

**(E)co-Translation:
Toward a Collective Task**

by

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Preface

Before I speak: those who've come before me, their singing in my ears—

*

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”
— Arundhati Roy

“We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable—but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.” — Ursula K. Le Guin

“I am interested in building a society in which creativity is a mass condition and not a gift reserved to the happy few, even if half of them are women.” — Silvia Federici

*

“If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground.” — Frederick Douglass

“Knowledge alone has never ended imperialism.” — Nick Estes

“I do not want to erect solidarities in metaphysics.” — Aimé Césaire

*

“If you're an artist who identifies with, who springs from, who is serviced by or drafted by a bourgeois capitalist class then that's the kind of writing you do . . . to maintain status quo, to celebrate exploitation or to guise it in some lovely, romantic way.” — Toni Cade Bambara

“We don't need any more writers as solitary heroes. We need a heroic writer's movement: assertive, militant, pugnacious.” — Toni Morrison

“What if the aim of your art is not to humanize the other but to talk about the systems of power, and the people who benefit from them, that turn people into others in the first place?” — Kaitlyn Greenidge

*

“Collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaborations, we all die.” — Anna L. Tsing

“The relationship of the storyteller to the structures of the world matters.” — Alexandros Orphanides

“Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them, listen to them. They are alive poems.” — Joy Harjo

“To build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination.” — bell hooks

“While I don’t believe that we can separate ourselves from our privileges, we can leverage them toward justice.” — Ejeris Dixon

*

“Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand, the implementation of that freedom. However, experience has taught us that the action in the now is also always necessary.” — Audre Lorde

“Because of the current crises in the world, as well as those within the art field, you ask yourself these existential questions – ‘Why should I do this? What relevance does art bring to the world in light of these crises, and what role can artists play within them, without perhaps inadvertently reinforcing them?’” — Patricia Reed

“Choose where you want to work, choose: Invent your task, do it! All together to destroy reactionary ideas, bourgeoisie ideology, individualism, solemnity, all white, European, capitalist ways of existence.” — Cecilia Vicuña

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“[W]e are each other’s / harvest.” — Gwendolyn Brooks

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Preface	iv
List of Figures	vii
List of Appendices	viii
Abstract	ix
Chapters	
I. Dreaming the Collective: (E)co-Translation in the Era of Climate Crisis	1
II. (E)co-Translation as Entanglement in Cristina Peri Rossi’s <i>Strange Flying Objects</i>	32
III. “Carrying Ourselves Across”: A Self-Translation Workshop	65
IV. Careful Collaboration: On the Making of <i>Barings // Bearings</i>	88
V. The Rise of the Translator Collective	103
VI. Cultivating Refuge: Toward a Care-Centered Translation Practice	152
VII. Coda: May We Care, May We Repair, May We Liberate Ourselves	191
Appendices	203
Bibliography	272

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Jaipur man warding off locusts, photograph: Vishal Bhatnagar	39
Figure 2.2. Dead cattle after extreme drought (San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua), photograph: Sean Hawkey	52
Figure 2.3. Dead cattle at Eddington Station (Queensland, Australia), photograph: Rachael Anderson	53
Figure 3.1. First “Carrying Ourselves Across” workshop publication (2018)	73
Figure 3.2. Second “Carrying Ourselves Across” workshop publication (2019)	74
Figure 4.1. “Ping” by Elisa Munsó	99
Figure 5.1. ETC manifesto (2015)	111
Figure 5.2. ETC brainstorming session (2016)	113
Figure 5.3. Broadside from <i>Polyphonia</i> issue one	115
Figure 5.4. Ephemera printed by tabletop press and Gocco duplicator	116
Figure 5.5. Half-Letter Press poster, illustrated by Kione Kochi	117
Figure 5.6. Annie Boletin looks for inspiration	118
Figure 5.7. Various broadsides from <i>Polyphonia</i> issue two	118
Figure 5.8. <i>Co Co Co U</i>	119
Figure 5.9. <i>Chogwa zine</i> issue three (February 2020)	144
Figure 5.10. Back cover of <i>Cold to the Eye</i>	145
Figure 5.11. Envelope cover of <i>Polyphonia</i> issue two	145
Figure 7.1. Federal Translators Project, illustration: Jason Katzenstein	202

List of Appendices

Appendix A: <i>Everything You Fight for and Gain</i>	203
Appendix B: Personal Interview with Jeremy Tiang	240
Appendix C: Personal Interview with Alex Zucker	255
Appendix D: Personal Interview with Anton Hur	264

Abstract

Combining theoretical and personal reflection, this dissertation situates my experiences as a translator-activist within the emerging scholarship of eco-criticism and eco-translation. Playing upon the prefix “co-” in Michael Cronin’s theory of “eco-translation,” I suggest how literary translators might work collectively to bring about a more avowedly ecological practice. I also extend the concept to the broader political conditions in which translators perform their labor across distinct socio-linguistic contexts. The collective task of (e)co-translation, I propose, is to build alternative communal structures in which the practice of translation reflects and addresses ecological and political crises.

The essays that comprise this dissertation map several relations between translational, ecological, and decolonial discourses. Chapter One explores how a process-oriented translation practice challenges translators to build solidarity with established and potential collaborators, in order to cultivate what Anna L. Tsing calls *refugia*: spaces that stage transformational, cross-species encounters in order to deepen our sense of entanglement. Refuge, in this sense, evokes two particular lines of the thought that animate this dissertation: a sense of “comradeship,” or shared cover, that collectivities facilitate, and the need to prepare climate refugia in a world of advanced environmental breakdown.

The next two chapters reflect on specific examples drawn from my own practice of translation. Chapter Two gives an account of translating Cristina Peri Rossi’s 1968 novella *Strange Flying Objects* into the contemporary context of climate disaster. Chapter Three

describes the process of designing and leading a self-translation workshop for English-language learners at a high school in Ypsilanti, Michigan, within a moment of increased climate migration. The appendix includes a Risograph publication of student self-translations, titled *Everything You Fight for and Gain*.

The remaining chapters expand my focus to reflect on various forms of collaboration through literary translation. Chapter Four meditates on the challenges and felicities of co-editing the 2019 special issue of *Absinthe: World Literature in Translation* on contemporary Catalan writing by women. Chapter Five documents (including a series of interviews in the appendix) the recent founding of several translator collectives in the Anglophone sphere, and the promise they hold for developing alternative structures for communal translation and publishing. Chapter Six develops a theoretical framework for approaching translation practice within discourses of ecology by examining translation that prioritizes incommensurability as an invitation for many-bodied collaboration.

Finally, the speculative coda imagines a day in the life of a translator who lives according to the principles introduced throughout the essays, in order to flesh out translational practice within an emergent “care-work economy” of the future. Translation emerges as a form of care work—a careful practice of tending to the text that, in turn, permits us to cultivate community as well as broader ecological refuge.

