession in Ancient Egypt

T&I can be dated back as far as the Bible's Old Testament. ***Language on the Move***

Caption: see opposite page, column 1

01 Jul: Optus announces real-time call translating for customers

Optus customers can use Optus Real Time Call Translate, a trial that is using Google Cloud AI machine learning. ***canstarblue.com.au***

13 Jul: Volunteers translating critical health messages say they're filling a gap left by the NSW government

With COVID-19's Delta strain spreading in Sydney's multicultural south-west, concerned citizens find themselves still filling a gap they feel is the responsibility of the NSW Government. ***Triple J***

2021 National Conference In Perth And Online

19–20 NOVEMBER 2021
RENDEZVOUS HOTEL, SCARBOROUGH BEACH, PERTH

**Accompanied by the AUSIT Gala Dinner,
the Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture and the NAGM**

The Western Australia Branch have the pleasure of inviting you to AUSIT's 2021 National Conference, which will be held by the Indian Ocean. This year's theme is:

'Another Word, Another World'

The conference will be a hybrid event, with speakers and attendees having the option of attending in person or participating virtually.

As translators and interpreters, it is our job to connect different worlds and help people move between them.

How does switching between languages change our interpretation of the world?

How can we, as T&I professionals, best facilitate understanding and ease the shift in meaning?

What are the best business practices that help us work efficiently, work competently and keep well?

Join us to explore best practice and innovation across the T&I field and in language service businesses and organisations.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

Please contact the organising committee to choose from a range of sponsorship categories to suit your specific needs:

AUSIT2021-PerthOC@groups.io

CONTRIBUTING

CALL FOR PAPERS OPEN! deadline: 30 Aug

There's still time to propose a paper, to be delivered either on site or virtually. Check out the theme and associated questions (in blue, opposite page). Subthemes range across:

- contribution of migration to the evolution of languages and strategies for overcoming cultural differences
- challenges of communication and cultural perceptions for multilingual communities
- perspectives of indigenous language speakers on their experiences of T&I
- challenges of terminology in specialised areas
- interpreting & translating in a post-pandemic era: what does the future hold?

For more details visit the conference page (link below), and to submit an abstract go to:

easychair.org/conferences/?conf=ausitncperth2021

(NOTE: to access easychair, first open an account)

ATTENDING

WEBSITE, REGISTRATION, ETC.

Visit AUSIT Learnbook for a chance to win free registration (ends October).

You're not too late to be an early bird! Just register by 30 September. Plus grab 2 or more colleagues and book together for a group discount on accommodation (ends 20 October).

For program details, registration (opening early August) and accommodation, go to:

ausit.org/2021-conference/

Registration enquiries: admin@ausit.org

For all other enquiries, contact the conference managers: AUSIT2021-PerthOC@groups.io

AUSIT GALA DINNER

AUSIT's premier annual social event is a great opportunity to meet colleagues from all around Australia, and all areas of T&I – and with pre-dinner drinks overlooking an Indian Ocean sunset on the hotel's Mentelle Deck ... wow!

VISITING PERTH

There's heaps to do around Perth, both indoors and out. Here are some local tips from Sally Wals, a member of the organising committee:

- From the conference venue, head down to the sand for a stroll along **Scarborough Beach**, or a swim – why not?! Watch the sun set into the ocean – listen hard enough and you'll hear it hit the water – and if you arrive early enough, check out Scarborough Sunset Markets on Thursday evening – food, arts and crafts, music.
- The **WA Museum Boola Bardip** – located in the CBD – recently reopened after a major refurbishment that integrates the original heritage buildings into the new. Its range of collections have a strong connection to WA, and entry is free – just walk in, or to be sure you won't have to wait, book ahead.
- The **CBD** has had a freshen up too. **Yagan Square** now joins it to **Northbridge** (for nightlife) and to **Elizabeth Quay**, where you can stroll along the **Swan River** or maybe take a boat ride. From there you can hop on the Transperth ferry (our only public water transport!) to **South Perth** for public art, good eating and a short walk to Perth Zoo.
- **Kings Park**, situated close to the CBD, features botanic gardens, bushwalks, a stunning view of the city and a gift shop. Learn about local **Aboriginal culture** on a walking tour with Nyungar Tours.
- If you can fit in a day trip:
  - **Fremantle** to the south ('Freo' as we call it) is really hip with heritage buildings and lots of fancy places to eat. It's easily reached via a 50-minute train journey or a leisurely river cruise.
  - Cruise to **Rottnest Island** from Freo or the CBD to enjoy its spectacular white beaches, wildlife (come and see the quokkas!) and history.
  - Hire a car and head to the **Swan Valley** wine region – think tasting and dining, lush scenery and heritage trails.

For more ideas go to: Discover Western Australia

Fremantle (Roel Loopers CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons)

Elizabeth Quay (opailin/Shutterstock.com)

The Gorman/Rijneveld translation controversy

Amanda Gorman, America's current Youth Poet Laureate, wrote her poem *The Hill We Climb* the night after the violent invasion of the United States Capitol on 6 January.

Just two weeks later she became the youngest ever American poet to read her work at a presidential inauguration; within minutes her Twitter following had gone from 48,000 to 255,000, and soon translations of her work were underway around the world.

However, when Gorman's agent chose Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (the youngest ever author to win the International Booker Prize, and therefore able to relate to her experience of early fame) to translate her work into Dutch, this sparked an international media frenzy. Apart from the fact that Rijneveld (pronouns: they/them) isn't a seasoned translator, their whiteness and gender identification were seen as problematic.

The ensuing debate has centred around issues of opportunity – why wasn't a translator sought out who was also Black and an activist, and ideally also identified as a woman? – and within weeks Victor Obiols, an experienced Catalan translator, was told that although he would be paid for his commissioned translation of Gorman's work, it would not be published – he, too, had the wrong profile.

In Touch is setting out to explore some of the issues raised – including identity, opportunity and cultural appropriation – in a two-part feature. We asked **Anita Patel** – an Australian writer and critic – and **Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty** – an Australian academic whose research interests include literary translation and diasporic subcontinental literatures from Africa, Canada, Australia and the USA – to share their thoughts on these matters in the following pages.

The story in brief

(a chronology of the controversy, plus a bibliography that contextualises it):

21 Jan: Amanda Gorman's Poem Stole the Show at the Inauguration. Read It ...

23 Feb: *Spoken word poet and activist Zaire Krieger's tweet questions the choice of Rijneveld to translate Gorman's work.*

25 Feb: *An opinion piece by Dutch journalist and activist Janice Deul fuels the debate (see **18 Mar** for translation), and Rijneveld steps down the same day.*

1 Mar: Everything you need to know about the controversy ...

1 Mar: 'Shocked by the uproar': Amanda Gorman's white translator quits

6 Mar: Everything inhabitable: a poem by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld

10 Mar: Why a white poet did not translate Amanda Gorman

11 Mar: 'Not suitable': Catalan translator for Amanda Gorman poem removed

12 Mar: Friday essay: is this the end of translation?

12 Mar: The challenge of translating Amanda Gorman if you are white

18 Mar: English translation: Janice Deul's opinion piece about Gorman/Rijneveld

2 Apr: European publishers agonise over profile of Amanda Gorman translators

3 Apr: Who should translate Amanda Gorman's work?

13 May: *Yale University doctoral candidate Jeanne Sauvage's bibliography fuurther contextualises the discussion.*

Images Above, L->R: Amanda Gorman (Shawn Miller, public domain) / Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (self portrait, CC BY-SA 4.0) / Viktor Obiols (Òmnium Cultural, CC BY-SA 2.0), all via Wikimedia Commons

Opp. page (combined): a Malay pantun in Jawi script (from Marsden W [1812]. *A Grammar of the Malayan Language, with an introduction and praxis*. London: Longman and Black; and RO Winstedt, reproduced courtesy of SOAS University of London, Special Collections, ref: SOAS/SPA/4/37

Identity always matters:

ending an era of invisible translators

Anita Patel

In my past life, as a teacher of Indonesian and English, I read and taught many works in translation.

At the time I didn't consider the identity of the translator; translators were, largely, invisible. Suddenly, today, translators are very visible and their identities matter. Rijneveld and Obiols have stepped aside as translators of Amanda Gorman's stirring poem after criticism of their suitability (as white Europeans) to properly interpret the words of, as Gorman describes herself in *The Hill We Climb*, 'a skinny Black girl descended from slaves'.[1]

As Mridula Nath Chakraborty writes, in 'a world rife with controversies around cultural appropriation and identity politics' it was 'only a matter of time before these burning issues ignited the art of translation'.[2]

Although I was teaching translated works before this ignition had taken place, I was always aware of the many technical and creative issues surrounding literary translation, and particularly the translation of poetry.

Translating literary work is a complex task. It requires creativity and imagination, and an ability to tackle the enormous hurdle of translating the language of metaphor at the same time as reproducing style and tone. I always assumed that the flaws I noticed in translated works came about because the translator lacked these specialised skills. Now I wonder whether some of them occurred simply because the 'invisible' translator hadn't been able to step into the lived experience and cultural outlook of the writer.