Keywords: literary translation, eco-translation, refugia, decolonization, incommensurability, care work, translator collectives, self-translation, translation theory

Chapter I
Dreaming the Collective:
(E)co-Translation in the Era of Climate Crisis

a difficult question

“What I would like to propose is that we situate value elsewhere and consider how collaborative forms of translation might be situated within a posthumanist ecology of translation. In other words: is there a way of attaching value to what translators do that does not involve the sacrifice of a sense of collective responsibility?”

Michael Cronin, “A New Ecology for Translation”

a speculative response

In her 2019 Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture, Arundathi Roy grapples with the ways that literature might respond to our current moment of ecological and political crisis, as “the ice caps melt, as oceans heat up, and water tables plunge, as we rip through the delicate web of interdependence that sustains life on earth” (“Literature Provides Shelter”). In asking what it means to be a writer at this critical juncture, and what it has meant for her to know that her work has reached “readers on the frontlines” of struggle—readers who have very different perceptions of what literature “should be in the first place”—Roy asserts a vision of collaborative literary practice:

[T]he place for literature is built by writers and readers. It's a fragile place in some ways, but an indestructible one. When it's broken, we rebuild it. Because we need shelter. I very much like the idea of literature that is needed. Literature that provides shelter.

Shelter of all kinds. ("Literature")

On first read, Roy's metaphor calls to mind the image of worn book boards that transform into a roof over our heads. This shelter is less about offering imaginative "escape"—although that can certainly be part of it—and more about contesting power and dreaming up an alternative to the systems we find ourselves locked within. In this sense, literature, for Roy, is a structure that offers essential cover—dispelling, as Audre Lorde has done, notions of "luxury" that linger around practices of storytelling and poetry—from the increasingly authoritarian and techno-progressivist ordering of our global political economy that has led us to "nightmare" ("Literature").¹ Instead, literature can be fashioned as a "commons": a life-giving web of resources, accessible to all, that exists outside the framework of private property. Central to Roy's claims, then, is that no single person can build this shelter, and that no sole set of arms can bear its weight, which is why she insists that literature must be a structure "built by readers and writers" together—a place of our own construction, where we might practice relating with the un/familiar in mutualistic ways.

Since beginning my work of organizing around issues of climate justice and ecosocialism a few years ago, I have found myself asking a very similar question: what does it mean to be a literary translator in these uncertain times, especially for those of us who live in the United

¹ In her essay "Poetry is Not a Luxury," Audre Lorde conceives of poetry as a type of "sanctuary" in which we might grapple with our sense of self and our sense of others as inextricably linked. Lorde writes, "As they become known and accepted to ourselves, our feelings, and the honest exploration of them, become sanctuaries and fortresses and spawning grounds for the most radical and daring of ideas, the house of difference so necessary to change and the conceptualization of any meaningful action" (25). The goal of poetry, for Lorde, is not to offer some "unthinking" respite, but rather to build a space where we might carefully reflect on our process of becoming—our entanglement—in a harmful world, and how that reflection gives way to careful action.

States? After all, “Capitalism’s gratuitous wars and sanctioned greed have jeopardized the planet and filled it with refugees” writes Roy, and “much of the blame for this rests squarely on the shoulders of the government of the United States” (“Literature”). What’s more, if literature offers shelter, what kind of cover does literature in translation afford? To whom does it offer cover? What materials, what conditions, what relationships make literature, and the process of translating stories, a place of possibility for those who enter?

I’ve wrestled with these very questions across the various sites of translational practice I’ve occupied in the last ten years: in the university classroom, where I remain committed to workshop pedagogy as key to translation praxis; in the publishing sphere, where I’ve collaborated with myriad translators, authors, and editors to amplify stories from the minority-language matrix from which I work (Catalan, Spanish, and Galician); in the graduate workshop in literary translation I co-founded with fellow translator and graduate worker Emily Goedde, which has acted as a core space for community-making in my own department; and in the translation workshops I’ve designed for English-language learners in a nearby secondary school. When I bring these sites to mind, I’m overcome with flashes of joyous and difficult collaboration. I remember how texts were not taken as static, but were instead living bridges opening up a terrain for the collective negotiation of meaning. (I’ll never forget a lively discussion I had with a group of Spanish-speaking high-school students who were trying to render the term “chingona” in English.) And I’ve come to realize that an engaged, careful practice of literary translation doesn’t skirt the lived experiences we bring with us to any text—it seeks them out. Put another way: the object of (literary) translation is never simply a text, but instead the relationships revealed and transformed by the translational process.

While Roy doesn’t directly address the questions of literature in translation, or

world literature, as it takes shapes within the publishing industry, we can safely assume they inhabit her considerations; as a writer in constant engagement with readers, her sense of building becomes apparent as she maps out the ways her own work has travelled “into other Indian languages, printed as pamphlets, distributed for free in forests and river valleys, in villages that were under attack, on university campuses where students were fed up of being lied to” (“Literature”). Her considerations also occupy my own, as I am interested in the ways that literature is re-made as it travels, not only through the practices of translators, but also through dominant publishing and distribution networks, which are often trapped within the transactional logic of market-driven consumption. Despite these current systems, I’m convinced that literary translators have much to contribute to this process of reorientation toward interdependence, for building together, after all, requires that the instruction manual be accessible across languages and lifeways.

As a literary translator and educator, I hold tight to Roy’s insistence on the spirit of co-creation, because translation, in my understanding, is a lived process of (re)building ideas—through reading *and* writing—across languages and bodies and space. Translation leans into worldly things; it’s an embodied, collaborative act. In fact, “the popular image of the lonely translator is strikingly at odds with the reality of his or her work within the profession,” for translators are in constant collaboration with others: authors, readers, editors, publishers, and, often enough, other translators (Cordingley and Manning 2). Indeed, “A focus on collaboration is a focus on process” (Huss 449). And when a text enters into translation, when it’s “no longer a stable object owned by a single author, it emerges as a site of translational or editorial labor” (Apter 1410). With the rise of Translation Studies as a discipline, literary translators have probed and resisted the historical discourses that would categorize them as invisible mediator of others’

stories and, in doing so, they have played a role in how we perceive our (in)separability from one another and from the world that animates us. And when we encounter stories from “outside,” from “elsewhere,” that move us, we open ourselves up to other ways of being in and traversing the world—we participate in the collective process of imagining what enduring shelter might look like in the first place.

Out of this sense of interdependence emerges a critical vision for the future: When we act together, in the spirit of comradeship and togetherness, we also shelter one another. For “comradeship”—a living and lived expression of “reflective solidarity,” of mutual responsibility—“is a political relation of supported cover” (Dean *Comrade*, 2020).² And to live and act in comradely fashion is to act with care: to hold ourselves and others accountable to those with whom we are intertwined—and to hold ourselves and other accountable for the world that we share, the world that shelters us. In contributing to this cover, we acknowledge that “translation and justice,” as James Boyd White suggests, “first meet at the point where we recognize that they are both ways of talking about *right relations*, and of two kinds simultaneously: relations with languages, relations with people” (322, my emphasis). Making right, in this sense, is also a speculative “making ready,” a prefigurative living in the world we occupy now, and in anticipation of the world we hope to bring into being, to which literary translation can contribute.³ In fact, the only way to bring that world into being is *through* translation (Cronin 13).