One of the poetic forms that I taught in translation was the *pantun*. This well-loved form of Malay and Indonesian poetry is a four-line poem built out of two couplets. As the Indonesian critic Gazali explains, the link between the couplets is '*gaib*' (mysterious), 'yet palpable to Indonesians whether or not they can say what it is. After reading the first couplet one feels an expectant vibration of the message which is about to come via the second couplet'.[3] Gazali's description raises the question of whether a reader who is neither Indonesian nor Malay could translate the moment of *gaib* in a *pantun*.

Until recently, I had no idea who created the English versions of the *pantun* that I read and taught, but it turns out that most English translations of Malay *pantun* were by male British military officers during the period of British rule in what was then called Malaya. Here is one of these translations – by the English colonial administrator (1913–35) and later teacher of Oriental studies, RO Winstedt KBE CMG FBA – along with my own:

A Malay *pantun*

Dari mana hendak ke-mana?
Tinggi rumput dari padi.
Tahun mana bulan yang mana
Boleh kita berjumpa lagi?

Translation (Anita Patel)

From where, going where?
Grass is taller than grain
What year, what month
Will we be able to meet again?

Translation (RO Winstedt)

High towers the grass
where once we'd meet and wander
'Twist yonder fields of golden grain;
Ah! years may pass, and moons may fleet
how many,
Ere we fond lovers meet again.[4]

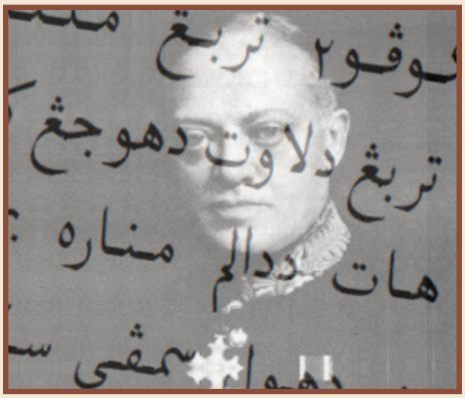
Winstedt's heavy-handed, turgid translation demonstrates his inability to enter a Malay or Indonesian mindset. Instead of relishing the *gaib* of a *pantun*, he seems intent on forcing this elegant poetic form to do the onerous work of a European romantic poem. His dismaying translation is a wake-up call for readers, writers and translators.

Having said this, many translators of literary works are – unlike Winstedt – more than able to transcend multiple boundaries and to successfully tackle the unfamiliar, but it is important for all translators to be visible.

Identity always matters.

[1] https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/20/amanda-gormans-inaugural-poem-the-hill-we-climb-full-text.html
[2] https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-is-this-the-end-of-translation-156375
[3] Gazali (1962). *Puisi dan prosa Indonesia (lama dan baru)* (Indonesian poetry and prose [old and new]), 2nd edn, Jakarta, p. 13.
[4] https://mojes.um.edu.my/index.php/JML/article/view/3600

Image details: see opposite page



Anita Patel *is a Canberra-based writer. Her collection of poetry* A Common Garment *(Recent Work Press) was published in 2019. Her work also appears in publications such as* Cha: An Asian Literary Journal, Mascara Literary Review, Cordite Poetry Review *and* Australian Poetry Anthology, *vol 8 (2020). Anita's poetry was selected for the* Australian Book Review*'s* States of Poetry ACT – Series Three *(2018), her poem* Women's Talk *won the ACT Writers Centre Poetry Prize (2004), and she was the guest editor of* Not Very Quiet Journal, *Issue 2 (2018).*

Who's afraid of identity in translation?

Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty

In March – in the wake of debates and discussions generated by the controversy around the translation of Amanda Gorman's work [see intro, page 6] – I wrote an essay, 'Is this the end of translation?' which was published in *The Conversation*.

In the five months since, that parley has moved in many directions and into multiple arenas, striking at the heart of our age, the 'age of identity'. As I mentioned in that earlier essay, the world we live in is 'rife with controversies around cultural appropriation and identity politics', and with 'power differentials created by the twin forces of colonialism and capitalism … being interrogated in every realm today', it was 'only a matter of time before these burning issues ignited the art of translation'.

Tracing a trajectory of translation from the grand sweep of the Nirvana Route, the Graeco-Arabic and Indo-Persian traditions, I observed that translation is a long game – one that is circuitous, serendipitous and unpredictable – and argued that it must, of necessity, be an encounter with profound difference and the intercultural dialogue that such an act engenders. I concluded that acts of translation – albeit without intending to – alter the course of histories, reorient existing geographies and transform human imaginaries; and therefore the creative potential entailed in journeys of translation are boundless, and often unbounded by immediate concerns of the here and the now.

I also declared that translation has always been the essential tool of empire making, implicated in ruses and stratagems of control and dominance. In our times, these concerns are entwined in the socio-political triumvirate of race, class and sex, which have expressed themselves in the recent decades as the 'culture wars', the 'politics of identity', and now, through what has been – both damningly and euphemistically – termed 'cancel culture'.

However, in that essay, taking a long view of history and its surprising twists and turns, I emphatically appealed to an imagination without borders, as follows:

> The act and the art of translation requires the permission to transcend borders, the permission to make mistakes, and the permission to be repeated, by anyone who feels the tempestuous tug, and the clarion call, of the unfamiliar.

My earlier essay sits alongside many others that have been vital to expanding a much-needed conversation around translation, often seen as a silent and invisible act and commented upon only when a translation is in some way unsatisfactory. As Haidee Kotze says, in a blog piece published three days after my essay:

> Translation – and more specifically, the translator – is for once finding itself shoved into the spotlight, becoming a topic of controversy in an unprecedented slew of newspaper opinion pieces and tweet-skirmishes, both in the Netherlands and abroad … What is it about the Gorman/Rijneveld case that has prompted a sudden outpouring of emotional and intellectual investment in translation, when most people, most of the time, give translation hardly a thought?

In response, in this short piece, I wish to pick up a thread that was somewhat slender in my March essay: the insistence on representation in our contemporary age of identity. Always embedded in relations of power, translation in the realm of imagination is a practice where questions of cultural capital and civilisational concerns govern the shaping of creativity and consumption, appetites and audiences. The arrival of Hernán Cortés on the shores of the Aztec Empire in 1519 led to the Latinisation of an immense landmass; in fact, it instigated a cartographic imagination that *translated* the boundaries of this planet as earth and seas, as globe and continents. Thus was born the European 'myth of discovery' of 'dark' spaces – translated by imperialists as 'black holes' of humankind – and routes that demanded navigation by a muscular Christianity.

As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak theorises, space became 'worlded' in terms of Europe and its Others, in terms of an Enlightened North that carried the burden to civilise the heathens of the South, a remit that recurs in Samuel Huntington's catastrophic 'clash of civilisations' rhetoric. But make no mistake: this appropriation of vast bodies of *terra firma* and *aqua* across the world – and the accompanying conversion of Indigenous peoples, places, plants and parlance to imposed religions, tongues and purposes – was a mission of pillage and plunder, and it was achieved through the means of translation.

… translation requires the permission to transcend borders …

If today, we are witnessing contestations at the site of writing and storytelling by erstwhile colonised peoples and voices, it is because the lineage which imposed 500 years of European subjugation on four fifths of the world now has to face the consequences of such oppression. In this scenario, the argument for a universalist freedom of expression comes into direct conflict with a call for the redress of systemic inequities which continue in the name of this same liberty.

Image: a page from the *Codex Azcatitlan* – a 16th-century indigenous pictorial manuscript of the conquest of Mexico – depicting (far right) Spaniard Hernán Cortés and his indigenous interpreter and lover, Nahua woman 'La Malinche' (unknown author, Wikipedia Commons).

... translation is a long game ... serendipitous and unpredictable.

Nancy Fraser argues that such polarisation sets up false anththeses between the 'politics of recognition' and 'claims for redistribution': she suggests that instead, a conceptual integration of the two is required through a participatory parity of justice and the pragmatic politics of intersubjectivity. It is here that translation sits in a unique place of both knowing and unknowing, equivalence and compensation, essentialism and cultural relativism, that simply has to take into account the scrimmage between words and thought, intention and meaning. Every translator worth their salt has to, perforce, sit in the discomfort of identity, an identity that is bestowed through language and its parochial – yet powerful – accoutrements of community, country and civilisation.

In a piercing article on the nexus of language, provincialism and nationalism that characterises the space of world literature, Milan Kundera lamented 'the inability (or the refusal) to imagine one's culture in *the large context*'. Let us speculate, for a moment, that Gorman's poem was not occasioned by the inauguration of the self-proclaimed leader of the contemporary world, the almighty US of A. What if, for example, it had been composed to announce the next great leader of the People's Republic of China, and had been translated by non-Chinese identities into a European language: would we be up in arms in the same way? My suggestion here is that contemporary questions of identity politics are raised in the face of the history of European imperialism and neo-colonialism, and their twentieth-century divisive partners-in-arms: the managerial mechanisms of multiculturalism and the profit-first impulse of neoliberalism. If in the final analysis, translation is about empire making, then we must interrogate a monopoly that the proverbial 'three percent problem' has on the world of creative and cultural production. We must ask, yet again, why English is the main currency of conversation around the world, and why this *lingua franca* is in such cahoots with global capital. In order to claim the ethical, moral and philosophical legitimacy of the Black Lives Matter movement, in the context of which the Gorman controversy garners power, we then need to argue for blackness in all arenas of representation. We cannot stop at the question of why Rijneveld was commissioned to translate Gorman's work. Even the most basic student of the contemporary publishing marketplace can understand that this was a pact between two transatlantic concerns, one in which the celebrity status of the figures involved – the translator and the translatee – was mere grist to the mill of filthy lucre, rather than representation in its truest sense.