² As Jodi Dean writes, “Etymologically, ‘comrade’ derives from camera, the Latin word for room, chamber, and vault . . . Sharing a room, sharing a space, generates a closeness, an intensity of feeling and expectation of solidarity that differentiates those on one side from those on the other. Comradeship is a political relation of supported cover” (3, 2020).

³ As Patricia Reed explains, “making ready” carries with it a long history of collaboration: “There’s an expression outlined by philosopher Robin Mackay that I’ve found helpful as a way to orient artistic practice, what he called ‘making ready.’ It’s an idea he wrote about following its coinage from the artist Simon Sterling. Obviously it’s a play on words as a follow-up to the paradigmatic ‘ready made’ operation of artistic production, which is more about the presentation or recontextualization of things that already exist. What I infer in the idea of ‘making ready’ is a

It is in this sense of “making ready” that I perform what Michael Cronin, whose question opens this conversation, has called “eco-translation,” which “covers all forms of translation thinking and practice that knowingly engage with the challenge of human-induced environmental change” (*Eco-Translation 2*). In a certain sense, all translation at this historical moment is “eco-translation,” much as “in the twenty-first century, all politics are climate politics” (Aronoff et al. 3). Importantly, here’s where we can make the distinction between collaborative translation in the past and that of the present and future: “eco-translation” challenges the “tyranny of ends over means,” a rhetorical move that captures discourse around translation as primarily a product that has, turn after turn, upheld the authority of certain institutions, whether they be the Church, the market, or publishing norms (Cordingley and Frigau 3).⁴ Even when co-translations became somewhat of a frequent practice, as within the Anglophone Modernist context, these collaborations were often flattened to uphold the idea of singular authorship, as Claire Davison’s concept of the “isolated paradox” reveals.⁵ So while collaboration may have indeed been a core

more hypothetical position; rather than reconfiguring what is, it engages propositionally with what could be. This ‘making ready’ is a way to prepare the sensorium for worlds, and configurations that don’t (yet) exist, so it’s potentially a way make these unknowns experiential, in order to make them amenable to cognition since so much of the phenomena we’ve been talking about often escapes sensory perception. Even if those ambitions for artworks may seem a bit bloated, I think of this ‘making ready’ in a humble way, away from the tropes of a heroic singular artist. Sylvia Wynter once noted that abrupt change doesn’t just magically come about, that the seeds of seemingly abrupt change have been planted and cultivated for some time, so perhaps in this light we can see our role as contributing to a setting of such seedbeds for hypothetical worlds to come” (“Towards Post-Anthropocentric Cosmologies”).

⁴ As Anthony Cordingley and Céline Frigau Manning argue, “tracing this history in the West, Belen Bistué (2013) has argued that the desire to represent translation as a conflation of different roles derived from a will to accord the translated text poetic unity and singular authority. This aligned it with wider political processes in Europe that were consolidating power around the unification of church, state, family and patriarch. Devolving upon the individual the task that was sometimes performed by the many allowed those writing about translation to promote an image of the translator as the text’s surrogate author” (19-20).

⁵ In her study *Translation as Collaboration: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, and S.S. Kotliansky*, Davison writes that there has been, historically, a “tendency to underrate collaborative translation” in the modernist context, even as translating, as a cultural process, was taking greater hold (4-6). She asserts, “Yet even within this welcome rereading of transnational literary dynamics, two paradoxes lingered on. First, the ‘entropic paradox’ (Cronin 2006: 128): translation is acknowledged conceptually as a driving force in cultural exchange, yet individual translations continue to be assessed in terms of what they lose in the linguistic exchange. And second, what might be called the ‘isolated paradox’: despite the consensus surrounding a collective cultural interchange, translators themselves tend to be evoked in isolation. *The temptation to draw up hierarchies and to resort to binary qualitative assessments also*

value of translation in other periods, it has often been downplayed because our analytical tools, so often based in what “belongs” to one author or another, as Davison argues, get in the way of making meaning out of collaborative endeavors in the first place (8).⁶ This erasure of process ties in, however subtly, to Cronin’s paralleling of product-oriented translation to that of the “the more general concealment of the earth’s resources that have made human action possible” at the cost of all other forms of life (*Eco-Translation* 3).

Throughout this dissertation, I will build on the labor of Cronin and many others to provide an incipient blueprint that incorporates the linguistic, material, and interpersonal concerns I flag above, recognizing that literary translation, as praxis and pedagogy, holds the capacity to repair harm only if we understand it as *embodied* and *many-bodied* labor, that is, as decidedly process-oriented. My use of “many-bodied” underscores one of my primary contentions throughout this dissertation: A literary translation practice that takes ecological thinking seriously insists on collective labor and collaborative translation, recognizing that no single translator necessarily possesses all the critical knowledge to take on a translation in an “open-ended” way; in this sense, the co-translation is always already embedded in *eco*-translation. This movement toward (e)co-translation becomes even more important in a moment when we must act swiftly, and in new transnational configurations that greatly reduce high-

feeds this ‘isolated paradox.’ The welcome focus on Constance Garnett’s immense translation achievements, for example, seem to require a concomitant downplaying of Aylmer Maude; it applied her courageous, single-minded resolution but at the expense of prevailing linguistic and translation ethics; it also overshadowed her working methods, which depended, particularly in the early years, on her work alongside a native guide: Stepniak, Fanny Stepniak or Natalie Ertel-Duddington. The dynamics of translation as a collective partnership, a common practice particularly when engaging in literatures in languages for which there were few thorough dictionaries, and fewer scholars or specialists, are even further marginalised. Translation carried out by novelists and poets tend to be broach only within their individual biography. If their translations are idiosyncratic or experimental, they might be taken as a lesser part of the final oeuvre, or as extended expressions of the writer’s personality. If the translations are ‘faithful,’ painstaking or unspecialised, they are more often discounted. Here too, if writers are not proficient in the languages they translate from, and work collectively, they tend to remain ‘invisible in the margins of someone else’s translation’ (Dalgarno 2020:3)” (5-6 my emphasis).

⁶ In the context of Woolf and Mansfield’s collaboration with Koteliensky, Davison declares, “Another factor to be taken into account is that individual approaches to the writers inevitably downplayed the co-translations because they were collective, giving no material indication of the writer’s singular contribution” (8).

carbon travel. At its most intimate, (e)co-translation might facilitate what Marc Fischer calls “mutually-supportive practice” by embracing co-translation—in pre-negotiated, freelance teams or in translator collectives—and, in so doing, dispensing with the tired enmities of competition, property, and domination, especially as they are expressed through Western constructions of authorship. (E)co-translation is, then, not a “resistant” strategy, but an active, reparative one, and comradeship, in the form of collaborative and co-translation, has the capacity to be a highly ecological mode of communing and creating. And a translation practice that is, at its heart, ecological, must attend not only to the making of worlds between text, body, and land, but between bodies themselves. In this context, we can move from discussing translation in terms of craft—which traps the art form into a discourse of singular artistry—to translation as the art of care for the many. And as poet Aja Monet reminds us, “Self-care may be an act of resistance, [but] collective care is revolutionary” (@aja_monet).