The crux of translational representation can be addressed only when Black (and other) readers, writers and translators have wide-ranging access to the languages of the world, and can pick and choose from a vast repository of world literatures in myriad languages. This would require a far more Babylonian approach to the active practice of multilinguality, of multiple languages being taught from the early school years, of sustained funding to university language programs, and of linguistic proliferation not merely in the name of corporate diversity, but because difference sits at the heart of planetary sustenance.

What about representation then, you ask again – and we are back to that old nut of capitalism and colonialism, reborn today as corporatisation and cartelisation. In this fraught landscape, the role of the so-called 'global' American/English publishing regime is that of a superpower juggernaut which drags in its wake the destruction of a vast number of languages and their creative expressions. In the name of globality, this behemoth of the print industry has created its own empire and swallows everything that comes in its path.

So, if there is a controversy about the translation of Gorman's work, perhaps we need to ask whether the outrage would have been of equal magnitude, had an Inuit practitioner translated a work by a Dalit writer from southern Asia or a Kalinga storyteller from the Philippines. Reader, you may well ask who/what they are – such is the level of ignorance of, and lack of access to, these indigenous voices in the 'global' marketplace of words, or what Goethe called the '*Weltliteratur*'. When those hitherto unknown narrators and translators in myriad 'obscure' languages of the world are able to ask such a question in the climate of an utterly defensible politics of representation, then perhaps we can have a rigorous conversation around who can translate what – and it is only then, perhaps, that we will no longer be afraid of identity in translation.

Mridula Nath Chakraborty *studied the classical English literary canon at Delhi University, and is currently a senior lecturer in Monash University's Intercultural Lab. Her research interests include postcolonial and Indian subcontinental and diasporic literatures (in English and translation), translation theory and practice, studies in nationalism, feminisms and diasporas, public intellectuals, identity politics, queer theory, culinary cultures, global Englishes and Bombay cinema. Mridula's most recent work has been in public diplomacy between Australia and India, via deep-impact literary and cultural exchanges.*

The language I dream in

Pertame Elder Christobel Swan is a founding member of today's Australian Indigenous interpreting profession. One of the few remaining fluent speakers of her first language, Pertame (aka Southern Arrernte), she worked with Russell Goldflam at the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs in the 1980s, and with Jodie Clarkson at the Arrernte Language Office, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory from 2013 to 2017. In April the three caught up to record Christobel's story for *In Touch*.

My home is Twenga [Henbury]. My mum comes from Henbury Station. She was a real strong Pertame [Southern Arrernte] lady. She grew us up to be really strong. My dad was a Pertame bloke from a place called Horseshoe Bend.

I was born in 1946 at Nthareye [Hermannsburg] because my mum and dad were Christians. They used to go there for church. We went by camel – we never had any motorcars at that time. Just camels, horses and donkeys. Mum was full [nine months] pregnant with me, and they wanted to be there for Christmas.

Dad got a job at Henbury Station as head stockman and he worked there all his life, and they had all their kids there. There were seven or eight of us. There's only two of us left now.

Dad loved the work. That was his life, teaching the younger generations how to ride horses, how to brand, going out for mustering. The women used to work in the houses, doing the ironing with the old flat iron. There were no washing machines at that time, and it was hard work for them.

The police went and shot people at Twenga. They shot them like dogs. I was told this story by mum. They were really cruel to our people. The young people were really terrified when they saw it. And the old women, the old men and the crippled used to cry, 'The police are coming to shoot us.'

We used to play a lot of games. We used to go down the creek, and play 'mane-mane' [oral storytelling, pronounced 'money money'] on the ground, with sticks and wires and leaves. We used to make up they're people and put 'em down, and say 'This is the white people here look. They're the bosses.' We were the brown leaves and the white people were the white leaves, and we'd pick up little sticks like they were guns and go 'Bang, bang' and shoot *them* this time.

At first, we were just Pertame people, but then Pitjantjatjara and Luritja people started to come. Our family talked Luritja. Southern Arrernte and Luritja people are really close.

At Twenga we used to see these white people coming there with their suitcases. They said, 'These kids are grown up now, they need to go to school.' When we used to see these people we'd get all our dogs and take off scared because we used to think they were coming to shoot us. Up the sandhill or down the creek somewhere and hide away.

But anyway, my father brought us here to school in Alice Springs. After that I went south for three years and went to school in Adelaide. I stayed there and went to school and there I learnt lots of things – Whitefella way.

Sometimes I say 'No, no, you don't do it like that, you do it like that. *That's* my *language you're talking about.'*

Sometimes we wasn't allowed to speak our language. They used to tell us, 'Don't speak that language!' We used to get together as young kids and say, 'We don't know this English! This is *our* language we're talking.'

My language means the life to me. The world. That's the language I learned when I was a little kid growing up. I love it. I love this Pertame language.

I've got a lot of grandkids and I'm learning them a bit of language, how to speak. I ask them questions, they answer me back in Pertame. I'm really happy. I tell them the old stories, how we lived in those days. I want all my young kids' families to learn Pertame. This language is very very important to us. It got lost. I'm worried. I'm reviving this language of mine by talking to the kids.

=

My language has never been written until I came along and learnt how …

I started working at IAD [the Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs] in the '80s, and I worked as an interpreter first there, and later at AIS [the Aboriginal Interpreter Service] for over thirty years. Interpreting for the Aboriginal people who come from out bush and can't speak English. I did a lot of work. I was made the second coordinator of the Interpreter Service at IAD, after Dr Veronica Perrurle Dobson AM. At that time this was the only Aboriginal interpreter service in Australia.

I used to be in the Supreme Court, doing murder cases and things like that. Sometimes I used to feel really sad, but it was my job and I was learned for that work. For an interpreter if it's a hard word, if the judge says some words we don't understand, we tell them 'Excuse me, can you tell us in a simple way?'

I was there to make them understand why *they* were there, and what they were going to do to them, like put them in gaol or send them back out. And that was good, you know, a lot of those people, when I went out of the courthouse, they shook my hand: 'Thank you, thank you for helping us.'

You've gotta be really precise, especially when you're translating, it's hard work. When you're interpreting it's just your mouth talking. But when you go back and start translating those stories it's very hard. My language has never been written … until I came along and went to IAD and learnt how to write in my language.

I know all them sounds they taught us, the linguists taught us. Sometimes I say 'No, no, you don't do it like that, you do it like *that*. That's *my* language you're talking about.' I know sometimes I'm a headache for them, but I'm a straight out person.

I went to Perth and done interpreting there. I went to every city in Australia doing them things.

I also done interpreting in health. There was one young fella who was going to see the mental health people. He used to talk to me, I used to understand what he was talking about and I used to explain it to them, the nurses and doctors. At the time I was working at IAD we used to go there as interpreters, but now you can see people working there all the time.

Pertame is the language I dream in. I've talked this language every day of my life. I reckon we should learn to live with each other side by side and understand. I think we're sort of getting there. A lot of white people are my close friends. They are really starting to understand our way of doing things.

With the help of some generous friends from down south, we're now teaching Pertame language to Pertame kids in primary schools in Alice Springs, and at Twenga and Perta Rrutenga [Boomerang Bore] in school holidays. When we go back to Twenga, we can hear the people singing out. Their spirits are still there.

I'm proud of what I've done for my language. I teach my children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren songs in Pertame. I tell them about their ancestors and about the Dreamings. We were told about it by our elders and so I tell the next generations now, so that they will know.

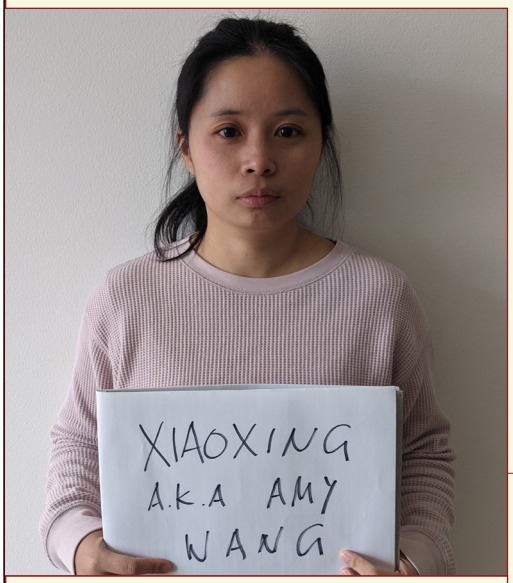
My advice to the children of the world: love each other and love each others' language.

Yenga kangkema [I'm happy].

***Christobel Swan**, now in her mid-seventies, worked for the Northern Territory's Aboriginal Interpreter Service from 2001 to 2011, and remains a NAATI-certified interpreter for Western Arrarnta and Luritja. In 2018 she was one of ten founding Australian Indigenous language interpreters presented with a special NAATI Certificate honouring their achievements, and she was also a finalist in the National NAIDOC Awards 2021, as Female Elder of the Year.*

Four generations of Christobel's family (see photo below) currently work in Pertame language revitalisation and T&I, and in February her great-granddaughter Shania Armstrong, aged just 18, received a Karmi Sceney Aboriginal Excellence and Leadership Award. You can read more about the work that Christobel's family and others are doing to revitalise Pertame language here and here.