Translational Labor and Collaboration

While I fundamentally believe in the potential of translation as a kind of care-full building, I’ve also had to grapple with the fact that literary translation has, wittingly and not, contributed to the machinery of cultural othering, owing to the fact that our dominant conception of literary translation has emerged from a historical *excision* of that which doesn’t neatly fit—a harmful “ethnocentric violence” in Lawrence Venuti’s term—over solidarity across difference.⁷

⁷ Lawrence Venuti, in “Translation as a Social Practice: Or, the Violence of Translation,” states: “The violence of translation resides in its very purpose and activity: the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist it in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts” (20, 1996). Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier advance a similar argument in the introduction to their critical anthology *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts* (1995). In order to “resist” this violent tendency, Venuti proposes a “foreignizing” strategy over a “domesticating” one: “Foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations” (20, 1995).

For Venuti, “The violence of translation resides in its very purpose and activity,” that is, in the repositioning of texts to “fit” within the “hierarchies of dominance and marginality” that shape the structures of meaning and conditions of legibility by which readers in a given target culture will be able to make sense of them (20). I’m not convinced, however, that this violence is “inherent,” as Venuti proposes; it seems more likely that these dominant models are a question of potentiality and socialization over the “nature” of translation writ large. In any case, it certainly stands that we must reckon with these dynamics now, for the logic of “straightening out” for the sake of intelligibility or acceptance within discourses of power is a material process as much as a conceptual one: the harm is clearly more than textual. Because “when the movement of texts (translation) is linked with the movement of bodies (migration),” writes poet and translator Madhu H. Kaza, “issues of language and culture necessarily collide with questions about politics, history, race, and imperialism—the very contexts of migration and diaspora” (13). These embodied collisions—shearings, woundings, even slayings—have been integral to exposing deep (and deeply unjust) structural flaws in this fortification we call the United States of America, proving that not all forms of shelter serve the good or the many.

Many contemporary literary translators and scholars have dedicated considerable thought to minimizing discursive violence in the texts they take on. Some, like Tejaswini Niranjana, have called for targeted disruption, “one which she explains ‘shatters the coherence of the “original” and the ‘invariable identity of sense . . .’ in a practice in which we constantly interrogate ourselves and our right to speak as and to speak for” (Merrill 161). Doing so requires a keen sense of what Gayatri Spivak calls the text’s “rhetoricity”: the strategic handling of language, of what’s said and left unsaid, as well as a given language’s entanglement in the world (181).⁸

⁸ In one of her most-quoted arguments, Spivak asserts, “In the act of wholesale translation into English there can be a betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest. This happens when all the literature of the Third

Building on this post-colonial stance, others have attempted to turn the violence of translation against itself by positioning translation as what Joyelle McSweeney and Johannes Göransson call a “deformation zone,” where “a wound . . . makes impossible connections between languages, unsettling stable ideas of language, productive ideas of literature” (quoted in Choi 4). In this regard, Don Mee Choi has advanced the idea of translation as an “anti-neocolonial mode,” reminding us that we can only begin making “impossible connections” when we refuse “to uphold the notion of national literature . . . as if such borders are ahistorical and apolitical” (4). These multiple theoretical interventions have been critical to mapping the logic of domination that structures our encounters in/of the world and how we come to occupy and reproduce them.

Yet, beyond issues of textual strategy, it’s worth mentioning that exclusion still structures the ways we tend to gather and build, especially within the most *visible* communities of literary translators—those whose most publicly represent the “human” image of the translator in the public eye—in the U.S. Here, too, those insistent, institutionalized “hierarchies of dominance and marginality” are difficult to simply will away. Despite being a profession that seeks to promote meaningful diversity, the Author’s Guild 2017 Survey of Literary Translators’ Working Conditions—the first of its kind, and not without its methodological limits, including its small sample size—reports that the majority of U.S. literary translators self-identify as white, college-educated women (with many holding Ph.D.s).⁹ Yet, as Corine Tachtiris has noted, “Though

World gets translated into a sort of with-it translatese, so that the literature by a woman in Palestine begins to resemble, in the feel of its prose, something by a man in Taiwan. The rhetoricity of Chinese and Arabic! The cultural politics of high-growth, capitalist Asia-Pacific, and devastated West Asia! Gender difference inscribed and inscribing in these differences! For the student, this tedious translatese cannot compete with the spectacular stylistic experiments of a Monique Wittig or an Alice Walker” (182). While it is fair to say that Spivak identifies a particular problem in the way that mainstream publishing standards tend to demand legibility, we should also hold open the possibility that affinities exist across languages, and that notions of what any writer should sound like also enforces its own prescriptiveness.

⁹ The 2017 Author’s Guild Survey of Literary Translators’ Working Conditions puts this disconnect in stark relief: 83% of respondents reported that they were white and 77% have completed either a Ph.D. or M.A. Yet, the survey has its limits, given that the question of who identifies as a literary translator, and thus who responded, is a messy

women translators outnumber men about six to four, their total publications are nearly equivalent—evidence of gender inequity in publishing practices in which the work of women translators is published at a lower rate than men’s” (“Allyship and Intersectional Feminism in Translation”). What’s more, Tachtiris points out, the question of *who* translates also collides with *whom* is translated, as available data reflects that male authors are more regularly translated, and that “a bias also persists toward European authors, or at least authors writing in European languages” (“Allyship”).¹⁰ These are difficult, uncomfortable questions to ponder together, made more difficult by the fact that we don’t have extensive, easily consultable demographic data about the translation industry (literary or technical), which indicates a larger problem likely linked to the very problem of the translator’s historical invisibility itself.

While the Authors Guild Survey isn’t definitive, as its authors themselves note, it generally points to experiences that coincide with the translation community as I have, albeit briefly, known it: 1) that the field of literary translation in the US is overwhelmingly white, 2) that literary translators rarely make a living from translating literary works alone, and 3) because many literary translators cannot make a living from their work, they often seek shelter elsewhere, including in academia. As a white woman pursuing a Ph.D. and as someone who learned her second and third languages later in life, I’ve sat with this disquiet over the past ten years. While my sense of identity as a translator cannot be reduced to these broad categories, which fluctuate depending on institutional location, class, race, and gender identification, etc., they are

one. For example, although the survey was sent directly to members of various professional associations (approximately 1,200 people) and was publicized on social media, only 205 people responded. Moreover, respondents were over 30 years of age. Given these constraints, we don’t know who remains outside the report’s remit (those outside of professional associations, for example) or what encouraged/discouraged respondents to answer in the first place. This is only further complicated by the fact that the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics—whose data reflects a broader swath of workers—doesn’t offer a “literary” category in their summary of Interpreters and Translators against which to compare results.

¹⁰ Tachtiris: “Despite the fact that women translators outnumber men, however, men authors in translation are published at a higher rather than women authors, at a rate of 65-70% men to 30-35% women, in recent years (data collected from the Open Letter Translation Database)” (“Allyship and Intersectional Feminism in Translation”).

nonetheless instructive. Overall, though, I've grown only more convinced that the shelter we're constructing—that white, “educated” *we*—looks more like the Ivory Tower I currently occupy than the sanctuary it could be.¹¹ Indeed, this tower does offer some kind of shelter, for “at its best, the academy feels like a refuge from the exigencies of the rest of the world,” and yet, it “increasingly relies on the same exploitative economic forces that power the rest of the world (Hsu).¹² We tend to (re)build, however unconsciously, what we know; that's what makes the socialization of domination and its reproduction through us so terribly effective.

While we certainly need more data on the subject, literary translators are grappling with these questions nonetheless.¹³ With defiant clarity, Kaza draws our attention to this difficult divide between literary translators in her introduction to *Kitchen Table Translation* (2017), an anthology dedicated to translators of color in the Anglophone sphere. For Kaza, gathering together voices and strategies “distinct from the mainstream of literary translation”—that is, whose work is generally published—is not a form of “congratulatory diversity,” but rather an affirmation that “some of us experience translation all the time in our bodies, names, homes, movements, and daily lives even if we are not translating from one text to another” (15). Despite the fact that “in most parts of the world—particularly in post-colonial contexts—translation is

¹¹ Interestingly enough, Jason Grunebaum draws the direct connection between freelance translators and adjunct faculty: “Like adjunct faculty, translators constantly struggle for visibility in a world that would rather pretend they don't exist. Translators are often not considered “real writers” similar to how adjunct faculty are often seen as also-ran tenure-track professors. In a landscape of scarcity, most full-time translators, like adjunct faculty, have to hustle all the time, and live in a state of constant contingency, where being able to say no to work is a luxury. And how many literary translators are also adjuncts?” (“Translators and Collective Action”).

¹² Hua Hsu contends, “At its best, the academy feels like a refuge from the exigencies of the rest of the world. It's why many of us came here in the first place, to pursue knowledge or meaning at a safe distance from market forces, political fashion, the logic of short-term deliverables. And yet from the adjunct crisis to ballooning student debt, our profession increasingly relies on the same exploitative economic forces that power the rest of the world. Our spaces of critical inquiry are now built on a system in which a minority has absolute job security, and most are permanently waylaid, living paycheck to paycheck” (“The Purpose of Our Profession is at Risk”).

¹³ In 2016, a series of formal and informal conversations about the overwhelming whiteness at the American Literary Translators Association annual conference occasioned the creation of the Peter K. Jansen Memorial Travel Fellowship, which is “preferentially awarded to an emerging translator of color or a translator working from an underrepresented diaspora or stateless language” (“Jansen Fellowship”).

recognized as inherently political,” Kaza notes that “discussions of literary translation in the U.S. emphasize formal concerns with a light attention to cultural variance” (14). Drawing on the work of Venuti as well as those marginalized voices featured in the anthology, Kaza suggests that these “formal concerns” are often articulated in the desire to promote “fluency, which often coincides with ideas of accessibility and seamlessness . . . There is an emphasis on the translator’s mastery of language and artfully inconspicuous technique” (14). And while we might acknowledge, as Kaza does, that the question of “resistant translation” animates academic debates on translation, the drive to “fluency” still often dictates publishing norms. What’s more, a fixation on the mastery—often through assimilation—often leaves little room for (and little room for “error” from) those who have been socialized to doubt their own experiences with language, namely immigrants and first-generation US citizens.¹⁴

For some, it might be easy to balk at Kaza’s contention that craft is not political. After all, how many panels at the major annual literary academic conferences (those of the American Literary Translators Association, Modern Language Association, and American Comparative Literature Association come to mind) contain the word “political” in their descriptions? Of course, the ways in which language use resists or re-inscribes power *is* a political question, and the questions asked and knowledge produced during these panels—and in the investigatory

¹⁴ Tachtiris, drawing on Kaza, extends this critique: “Recent immigrants or the children of immigrants often translate simply as a way of life, yet as many panelists indicated on the 2016 ALTA panel “Inheriting the Future: Cross-pollinations of Race and Translation,” these communities may also not picture themselves as literary translators because of anxieties about a “lack of fluency” in one or both languages (later published as Perry et al, 2018). Madhu H. Kaza—the editor of *Kitchen Table Translation*, featuring translations, essays, and other reflections on translation by young immigrants or children of immigrants—encourages immigrants and heritage speakers to move past the idea of mastery and just try their hands at translation, to take a text and think of translation as a form of play (in Perry et al 2018: 198-199). She also argues that inclusivity should not amount to assimilation into the established norms of the profession. In her words, “If you’re having this big translation party, it involves opening the doors so that more people can come to the party. But the party has to change, too” (Perry et al 2018: 187). This can include, again, breaking down the idea of “mastery,” as Haitian-American translator and performance artist Gabrielle Civil does in a performance piece in which she mockingly takes on the role of her male translation professor critiquing her mistakes (2017: 44-45). Changing the party also includes an openness to how people arrive at it” (“Allyship”).

papers presented by panelists—are not without their scholarly value. But, again, that the content of scholarship can be so systematically divorced from the context of scholarship is the problem. While many translators might readily underscore the political ramifications of their texts, institutional privilege and questions of the translator’s positionality (a positionality that indexes one’s relationship to the world and how social and political contexts contribute to one’s sense of identity across race, gender, class, sexual preference, ability status) often come second, when they’re even addressed at all.

This divide, then, between what many of us situated in that “mainstream of literary translation” *say* we want translation to be and how we go about producing the material change needed to get there is, at root, the political question we need to ask. In my own experience, Kaza’s inquiries come to a head in discussions of literary translation as a form of labor. Building on Kaza, Tachtiris contends that literary translation, as a profession, has tended to exclude two communities: “people of color whose families have been in the United States for generations (predominantly African Americans whose ancestors were enslaved) and more recent immigrants of color or the children of immigrants of color” (“Allyship”). Here, Tachtiris identifies second-language acquisition as a major challenge for those communities in entering the profession, and so is right to establish that the question of diversity is a structural issue not easily remedied by interventions within our field alone. Yet, she also points to how “young people in domestic communities of color often face pressure to participate in ‘social uplift’ by entering well-paid and well-respected professions” (“Allyship”). This tracks, at least anecdotally, with the impression that more people of color work in technical translation and interpreting, which tends to offer a more stable salary. This last point suggests one way that we, literary translators in the US, contribute to these exclusionary structures: Instead of demanding a living wage for our

labor—a demand that implies (and necessitates) a kind of class consciousness that directly connects our individual fight against the de-collectivization of public life to the collective struggle of a broader, more diverse coalition of workers—literary translators in the US have tended to focus on making the current system marginally workable, despite how it limits *who* can participate in the first place.¹⁵ This is a complicated question, especially considering that our ability to collectively negotiate rates as translators in the US has been historically undercut by federal bodies like the FTC, who famously brought suits against the ATA as early as the 1980s.¹⁶ Yet, even in the UK, where the Translators Association provides recommended rates, the problem of fighting for a living wage persists.¹⁷ As Deborah Smith puts it,