Christobel holding her NAATI ID card, with (L->R) her daughter Aurial Swan, great-granddaughter Shania Armstrong and granddaughter Vanessa Farrelly



The Routledge Handbook of Forensic Linguistics (2nd Edition)

edited by **Malcolm Coulthard, Alison May, Rui Sousa-Silva**
reviewed by **Xiaoxing (Amy) Wang**

The Handbook has given me the opportunity to look closely at how language is used as a device to achieve a range of purposes in legal settings.

These include investigation, negotiation, interrogation, fact-defining, persuasion, coercion, culpability/credibility establishment and identity confirmation. It tackles forensic linguistics in three sections:

Section I – The language of the law and the legal process provides a fundamental explanation of how language is structured in legal settings, and how this can affect the various players in this highly complex field.

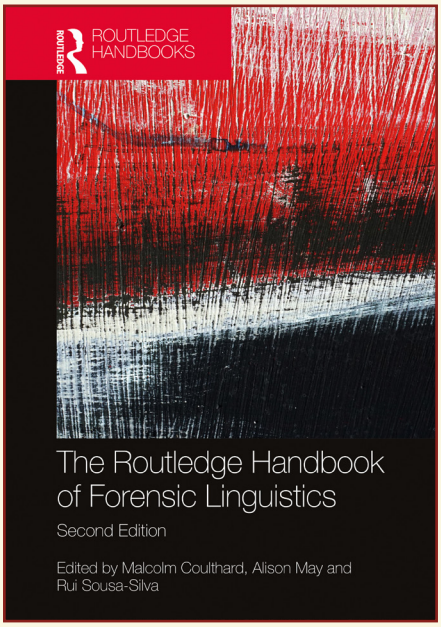
I find **Chapter 2: Legal Talk** particularly useful, as it enables interpreters to understand the roles that both legal professionals and lay persons play in any particular legal setting.

It also gives an overview of various question types commonly found in police and courtroom settings, and explains how each type is formulated, with what intention, and what pragmatic function it is designed to achieve. Knowing how questions can be asked in different ways to trigger a range of contrasting reactions is extremely important for interpreters. It will enable us to evaluate each question type and/or speech style in advance, and prepare an equivalence in the target language that is likely to elicit a similar (if not the same) reaction.

The use of language in police and courtroom settings is further explored in subsections **1.2: Witness and suspects in interviews and investigations**, and **1.3: Language in the courtroom**. The effects of language used in jury instructions and in communication with vulnerable victims are discussed in subsection **1.4: Lay participants in the judicial process**. This may be particularly helpful for those interpreting for the jury, or for victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse.

Section II: The linguist as expert in the legal process discusses in detail the role played by linguistics at different stages of the forensic process. Subsection **2.2 Multilingualism in legal contexts** has to be my personal highlight, particularly **Chapters 30: Court interpreting** and **31: Interpreting outside the courtroom**, which highlight the important role specialised legal interpreters can play in preventing miscarriages of justice caused by misinterpretation. Misinterpretation in legal matters can only be avoided when the interpreter has a good understanding of interviewing and questioning strategies (which is why Section I of the Handbook is of particular interest), has mastered different modes of interpreting (i.e. consecutive and simultaneous interpreting and sight translation), knows when to switch modes to facilitate better understanding, and knows when and how to interrupt a speaker for the purpose of clarification.

Chapter 26: Forensic transcription by Dr Helen Fraser is also an eye-opener, raising a big question mark over how transcripts of covert recordings are dealt with in Australia's justice system (read Dr Fraser's article – opposite page – to see how much more complicated this becomes when translation is involved). One can only wish all legal practitioners would read this whole section carefully, so they understand that specialised training for legal T/Is is essential in ensuring forensic evidence is processed in a fair and just manner, and are aware of the potential consequences if interpreters are not provided with the appropriate working conditions, recognition and remuneration.



Section III – New directions points out several emerging areas that may benefit from more study and is an interesting read. However, I find it less relevant to interpreters than its predecessors. Perhaps the impact of interpreting on the justice system can be considered an area of interest moving forward.

Overall, this comprehensive collection of articles assesses all aspects of forensic linguistics that one can think of. Any interpreter interested in practising in legal settings will benefit from its detailed examination of courtroom dynamics, questioning/interviewing strategies, and language formulation and its pragmatic functions.

***Xiaoxing (Amy) Wang** is a practising interpreter (English–Mandarin) and translator (English>Chinese). She holds a master's degree in T&I from Western Sydney University, and has served AUSIT in many positions. For a fuller biography see our Winter 2020 issue, page 17.*

Translating covert recordings: why more support is needed

In high-stakes criminal cases a great deal can hinge on covert recordings, and if they contain conversations in a language other than English, this adds another layer to the process of determining the content. Professor Helen Fraser – Director of the Research Hub for Language in Forensic Evidence at the University of Melbourne – explains some of the issues involved, around which the Australian Linguistics Call to Action is helping raise awareness and foster change.

Translation of covert recordings (audio recorded secretly, typically as part of a police investigation) for use as evidence in a criminal trial is a particularly challenging area of work.

It lies on the border between translating and interpreting – yet has unique characteristics that really make it a distinct area of specialisation in its own right.

On the one hand it's like translation, in that the 'text' is relatively stable – you can rewind the audio and play it again just as you can review a printed page. A significant difference, however, is that each time you replay audio, it rushes by at speed. To really study it, you need a transcript.

On the other hand, covert recordings often feature informal conversations full of colloquial slang, making it more like an interpreter's job. Two important differences, however, are that you can't ask the speakers to clarify their intended meaning, and you may only have a partial or one-sided impression of the context.

Another major challenge is that many covert recordings are extremely indistinct, to the extent that even trained listeners struggle to hear what the speakers are saying. This highlights an important fact about translating from recordings: the quality of the translation is limited by the accuracy of the translator's hearing. Even the best translation will be unreliable if it includes translation of words that were not actually spoken in the recording.

It is essential, therefore, to start the process of translation by making a reliable transcript of the audio content in the original language. Transcribing indistinct audio is laborious and time consuming. It's also prone to error – so the transcript must be carefully checked. Unfortunately, there is rarely support for translators to spend time creating transcripts, let alone to have them checked for reliability. This is because the courts do not require a source-language transcript – in fact, they don't clearly distinguish between transcription and translation, simply calling the translation a transcript.

The law reasons that the jury cannot use a transcript in the original language. This is true of course – but a transcript *does* provide important assistance to the opposing side in checking the overall reliability of the translation before it is submitted to the jury, to play the important role of assisting them in deciding their verdict. This is one of a number of misunderstandings within the law about what is involved in the transcription and translation of indistinct covert recordings.

Just as the work of Professors Sandra Hale and Ludmila Stern has improved the judiciary's understanding of court interpreting, so the Research Hub for Language in Forensic Evidence is working to help the law ensure that juries form an accurate understanding of indistinct audio that is used as forensic evidence.

The Hub was formed as a direct result of the Australian Linguistics Call to Action, initiated in 2017 by the Australian Linguistic Society and joined by the Allied Linguistics Association of Australia, the Australian Speech Science and Technology Association and AUSIT (you can read the full story here).

On the one hand it's like translation … On the other … more like an interpreter's job.

My colleagues and I are glad to live in a democracy where this kind of engagement between law, law enforcement and academia is possible, and we hope we can continue to work together to improve the handling of indistinct covert recordings in the criminal justice process.

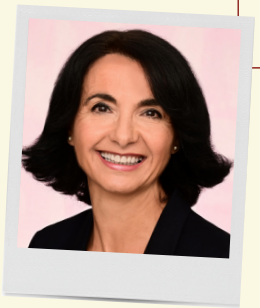
***Professor Helen Fraser** studied linguistics and phonetics at Macquarie University and the University of Edinburgh, then taught phonetics and related subjects at the University of New England, NSW. She has been involved with casework and research in forensic transcription for more than 20 years, and is the Founding Director of the Research Hub for Language in Forensic Evidence.*

In her chapter of the Routledge Handbook (reviewed on the opposite page), Helen argues the case for recognition of forensic transcription as a separate branch of linguistic science.

Court interpreting: advocating for change reaps results

Despite the introduction of the *Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals* (RNS) in 2017, court interpreters have reported few improvements in their working conditions. Courts still rarely provide them with briefing and preparation materials, or assist when they struggle in the dock – where they typically work alone for hours, days or even weeks. However, in March practitioners Cintia Lee and Silvia Martinez both achieved success in advocating for specific changes. They believe that progress is possible – especially when interpreters show initiative and are assertive – if it is supported by both the court and the language service provider. In the following interview, Professor Ludmila Stern asks Cintia and Silvia about their workplace wins.

LS: Cintia, you recently had a gratifying interpreting experience, having received all the necessary preparation materials. How did you achieve this?



CL: I was booked to work in a criminal trial in the district court, but I'd been given very little information. A week before the trial I contacted the language service provider (LSP) to request that certain documents be provided for preparation: the indictment, crown witness list, crown case statement, witness statements and any expert witness reports, plus the names of the crown prosecutor and the defence barrister.

The LSP passed the request on to the court, who in turn passed it to the DPP, and they came back to the LSP with most of the materials I'd requested; and anything not provided initially was supplied during the trial.