We should all be aware that these kinds of books are usually not commercially self-sustaining, and therefore it's a choice the translator has to make, if they're not lucky enough to have private funds, between balancing translating the work they love for not very much pay, and doing other, better-paid jobs, some of which could be commercial translation, or teaching, or waitressing. (quoted in Tonkin)

While Smith inadvertently reinforces the “do you what you love” trope in describing the conditions most publishers and translators face, it's clear that we cannot ignore that literature

¹⁵ I would like to acknowledge that the debate over whether literary translations can count toward tenure introduces an interesting wrinkle to the argument. For more on these developments, see the Modern Language Association's recent guidelines for “Evaluating Translation as Scholarship” as well as the American Comparative Literature Association's statement on “Translation and Academic Promotion and Tenure.”

¹⁶ As the ATA website reports, “The ban on price discussions within ATA dates back to the late 1980s, when ATA as an organization published annual guidelines with price recommendations for translators. As a result of an investigation by the FTC, ATA as an organization (meaning all employees, elected officials, and publications of the Association) had to agree not to post specific prices. As a consequence, we are very cautious about price discussions, for example, in ATA-sponsored discussion groups for chapters or divisions” (“It's Ok to Tell”).

¹⁷ It is important to remember that “there is no standard translation rate in the United States, nor are U.S. professional organizations permitted to recommend or publish rates. However, considering the rate ‘that UK publishers are prepared to pay,’ as reported by the Society of Authors in the UK (‘in the region of £95 per 1,000 words,’ or about \$0.13 per word at the time of this writing), and the rate prescribed by the Canada Council for the Arts (\$0.18 Canadian per word, or \$0.14 U.S., for genres other than drama or poetry), it is clear that a large number of U.S. translators are being paid rates that make it difficult, if not impossible, to earn a living” (2017 Author's Guild Survey of Literary Translators' Working Condition).

translation is not “commercially self-sustaining,” and I hold little hope that increasing the visibility of translators will ever, on its own, lead to the kind of books sales necessary to pay them, as well as everyone else who’s involved (editors, designers, booksellers, readers etc.), a living wage. Across industries, it’s clear that our love and our precariousness connect us, which is why literary translation cannot—and should not—be divorced from the plights of other workers.

Despite what seem to be a set of structural problems, there’s a lack of discussion around what other models might be able to do justice to the collaborative work we take on as translators. Our attention tends to remain within the text, an arena in which we are made to feel “in control,” instead of asking how we might move away from a publishing industry model that leaves the projects (and *people*) that comprise it constantly underfunded. From conversations with my closest translator comrades, I would say that we’re nervous to examine larger issues within the industry *publicly* because doing so would rock the boat, heightening the very waves of precarity that led us to go along with the status quo in the first place. In the backs of our minds, at least, many translators are aware of this critique, which is why so many of us feel compelled to qualify our work as a “labor of love” rather than insisting that, whether we love it or not, it is still labor for which we should be adequately compensated. This qualifying compulsion is a testament to our good and noble intentions, sure, but it also inadvertently submits us to the harmful logic behind the “Do What You Love” trope, which, as Miya Tokumitsu writes, “exposes its adherents to exploitation, justifying unpaid or underpaid work by throwing workers’ motivations back at them” (7).¹⁸ (This, of course, is by no means a problem unique to our field.)

¹⁸ Tokumitsu writes: “DWYL is an essentially narcissist schema, facilitating willful ignorance of working conditions of other by encouraging self-gratification.... DWYL exposes its adherents to exploitation, justifying unpaid or underpaid work by throwing workers’ motivations back at them; when passion becomes the socially accepted motivation for working, talk of wages or reasonable scheduling becomes crass” (7).

If we want to *be* the change, if we want to start chipping away at the behaviors that allow dominant power structures to operate through us, we have to ask ourselves who can “afford” to be *strictly* literary translators in the US in the first place. In my own limited experience, those who have made it—those who have crossed what Anton Hur calls the “emerging translators valley of death”—have tended to be white with either enough outside monetary support (inherited wealth, partners, a job in academia etc...) to keep the dream alive. I would have quit long ago, if not for my own place in academia, which has allowed me to divert some institutional support to freelance literary translation projects, oftentimes paid in “visibility” instead of money, without having to rely on literary translation as a primary source of income. (And doing work without pay or for minimal pay, even when taken on in order to advocate for important causes, might also contribute to a feedback loop of underpay, as Tachtiris suggests.¹⁹) However, regardless of the unique privileges that literary translators are afforded by their respective positionalities, their success is seldom attributed to their station or their proximity to resources that aren’t available to others. Instead, as the persistent bootstrapism of capitalist ideology compels us to believe (and to *want* to believe), it’s all about talent and determination. There’s a politics, then, to the way in which translators and their work attain professional “legitimacy.” But the cultural and socioeconomic conditions that inform the mechanisms of professional legitimation rarely require us to confront or engage with the nagging contradiction of the rugged individualist fantasies undergirding our self-serving sense of “distinctiveness,” deservingness, and independence; in fact, more often than not, they do the opposite. As Michael Cronin so forcefully articulates, even though “[t]ranslation is seen to be all about relatedness,” at least in

¹⁹ Tachtiris: “Those of us for whom translation is not a major source of income should not agree to payment below the market rate. Not only can this drive the price down for other translators who primarily work freelance, it also contributes to the persistent stereotype that translation is a labor of love rather than a viable profession. [...] Academia conditions us to labor without pay for translations, articles, etc. because it ‘counts’ (though sometimes minimally) for tenure” (“Allyship”).

conceptual terms, “[t]ranslators have been keen to deny relatedness of a kind in their desire to emphasise the value or distinctness of their profession” (*Eco-Translation* 14).²⁰ Ultimately, we can’t build a better alternative to the systems in place without grappling with the underlying myths of “deservingness” and meritocracy that buttress systems of dominance and hierarchy in the realm of literary translation (and beyond).