The DPP's crown prosecutor was very much aware of interpreters' needs, so she made all the documents I'd requested – and more – available to the us throughout the trial. In fact we didn't have to request anything else, because the prosecution provided everything.

LS: How typical is it that you obtained all the preparation materials you had asked for?

... the first time, in ten years of interpreting ... I was able to get all the materials I needed to do my job properly.

CL: It's not typical at all. In fact, this was the first time, in 10 years of interpreting, that I was able to get all the materials I needed to do my job properly. More often than not, I get either nothing or very little.

LS: What difference did this make to your interpreting?

CL: It made all the difference. The materials allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the matter. When you're interpreting in court there's no time to analyse what's being said, and why, and predict what's going to come next, because it's all so fast.

In this case, I had the opportunity to prepare all the terminology associated with this particular matter. By terminology I'm referring not only to technical vocabulary but also the set of words attached to *this* matter. For example, not all sexual assaults are the same, each one has its own characteristic circumstances and associated vocabulary. So it was extremely important that I knew of any particular problematic words and had prepared for them.

As a result, this was the first case in which I had no difficulties whatsoever with any of the words and everything just rolled smoothly. I could anticipate what was going to happen and why, interpreting 'on the fly', and I can confidently say that in this trial, I provided my best interpreting yet. It was a fantastic experience.

LS: What else assisted you?

CL: This smooth way of working was only possible because I was working in tandem with another interpreter. In this case, with separate interpreters assigned to the defendant and the witnesses, I saw the opportunity for us to work together instead. The prosecutor thought it was a great idea and proposed it to the judge, who accepted it, so we took turns to interpret. This meant that, again, everything ran seamlessly as we didn't need to ask for extra breaks.

Another essential ingredient was the hearing loops, which we had at all times, so everything was crystal clear. In this case, we were doing *chuchotage* for the defendant, interpreting absolutely everything that happened in court,

from beginning to end, so the defendant was completely linguistically present.

This best time in court was also the hardest I've ever worked, because once you're prepared, with all the materials in front of you, and able to take turns, you don't need to interrupt the proceedings at all. As a result no one remembers there's an interpreter, so they don't slow down. Everybody spoke at their normal pace, so we worked extremely hard … but also extremely well.

LS: Going back to hearing loops – interpreters often find they're unavailable, uncharged or out of order. Who organised yours?

CL: That was a challenge. The court officers change from day to day, so even if one officer had learned that the loops need to be charged and available, you might get a different officer next day and have to explain again from the beginning, until they all knew that we needed them in advance of proceedings every day.

LS: **What was the role of the judge in all this?**

CL: The judge was very accommodating and facilitated not only working in tandem, but everything we proposed or requested. For example, at one point I needed a copy of the judge's written directions to the jury, but the associate refused to give them to me. When the judge started quoting from them at full speed I stood up, put up my hand and requested a copy, and the judge immediately asked his associate to give me one so I could interpret.

A hearing loop in use, image © and courtesy of Sennheiser electronic GmbH & Co. KG

LS: **Silvia, you recently had a positive experience of a different kind ...**

SM: Yes, I used remote simultaneous interpreting technology in court – 'tour guide' equipment provided by Congress Rental. I'd been assigned to interpret in a two-week trial, and knew I'd be sitting in a rigid chair in the dock next to the accused all day every day, facing sideways, getting a crooked neck and having nowhere to rest my notepad.

With the RNS having been in place for three years, I knew there had been efforts to use equipment in court. I wrote to the LSP, Multicultural NSW (who, in my experience, take interpreting in legal settings very seriously). The manager reached out to Congress Rental, who supported our proposal to trial their technology in a real situation.

I picked up the big briefcase of equipment from them and took it home with me to charge. With no response from the judge about my using the equipment, it was with trepidation that I turned up on Monday at the Downing Centre (a big Sydney court complex with serious security) with my radio transmitters. At the security check I pulled out the briefcase, which I'd labelled with the case number and name of the judge, to make it look very official … nobody cared!

So, getting the technology *into* the court complex was no issue, and once inside, there was absolutely no concern about its use in court either. What did require a bit of negotiation with the judge was for my colleague and me to work in tandem. I think the judge was aware of the RNS – she used language consistent with it – but she was concerned about setting a precedent which would have budgetary implications. Personally, I think being able to work in tandem (even without technology) on any case that takes more than two or three hours needs a precedent – and we set one, as she did eventually agree to allow it.

LS: Can you describe the set up?

SM: The portable equipment allowed us to sit just outside the dock. There were three fixed chairs there to be used by corrective services staff accompanying prisoners, but as the accused was on bail, we could set up there. We asked for a small table, and as soon as an okay came from the court, a wonderful court officer (who was there all the way through the trial) organised a small round table for us that fit perfectly. We could sit comfortably, one either side of the table, with all the information and our notepads in front of us and a good view of the court.

I think the judge was aware of the RNS ... but ... concerned about setting a precedent ...

LS: How did you negotiate the handover with your partner?

SM: Initially, we said we'd do 15 to 20 minutes each. If a witness was delivering, or the judge was giving directions to the jury, reading prepared text really fast, we interpreted for 15 minutes, then swapped. In other instances we'd make it a bit longer, looking at what was happening and negotiating as we went. We had hearing loops, so audibility was sorted. I also got the little alcohol swabs to make sure we sanitised the loops and the interpreting equipment.

The fact that we had the equipment meant that we didn't need to be right next to the accused. I made sure that the equipment was charged every night. The next morning, I'd sanitise the equipment for the accused, switch it on, synchronise it to the correct channel on my transmitter, and set it on the little wall between where we were sitting and where he'd walk to go to the dock. We'd say 'Good morning' and he would grab it and put the earphone on and receiver in his pocket. That was the extent of our exchange with the accused.

It was almost ideal conditions in that we had both the information and the tech support we needed, and were working together. We never had to ask for a break; the court didn't have to accommodate the interpreting beyond the provision of these three main conditions that are required for full, accurate and professional interpreting to take place in a courtroom.

Working in tandem also makes document management – which is essential in court interpreting – much easier. When we're in the middle of intense interpreting it's difficult to make the cognitive space to look for a document and find the right place in it, but if I'm not the acting interpreter, I'll find each document in advance and hand it to my colleague.

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LS: Did the judge in either case comment at the end of the trial?

CL: Our judge said nothing. In fact, throughout the trial, he didn't have to do anything about the interpreters – we weren't there as far as he was concerned. He didn't introduce us at the beginning of the trial, or say anything to us at the end. It was disappointing, because we'd worked so hard – one day, when giving his directions to the jury, he spoke from 10 am to 4:15 pm, nonstop, at top speed, and we had to swap every 10 minutes – but he *did* thank me effusively when the matter returned to court for sentencing some weeks later.

SM: We were luckier. Towards the end of our trial the judge said, 'Madam interpreter, in case I forget when it's your last day, I do want to thank you and your colleague for the very professional way in which you provided the service'. I interpreted that simultaneously, and the accused nodded his head as well. It was gratifying to feel our work and knowledge being recognised within the court as an important service. It was excellent.

LS: What happened after these experiences? Did they become more common?

CL: No, it's always a battle. Before a recent hearing I approached the LSP, but the court told them, 'We don't provide materials to interpreters'. When I have no idea what a matter is about, I have several ways of finding out. One is Googling – sometimes I find information in the media. Or I get information from the unrepresented defendants, who have no problems letting you read the documents, the fact sheet, et cetera. If there's a lawyer they look at you and go, 'Wow, I'm not sure about this', but sometimes they'll go, 'Okay, yes, sure. Why not?' Sometimes all I'm asking for in the local court is the fact sheet. Very often they let you read it, and you have a good understanding of the context. Other times solicitors can be reluctant, saying things like 'Why would you need anything? All you have to do is interpret.' I can go to the prosecutor, but they might tell me, 'Oh, it's the solicitor who has to give you information.'

LS: Do judicial officers give you support?

CL: In a recent local court hearing, I was to interpret for a witness who was giving evidence over an audiovisual link (AVL). I didn't have her full name, the name of the matter, I didn't know anything else; so in the courtroom, I addressed the magistrate and said, 'I haven't been briefed', and he said, 'I don't think you're entitled to be briefed'. I mentioned that the RNS say interpreters should be briefed in order to provide more accurate interpreting and avoid mistakes that could be costly to the courts, but this magistrate had never heard of the RNS, and didn't want to. He basically seemed to think I was just a machine, so why would I want to know anything?

However, another time when I said to the magistrate, 'The interpreter has not been briefed yet,' he said to the solicitor, 'Can you please brief the interpreter?'

LS: Silvia, what was it like to go back to interpreting without equipment?

A portable 'tour guide' system contains (left to right): recharging case, transmitter, head-worn microphone, receivers x20, ear pieces x20, plus rechargeable batteries x21 (image courtesy of Congress Rental)

SM: I went back to *chuchotage*. Despite COVID, nobody cares where the interpreter sits in relation to the defendant, so it's become part of my conversation with the court officer up front: getting hearing loops, and letting them know that if I'm interpreting from the public gallery, I need space between me and the defendant – which also means that my volume needs to be greater than usual, because I can't whisper to them from 1.5 metres away. I don't sit next to them, but either behind and sideways, diagonally behind, or a chair-width apart.

LS: In conclusion, what advice do you each have for your fellow court interpreters?

CL: First, you have to show the court how much better you can interpret when you're familiar with the matter – not for yourself, but for our profession. I never take things personally; so when they say, 'Oh, you don't need this, you don't need that' – implying that I'm incompetent – I don't take it personally, because I haven't started interpreting yet so they can't know whether I'm competent. That gives me the strength to keep going, because it's nothing against me, myself.

SM: In court, I assume ignorance and don't get angry when people don't understand the interpreting process. For example, I ask for 'background information' that will allow me to interpret in context, not for 'briefings', because when I use this word people think I'm asking for the full brief. If my booking says 'criminal' I need to at least know the charges, and – if it's possible – get relevant fact sheets.

If people in court don't understand what I want, I explain in a confident way so there's less pushback. In that instance when the prosecutor resisted giving me the written directions to the jury, I knew that I had to keep trying, and I did get them.

We need to communicate our requirements professionally. I explain that this is what's required, not for the interpreter, but for the court to be able to work with languages other than English.

Some colleagues never ask. Many say they've been working in courts for years and never asked for anything, so why would they now, while others seem to feel they know everything and have nothing to learn – so complacency and lack of professionalism within our profession play a part too.

CL: In the past, if a request was denied I didn't insist, as I didn't have anything to back up my arguments, so I do understand that attitude of not asking. For me, the game changer was the RNS. It's given me the confidence and the conviction to stand up for my rights. When it was published, I really believed that things were going to change; and when they didn't, I realised I had to make them change myself. If interpreters in court can't hear clearly, they can't interpret effectively, but the court watches them without realising they need a hearing loop. We have to break this vicious cycle of incompetent interpreting by stepping in and saying, 'This is what we need in order to work professionally'.

LS: Thank you both very much for sharing your experience and advice with us.

Since this interview, Multicultural NSW has continued to negotiate with the NSW Courts Administration. One outcome has been a commitment to routinely make hearing loops available to interpreters in courts that have them. Providing preparation materials remains under discussion. In another step forward, Multicultural NSW has purchased several portable sets of interpreting equipment from Congress Rental, and has begun to train interpreters in their use.

***Ludmila Stern** is Professor of Interpreting at UNSW Sydney, where she founded the Master of Interpreting and Translation program. She was Director of the NAATI Board (2010–16) and Chair of NAATI's Technical Reference Advisory Committee (2017–20). Her research focuses on interpreting in international and domestic courts, and includes the ARC Linkage Project* Judicial Officers working with interpreters: Implications for access to justice *(on which she is Lead Investigator), and also the project* From the Nuremberg Trials to the International Criminal Court: Interpreting in War Crimes Prosecutions.

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Finding the right key: translating *On the Line*

When the younger of her two children set off to work overseas in early 2020, Sydney-based literary translator Stephanie Smee was looking forward to embarking on some new projects in the solitude and calm of an empty nest. Instead, she soon found herself juggling her work with retrieving both children – *and* her parents – from overseas, while her husband 'pivoted' to working from home. Luckily, one of the projects in hand – the translation of an award-winning book-length prose poem – was compelling enough to drown out all distractions. Stephanie reflects on the work and how she approached translating it here.

After more than a decade translating literature, mainly from French into English, I still feel privileged every day to be able to crawl into the minds of such talented writers.

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of the task, to me, is the notion of – in the words of translator and playwright Philip Boehm – 'putting one's ear to the text', to find its 'music'. Boehm describes his initial approach to a new literary translation thus:

> … I close my eyes and let the music play until I hear the melody and rhythm of the writing … Then I try to find the proper key in English – transposing as needed, while always paying careful attention to the musical rests, so that I may also render any silences lurking between the phrases … We isolate elements, we distil, we re-create. We have a whiff of the charlatan about us.

'I suppose', says Boehm, 'all translators are alchemists at heart'.*

'I suppose all translators are alchemists at heart'.

In the same way as a musician will make decisions about the texture, dynamics or length of a note, a literary translator will make decisions about how the text *sounds* … not only in their own head, but trying also to anticipate how the reader will hear it.

I'm insisting on these musical analogies – on the aural nature of the task of literary translation – because in previous commissions I've rarely felt the rhythm of the text to be so relevant as in my recent translation of Joseph Ponthus's ground-breaking, largely autobiographical work. Not only is the text of *On the Line: Notes from a factory* (originally published in French in 2019) full of musical references; its very structure lends a rhythm to the words which required particular sensitivity in the translation.

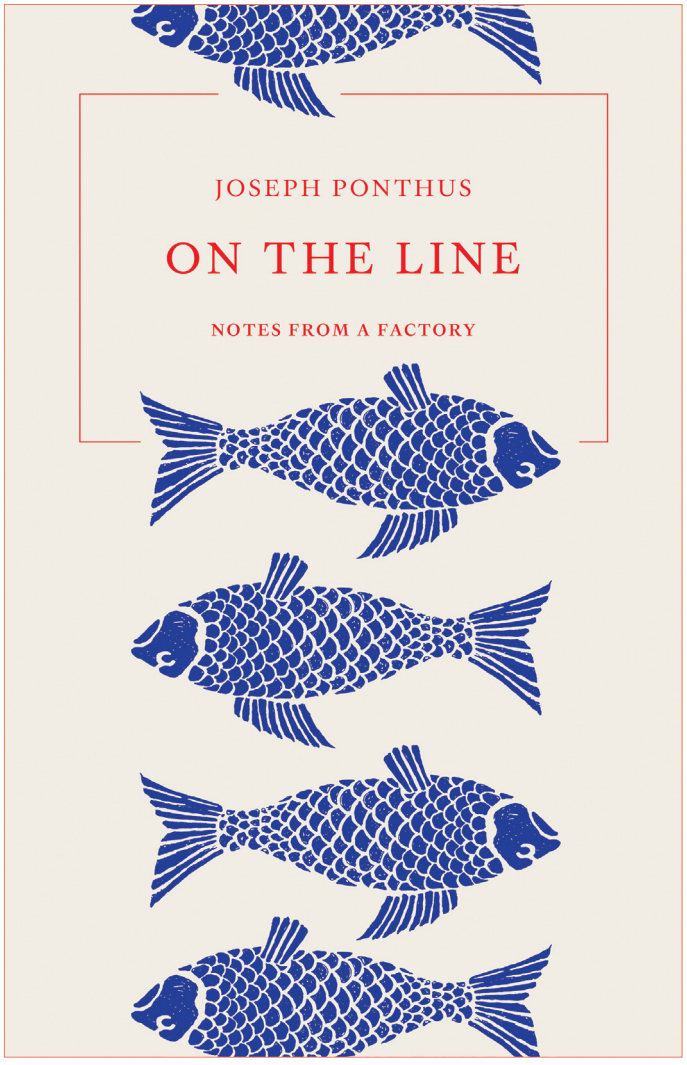
Unable to find work the area in which he had previously been employed, namely social work, the author enlisted with a temp agency and started to pick up casual shifts in the industrialised food plants of Brittany. Working on production lines, he first processed seafood: crowns of prawns for supermarkets, and whelks and shellfish for the festive season, then moved onto draining tofu – a truly nightmarish task – before finding himself assigned to abattoir work. *On the Line* is an attempt not just to record, but to process the horror of what he witnessed there, to try to give it some meaning, to find dignity in the nature and necessity of this work. But it also compels us, his readers, to bear witness to the broken minds and bodies left in the wake of these processing machines, forcing upon us a certain complicity. We cannot look away from the implications for other human beings, and animals, of the decisions we make as to how we choose to live.

We are offered a way into the text – the first challenge for the translator – in the French

title, *À la ligne*. If you have ever been asked to perform a French dictation, you may recognise the instruction to start a new line, a new paragraph. It is a clever double entendre, of course, not only referencing the production line and Ponthus's persistent return to the line, but also signalling the author's intent to start a new line with every new phrase, eschewing any other form of punctuation.

So, what to do with this title? For some time I considered simply 'Return', which I felt might mirror the relentlessness of the production line and go some way to capturing the double entendre of what could be understood as an instruction to press the 'return' key on a keyboard to start a new line. However, it would not, perhaps, offer readers enough of an idea of what was contained between the covers. And, of course, publishers have their own opinions which have to accommodate marketing requirements as much as linguistic imperatives. We ended up with 'On the Line: Notes …', accompanied by a 'translator's note' which allowed me a little more room to explain both the title and the nature of the text to come.

The technique of returning to a new line – with no full stops, barely a comma, and instead just a capital letter for the start of each new phrase on a new line – meant the author had tremendous freedom to allow the music of the text to mirror the rhythm and acoustics of his own day, his moods, his rage and exhaustion, but also the humour and pathos, the dignity and indignity of the environment in which he found himself working. The text shifts from short, sharp phrases to longer, more lyrical sentences, and then to phrases peppered with pragmatism and humour, requiring this translator always to have her 'ear to the text'.