I should pause here to say that there’s nothing wrong with rightfully demanding all due recognition for our work (on book covers, in reviews, etc.) or courses that stress literary translation as craft. Such recognition has been a crucial part of the “humanization” process over the past century by which translators and their labor have become more visible to the reading public. I certainly wouldn’t be a literary translator if it weren’t for these efforts. Yet, if we believe that literary translation is a form of “passionate advocacy” or “activism,” as is sometimes claimed, somewhere in our calls to elevate the voice and status of the translator to an equal footing with those of the Author—one of the principle ways we’ve been socialized to defend our labor—we might well have forgotten that our task isn’t just to produce cross-cultural texts or to become “professionals” (this is just one effect of the wear and tear of capitalist discourse, which inevitably designates our social roles in individualistic, hierarchical terms).²¹ We may well have forgotten that the very idea—and, in fact, the dream—of translation presumes from the outset that there is an implicit social good in connecting with other people, other texts, other worlds. “In

²⁰ Michael Cronin briefly traces the Western philosophical path of this idea of “self-interest,” ultimately arguing, “The individual assignation of identity and value in the liberal, utilitarian paradigm would seem then to be in obvious tension with the collective embrace of the relational that is seen as part of the utopian promise of translation. In other words, there is a clear contradiction between what I have termed elsewhere the ‘messianic tradition’ in translatorial self-representation (Cronin 2013: 89), the idea of translation as a collective project of mutual understanding and the regimes of value” (*Eco-Translation* 15).

²¹ On the question of literary translation as activism, see Jamie McKendrick’s essay “Forms of Fidelity: Poetry Translation as Literary Activism,” Laetitia Zecchini essay “Translation as Literary Activism: On Invisibility and Exposure, Arun Kolatkar and the Little Magazine ‘Conspiracy,’” and Laura Cesarco Eglin’s interview with Jeannine Pitas, “Translation is Activism Because it Involves Bringing One Culture into Another: An Interview with Laura Cesarco Eglin.”

other words,” as Cronin writes, “there is a clear contradiction between . . . the ‘messianic tradition’ in translatorial self-representation, and the idea of translation as a collective project of mutual understanding and the regimes of value that have been dominant in Western Modernity for more than three centuries” (*Eco-Translation* 15).

Our task should instead, I argue alongside Cronin, be guided towards the construction of a more just, more connective world for everyone. (As I write, Barbara Smith whispers in my ear that “the word 'professionalism' covers such a multitude of sins. [...] what usually follows is an excuse for inaction, an excuse for ethical irresponsibility” (49).) Put otherwise, our present vision of translational practice, despite its underlying collaborative impulse, isn’t yet focused on collective stewardship. *Our labor has yet to become a labor that transcends the bounds of the individual for the care of the many*, a labor that relishes in creating together, that finds its purpose in securing collective passage not behind a luminary leader, be it author or translator but, rather, in joyous lockstep. (Even if we disagree with the notion, we still act in ways that correspond with the antiquated idea of “a vast army moving forward, preceded by the most daring innovators and thinkers, followed by a mass of slower and heavier crowds,” as Bruno Latour writes (472).) A labor that, as poet and Disability Justice activist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha evinces, would harness “the power of a march moving as slow as the slowest members, who are at the front” (“To Survive the Trumpocalypse”). And the issue at hand is not just that translation can and should become a form of collective stewardship; in even broader terms, coordinating any type of collective building to address the needs of our interconnected world will require careful translation—not only of conversations, critiques, and demands from around the globe, but also of our shared visions for future shelter.

A renewed focus on collective action would require redoubling our efforts to build what

Dean calls “reflective solidarity”: an intentional act of cultivating relations of mutual support, care, and responsibility; a good-faith movement that prioritizes collectivity not as a way to overcome difference, but to celebrate it.²² We should imagine this collectivity as something that will be necessary in reconceiving of a translational practice that emphasizes collaboration and co-translation, as well as a force that activates us in the wider world as we engage with efforts of mass liberation, including movements for abolition and decolonization.²³ Doing so will better situate our current labors into the broader struggles—as Roy’s emphasis on interdependence above makes clear—for *livability*, struggles that concern all of us, whether or not we currently have the privilege of being able to comfortably ignore it.

Ecologies of Translation—Toward Refuge

At the heart of the struggle for livability is the ideational frame of “ecology,” that is, a way of understanding the dynamic interconnectedness of our world that concerns itself with relations of different, even incommensurable, ways of being.²⁴ Importantly, this includes how we interact with one another. Murray Bookchin, through the concept of “social ecology,” sketches out this sense of interdependence (and the stakes of it) on both a local and global scale:

[T]he way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis. Unless we clearly recognize this, we will fail to see that the hierarchical

²² Importantly, Dean suggests that we must lean into “reflective solidarity,” which she takes up in her book *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism after Identity Politics*. “In conventional solidarities,” writes Dean, “members are expected to sacrifice their own identities, desires, and opinions for the good of the group. They are expected to nod in silent acquiescence. Reflective solidarity, however, recognizes that members and participants are always insiders and outsiders” (*Solidarity of Strangers* 34).

²³ Throughout this dissertation, I draw, directly and indirectly, on the frameworks of “care” that have emerged in writings and conversations on abolition and in particular, the (often coauthored) works of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Mariame Kaba, Angela Davis, Saidiya Hartman, Harsha Walia, Robyn Maynard, Ejeris Dixon, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha as well as those by the Bay Area Justice Collective, Incite!, and the Chrysalis Collective.

²⁴ “The two basic axioms of an ecological epistemology, connectivity and diversity,” Hubert Zapf writes, “need to be taken seriously both in the ways in which ecocritical issues and subjects are explored and in the ways in which ecocriticism positions itself within the wider spectrum of contemporary academic disciplines” (4).

mentality and class relationships that so thoroughly permeate society are what has given rise to the very idea of dominating the natural world. (20)

If we cannot provide shelter in our own relationships, how we can enact transformational change on a larger scale? Indeed, questions of scale seem particularly important when facing the crises of governance and ecological interdependence before us because “scalability,” as Tsing describes, has so often been tied into capitalist models of growth that do away with care and entanglement. For Tsing, easy scalability “requires that project elements be oblivious to the indeterminacies of encounter; that they allow smooth expansion. Thus, too, scalability banishes meaningful diversity, that is, diversity that might change things” (*The Mushroom* 38). In contrast, literary translation, when seen as *process* and not product, can engender its own kind of ecological thinking to the extent that it maps relations between and among relations that, within individual language communities, cannot be seen. Translators, then, play a significant role in how these ecologies take shape, because translating requires thinking about how culturally specific terms accrue meaning from history, context, and the positionality of the speaker, but also in close relation to other words in a text, then outward from the text to the desires for connection they index and arouse, and whether those connections might be equitable, might be just. At this point in time, our desires are less linked to interdependence and more indelibly linked to the petrocultures we currently inhabit and the ideas of “independence” and easy mobility that undergird them.²⁵ Yet, another world is indeed being born, and translators have a role to play in

²⁵ “What do we mean by ‘petroculture’? We use this term to emphasize the ways in which global society today is an oil society through and through. It is shaped by oil in physical and material ways, from the automobiles and highways we use to the plastics that fill up every space of our daily lives. Even more significantly, fossil fuels have also shaped our values, practices, habits, beliefs and feelings. These latter can be difficult to parse. It might be easy to point to a highway interchange and understand why it is an important part of our oil culture, but much harder to name and isolate the ideas and ideals of autonomy and mobility that have become essential values to people around the world. In a very real way, these values are fueled by fossil fuels, as are many of the values and aspirations that we have come to associate with the freedoms and capacities of modern life. It is in this sense that we are a petroculture; and it is for this reason, too, that transitioning from fossil fuels to other sources of energy will require

bringing it about. And it is a dedication to cultivating togetherness across difference—across a myriad of communities, contexts, places, and points in time—that foregrounds the radical nature of translation and of livability writ large.