Incessant nightmares hammering
Repetitive
Daily

Not a nap not a night that is free of these nightmares of carcasses
Of dead animals
Tracking me
Attacking me
Violently
Taking on the features of my loved ones of my deepest fears

Ponthus shifts from this explosive battery of syllables to thoughtful musing:

And all those lines I didn't write
Though written in my mind a thousand times on my production lines
Phrases both beautiful and profound
Linking one to the next
Relentlessly

And then on to bleak black humour:

'It's the most bloody annoying thing trying to find a fingertip on the floor'
Jean-Paul's busy telling me
'With the blood and all the meat scraps that are constantly lying around
A fingertip for god's sake
You can easily miss it
…'

continued overleaf

The cover of *On the Line: Notes from a Factory* (2021) is reproduced courtesy of its Australian publisher, Black Inc.

continued

Most literary translators will agree that a particularly challenging aspect of their work is the reckoning with internal references to matters that authors have legitimately taken as assumed knowledge on the part of their original readers. Ponthus evidently delighted in manipulating into humour and wordplay the broad literary, historical and political references which he had at his disposal.

In a text such as this, footnotes would have interfered quite dramatically with the visual effect of the formatting of the author's words on the page, so it was necessary to find solutions that were, as much as possible, embedded in the original text. However, again, the very particular structure of this text sometimes rendered it challenging to expand upon – or provide an explanation within the body of the text for – a reference which might have proved too obscure for the average Anglophone if left unexplained.

Where it was felt that Anglophone readers might benefit from a little more 'background' information, we decided that brief endnotes would be the most effective solution, rather than interrupting the intended rhythm of Ponthus's words.

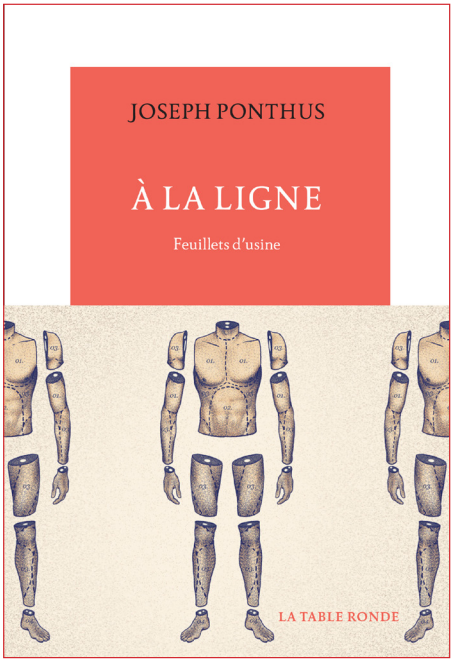
One example of this is a reference in the text to a fellow worker, Fabrice Le Noxaïc, deliberately changing the way he wrote his initials on his work kit. Instead of 'FLN' to reflect his actual name – initials which would have instantly brought to mind the political party known as the *Front de Libération Nationale* – Le Noxaïc would write 'LNF', leaving the author to quip that perhaps he regretted not being named Olivier-Antoine Schultz. While Ponthus could assume that his French readership would 'get' the inference without further explanation, the phrase and its political insinuation would be meaningless to many Anglophone readers. The solution proposed to the author was to include a reference linking that name to the acronym of the *Organisation de l'armée secrète* in the body of the text itself, and then to provide an endnote explaining the political inferences to be drawn from the author's remark. The result is, of course, not as subtle as the original, but the inference may well have been lost altogether without the additional information.

I feel enormously fortunate to have had the opportunity to translate this astonishing work. It is unlike anything I have ever previously read, let alone translated. It is an unflinching, moving and important book on the nature of work and our attempts to carve meaning and dignity out of some of the most inhumane environments we, as humans, have ever conceived. Perhaps, as Ponthus points out, it is the very essence of the human condition that we are capable of reeling before the beauty of Apollinaire's poetry, before the wonder that is Bach's St Matthew Passion, and yet still seek to reconcile ourselves with the horror of wars – analogies to the battlefields of World War One are numerous in the text – and the mindlessness of work on the production line and the slaughter of animals in our abattoirs. Ponthus forces us to engage, asks us not to look away, not from the exploitation of human capital, nor from the inhumanity of our actions.

Just weeks before the launch of the English language edition earlier this year, we received terribly sad news. Joseph Ponthus had died, at the tragically young age of 42. His death is a great loss, not just to the literary community in France, where his work received several prizes, but to the global community of minds.

Stephanie Smee *holds a double degree in law and French studies (University of Adelaide), was awarded the University Medal for her French Honours thesis (University of Sydney), and worked as a solicitor in Sydney and London before trading in her legal career for translation. Stephanie has translated across a range of genres, and worked with her Swedish mother, Ann-Margrete Smee, on the first English translation of an iconic set of Swedish children's stories. Her translation of Hannelore Cayre's* The Godmother (La Daronne) *made the NY Times list of 100 Notable Books (2019) and won the 2020 CWA Dagger for Crime Fiction in Translation.*

* Boehm P (2014). An Act of Imagination. In: Ball D (ed), *The Art of Empathy: Celebrating Literature in Translation,* National Endowment for the Arts' Office of Public Affairs, Washington DC.



Cover of *À la ligne* (2019) reproduced courtesy of its French publisher, Éditions la Table Ronde

Our excellent students !

Every year, AUSIT recognises some of our most promising future colleagues via two events for its educational affiliates – tertiary institutions which offer NAATI-approved T&I programs.

We invite each affiliate to nominate students for AUSIT Student Excellence Awards (SEAs), based on academic achievement. Congratulations to this year's nominees, listed far right.

Meanwhile, the annual **AUSIT Translation Competition**, launched in 2020, features a different set of languages into English each year. This year the languages were Chinese, Indonesian, Italian, Spanish and Vietnamese. A panel of 16 experienced AUSIT members worked together to assess a total of 50 entries and choose a winner for each language – two for Chinese, which had the highest number of entrants – and also a 'highly commended' for Chinese and also for Spanish, which had the second highest number of entrants.

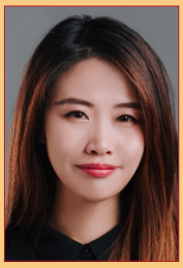
Congratulations to this year's winners (listed right), and a big thank you to all our volunteer assessors. Winners receive free AUSIT membership (2021/22), plus both they and the assessors receive free attendance to the AUSIT National Conference 2021 (see pages 4–5).

We asked **Olivia Lee** – two-time Translation Competition winner (2020 and '21, Chinese) – and **Ruonan Wei** – an SEA nominee from Babel International College, our newest affiliate – what winning this competition/award means to them, and where they'd like to go from here. They said:

AUSIT Translation Competition 2021

Language	Winners	Highly commended
Chinese	**Olivia Lee** *Monash University* **Kenny Han** *University of Queensland*	**Run Fei Ivy Lo** *University of New South Wales*
Indonesian	**Laura Wallace** *RMIT University*	
Italian	**Stefania Ravelli** *University of Western Australia*	
Spanish	**Brendan Joseph O'Reilly** *Western Sydney University*	**Mirkos Caparachin** *RMIT University*
Vietnamese	**Hai Yen Nguyen** *Western Sydney University*	

Olivia Lee: '*The competition is a rare opportunity to get feedback from the experts at AUSIT, so to me winning is like an affirmation of my approach to translation and to my studies. I hope I can continue to improve throughout the rest of my degree and future career.*'



AUSIT Student Excellence Awards 2021

Branch & Institution		Nominees and their courses	
NSW	University of New South Wales	**Sarah Helen Walas** Master of T&I	**Anita Jean Byrnes, Thea Holly Dixon** Master of Translation
	Macquarie University	**Linxi Huang, Shin Dong Yeop, Xiaomeng Qi, Sukgi Hong** Master of T&I Studies	
	TAFE NSW	**Ian Bartholomew** Diploma in Interpreting (LOTE–English)	
	Western Sydney University	**Noor Al-Badry** Graduate Diploma in Interpreting	**Sara Yoon, Elizabeth Jane Tilly, Thi Lam Phuong Nguyen** Master of I&T
VIC/ TAS	Monash University	**Monica Bakowski, Otis Karinya McCulloch, Christopher di Pasquale, Fan Qi** Master of I&T Studies	
	RMIT University	**Roksan Ashraf Ahmed Lashin** Master of T&I	**Suqin Qian, Roni Riyadh Toma** Advanced Diploma of Interpreting
QLD	University of Queensland	**Hui Shi, Mariko Kishi-Debski, Brendan Tran, Yingqi Bi** Translation and Interpreting	
WA	University of Western Australia	**Johanna Battista, Brett Meursault, Melissa Tan, Tiziana Borgese-Flocca** Master of Translation Studies	
	Babel International College	**Zhe Lu** Advanced Diploma of Translating	**Ruonan Wei** Diploma of Interpreting (LOTE–English)
SA/NT	University of Adelaide	**Fan Zhang, Xiaojing Zhou** Master of Arts (Interpreting, Translation & Transcultural Communication)	
	TAFE SA	**Margaret Phiddian, Rowen Reilly** Diploma of Interpreting (Auslan)	

Ruonan Wei: '*This award is a great honour. It particularly recognises my work, and it feels amazing to be awarded for the efforts that I put in. In the future, I will continue to work on enhancing the technical skills of interpreting and providing interpreters with knowledge and tools for reflecting on and improving our overall performance.*'

Branch PD Coordinator

This is the second interview in our series exploring the various roles that AUSIT members play in the running of the organisation. Most roles are voluntary, while a few of the more onerous are 'honorarium' positions, meaning that the incumbents receive some payment. In this issue we talk to Leisa Maia, the Queensland Branch's professional development (PD) coordinator.

Hours/week:	Voluntary?	AUSIT member for:	Time in this role:
1 to 4	Yes	14 years	4 years

Other: presented on behalf of AUSIT (annual T&I forum, School of Languages and Cultures, University of Queensland, 2018) / member of proof reader pool, *In Touch* magazine (since 2019) / moderated sessions at AUSIT National Conference (2020) / project management, AUSIT & NAATI 'QLD Preparing Interpreters' Scholarship Fund (since 2020) / presented national Portuguese language-specific webinar on complexities & challenges in translating academic documents (2021)

Q1: What are your main tasks as a PD coordinator?

The role involves: developing an annual PD proposal, which I submit to the branch committee for review; liaising with presenters and holding preparatory meetings with them in the run-up to their events, to ensure they run smoothly; discussing the requirements for each event with the branch committee and delegating tasks; performing the role of host for both face-to-face and online events; preparing post-event evaluation surveys which are sent out to all participants; and using the information gained from the surveys to guide further planning of workshops and programs.

Q2. There are so many PD options out there. How do you decide which to offer to Queensland members?

We consider a few factors. Foremost is the feedback received from members, through both the post-event surveys and direct contact. I collate the suggestions and present them to the committee, and we then have an extensive discussion on the types of presentations we've put on recently, what is currently lacking, and how we can best meet the PD needs of all our members. We try to offer a mix of interpreting- and translation-based events, and to make sure there are options for all levels – from T/Is who are new to the profession to highly experienced practitioners – and (particularly since COVID came into the picture) delivered both face-to-face and online; and we always include at least one ethics event per year.

Q3. How does the workload vary over the year?

This depends on the time of year and what's going on. During busy periods, such as with the roll-out of national webinars in 2020, I was spending at least four hours per week on PD coordination. In quieter times, the role only demands around one hour per week.

Q4. How have you benefited personally as a result of taking on this role?

I've benefited tremendously. In a past life I was an executive assistant, and I still really enjoy organising and coordinating people and events. The PD role allows me to fulfil this desire. The greatest benefit, however, has been the friendships that have developed with my fellow committee members. It is an absolute pleasure being part of the QLD committee, and I'm so proud of what we've achieved together over the years.

Q5. Like our first interviewee, Joe Van Dalen, you've taken on a variety of AUSIT roles. What advice would you give to a member who's thinking of putting their hand up?

I would strongly encourage any member, new or old, to join their branch committee. There are innumerable opportunities to get involved, such as helping to organise and deliver PD events, representing AUSIT on various working groups, or even just giving your opinion in discussions. It's extremely important that committees consist of a mix of translators and interpreters, and experience levels. The wealth of experience brought to the table by seasoned professionals is invaluable – it means we don't have to re-invent the wheel – while newcomers bring fresh perspectives and help ensure that AUSIT stays current and provides value to its members. Through participating in committee meetings, you are privy to debates about all facets of the industry, and can actively help shape the future of our profession.

Diplomatic T&I: three quick questions for Peter Filmer, Manager Events & Sister Cities, Blacktown City Council, NSW

In our April issue, Korean–English T/I Sophia Ra described her experiences in diplomatic T&I for the Council's engagements with its South Korean sister city, Suseong-gu (Suseong district) in Daegu City. We asked Peter Filmer about the Council's use of T&I services. He prefaced his answers with: 'Things have, of course, changed markedly during Covid restrictions. My answers relate to pre-Covid conditions, in the hope that things will be "normal" again post Covid.'

1. How often and when do you require the services of a T/I (translator/interpreter)?

This varies. Of our five sister cities, we require T&I services for those in China and South Korea. Should Council be planning to make a delegation visit to one of them, or preparing to receive a delegation, the level of engagement is high, and involves mainly verbal and/or email advice to clarify various aspects of the upcoming visit. From then onwards there is also a high need for translation (official speeches, etc). At other times our use of T/Is is sporadic, and we engage practitioners on a needs basis.

2. What are your main expectations of T/Is, and how do you find them?

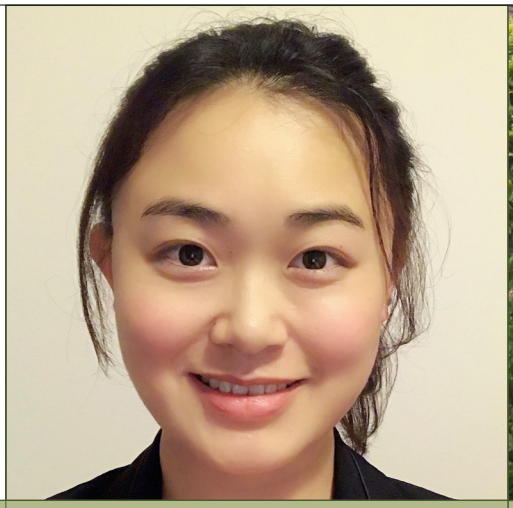
The process used to be quite ad hoc, but in 2011 we remitted an Expression of Interest document for practitioners holding NAATI qualifications in the relevant languages, in both interpreting and translating, and from the responses we were able to identify suitable candidates. Our core expectations are really quite simple: we need the spoken and written word to be converted in such a way as to clearly convey our messaging. We know that from time to time it's difficult to align a word or phrase with an exact equivalent, so we're also seeking people who can exercise initiative to ensure they get the message across, especially in live interpreting situations. Over time T/Is working with us also develop an understanding of the decision-making processes and cultural thinking involved, and a sense of the core of what makes Council tick. Our current T/Is have all had long-term engagements with us, so they've grown familiar with the political nature of the work, and the similarities and differences in the two local government political systems. This is very important, that their interpreting and translation goes beyond simple understanding of the words spoken or written.

3. What aspects of the way a T/I works would encourage you to use them again?

The main elements for reengagement are very high levels of demonstrated professionalism and reliability, combined with a clear understanding of the role. The professionalism required involves timely – in fact, often rapid – response to requested tasks; ability to gauge whether our visitors are fully understanding the message; being able to work additional hours at very short notice; and maintaining a cool, calm demeanour. We also reengage practitioners who are well groomed, and can relate to our visitors beyond their formal allocated tasks.

A 2017 visit by Suseong-gu celebrates 25 years of partnership, L->R: T/I Ms Sophia Ra; the Mayors, Mr Lee (Suseong-gu) and Cr Tony Bleasdale OAM (Blacktown); Manager Events & Sister Cities Mr Peter Filmer OAM

MEMBER PROFILES



NAME:	**TIANYU (CYNTHIA) LI**	**RUTH WYE**
Translator or interpreter (or both):	translator	translator
Language(s) and direction(s):	English>Chinese	English>German
Location:	Sydney & Wollongong, NSW	Sunshine Coast, QLD
Practising as a T/I since:	2018	2009
Member of AUSIT since:	2020	2009
Main area(s) of practice:	health advice	business, marketing, technical, medical

Q&A

Q1

How did you come to be a translator and/or interpreter?

A1

I've been fascinated by the beauty of language since I was young, and I did really well in language courses at school in China. When I came to Australia for tertiary study, I was further impressed by the role of language in promoting connections, and I took some units in translation. When I graduated I enrolled on the Advanced Diploma of Translating course at Multilink Academy of Interpreting & Translating. I went on to take the NAATI translation exam too, received my certificate in November 2018, and set out immediately on my journey as a freelance translator.

A1

The part of Germany I grew up in was under a significant British influence at the time, due to locally-based British occupation forces and their families. The different language and culture totally fascinated me – I just could not wait to learn all about them! Later – working in industrial business management (including in the IT, automotive and marine sectors) in both Hamburg and London – translating correspondence and technical documents quite naturally became part of my day-to-day work. For some years, my young children became my first priority; meanwhile, in 2004, my partner and I relocated our family to Australia; and while settling down here I gradually realised that it was time to take my translation work to a professional level – which I did in 2009.

Q2

Tell us about a project you have worked on that was especially interesting or challenging (within the bounds of confidentiality of course).

A2

As well as freelancing, I worked part time at the Australia–China Institute for Arts & Culture in Western Sydney for three years, and one of my responsibilities there was translating. One day I was asked to translate the minutes of a meeting of the Institute's Advisory Board from English into Chinese. This was a challenging task, as the meeting had covered a wide range of topics involving various unfamiliar terminologies, and it had to be completed within a few hours. One strange term – Chinese kangaroos – turned out to relate to how one culture is understood by another, and how this impacts cultural exchange. To complete the translation I needed to better understand the topics and terminologies, and to work efficiently and professionally. I used the research techniques, plus the translation skills and strategies, that I'd learnt during my studies and my freelance work to date, and I also often exchanged translation knowledge and skills with my manager at the Institute. She's an experienced translator, so I was pleased and relieved when she approved my translation.

A2

A recent translation project I found extremely interesting was on autonomous vehicles: facilitating on-road trials, testing and development of driverless vehicles and other advanced automotive technology in Australia. I was able to use my knowledge and experience of the automotive sector, but also challenge myself by delving into new technologies and their legal implications. The project resembled an exciting adventure. Extensive research was needed on some aspects, and this opened up a whole new world for me. So many extremely challenging questions started to appear, including: 'What about safety?' and 'Is the AI up to the task yet?' It seems the imagined futures depicted in the science fiction movies that I so enjoyed watching when I was growing up are starting to become reality.