As literary translators, we might start to provide this comradely cover to one another and to our communities by rethinking methods for showing solidarity with one another beyond those that are forcibly circumscribed by and limited to the capitalist logic of professional competition and individual achievement (“distinctiveness”). We can do more than simply buying, reviewing, and promoting one another’s work—the too often transactional terms of a literary activism governed by the overarching logic of consumerism. We can shed the very desires for personal acclaim and stature that existing systems of domination need—and need to reproduce in us—to function in the first place. We can work together, pooling our resources, knowledge, and experience, a kind of practice that is already being experimented with in the various “translators collectives” that have emerged in our field in the past few years (and which I will address in chapter four). What’s more, we can take the unequally distributed benefits and affordances proffered by our hierarchical political economy and weaponize them against it; in whatever spheres we occupy, in as many ways as we are able to, we can utilize the respective positionalities and privileges that give us a leg up to extend a hand down to others, to redistribute power and access. Uplifting one another need not contribute to upholding entrenched hierarchies of deservingness—indeed, it should be the opposite. We move toward liberation, then, by (re)investing ourselves in one another: those around us, with whom we’re currently in community, and with whom we strive to be in community. We move toward livability by (re)committing ourselves to ways of living, thinking, working, and being that take our ecological

more than new technologies. We will need to transform and transition our cultural and social values at the same time” (Szeman, Badia, Diamanti, O’Driscoll and Simson).

interconnectedness as a given—being is always being-together—and by accepting the responsibility that comes with it.

But here's the thing: *Comradeship, like translation, is no easy thing*. And we cannot truly begin the work of dismantling hierarchy and building solidarity until we grapple with our own positionality as translators in the US. As Douglas Robinson writes, “What makes capitalism so powerful is precisely this broad-based internalization of mastery, which makes it difficult to fight the power: what one finds himself resisting is oneself, one's own hegemonic attitudes and belief about reality” (*Dao of Translation*, 187-188). Like the work of translation, building comradeship requires carefully growing and sustaining relations among relations—it entails seriously addressing the question of *who* communicates and *how* they go about it. To pretend otherwise, I believe, is to dismiss the historical harm that has wrought so much destruction upon the delicate ecologies that sustain life itself.

Many of us are only now admitting how much we depend on and can't do without these delicate ecologies—only now, as the impacts of ecological disruption become harder to ignore, as we feel more of the pain of our aching world, which existing power structures, privileges, and disparately allocated resources have largely protected us from feeling before. And so it's a time of reflection, which we should undertake together. These are some of the questions rolling around my mind: Can we, those who currently benefit most from those existing structures, be more tender, more honest? Will the current system of publishing in translation—entrapped in the circuits and hard confines of a capitalist political economy that is against its very mission—ever be able to make good on these grand and vital visions? Not without struggle; not without those of us who labor within that system being willing to forego the meager payoffs it offers for the promise of something more just. Perhaps the real question is: If we, as translators, are not

contributing to that struggle, what could possibly be keeping us from doing so? Do we fear losing our status, privilege, contracts—perhaps the very “refuge” of whiteness itself, as James Baldwin put it?²⁶ Do we fear leaving the capitalist system we know behind because we’ve made it workable in a marginal way?

In the end, though, what do those losses matter when there’s everything to gain? A livable world, ways of living and working and being in the world that will allow us to experience (in ways we have hitherto been denied) the full, sustainable, inclusive, and *collective* meaning of ecological entangledness—is that not worth fighting for? It’s precisely this kind of questioning about what we love, what we fear losing, and what world we should have, precisely this movement into difficult and vital emotion, that amounts to what Audre Lorde describes as the kind of careful tending that begets reparative action—justice, we might say—in what she calls the “house of difference” that poetry and stories make possible. And it can only be with an “abundant justice,” as adrienne maree brown puts it, “that we can stop competing with each other, demanding scarce justice from our oppressors. That we can instead generate power from the overlapping space of desire and aliveness, tapping into an abundance that has enough attention, liberation, and justice for all of us to have plenty” (*Pleasure Activism* 12). Translation and justice are inextricably linked by their very concern for seeking repairing relations.

With the concern for broad ecological care in mind, it stands to reason that what we need now isn’t just shelter born from literature or literature in translation, which, to rework Amitav Ghosh, enacts the “containment” of an experience, but instead a sort of larger translational *refuge* that centers livability on a much larger scale (16). Refuge, then, isn’t something we simply build

²⁶ As James Baldwin explains in a letter to Angela Davis, “[A]s long as white Americans take refuge in their whiteness—for so long as they are unable to walk of this most monstrous of traps—they will allow millions of people to be slaughtered in their name, and will be manipulated into and surrender themselves to what they will think of—and justify—as a racial war.”

using the resources from the world around us, but something we *cultivate*: something we grow into, as it grows back into us. Perhaps it's something like what anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing calls "contamination," the "transformation through encounter" by which distinct beings impress themselves into one other, shaping each other into something else (which is not to imply that said beings exist in some state of untouched "purity" before such transformational encounters—"purity" is a myth) (*The Mushroom at the End of the World* 29). *Refugia*, in Tsing's understanding, are just those spaces of transformational encounter, where "those species wiped out elsewhere continued to thrive"—a dense forest, for example, with its leafy canopy shielding the roving undergrowth and its kin from the worst of the storm ("A Threat to Holocene Resurgence is Threat to Livability" 54). These speculative refuges can also be seen as "climate refugia," that is, "'areas that remain relatively buffered from contemporary climate change over time and enable persistence of valued physical, ecological, and socio-cultural resources.' The key attribute of refugia is their relative persistence, despite changes in the climate in the surrounding landscape" (Morelli and Millar).

Approaching literary translation as refuge, then, means understanding that the relationships that translational practice brings together are the very fibers that make refuge in the first place, and that refuge can only ever exist to the extent that we can care for it together and transform in the process. These refugia are also sites where we uphold the three principles of translation ecology that Cronin identifies: "place," or "a place-based rather than ethnos-based sense of identity [that] allows for the inclusion of all speakers of a language, both natives and newcomers"; "resilience," which "is generally understood as the capacity for individuals, cultures and societies to withstand stress or catastrophe"; and "relatedness," which draws together "historical contexts, languages, and cultures," and that, more than ever, theorizes

connections to the non-human (*Eco-Translation* 16-19). What joins these principles, in my reading, is a commitment to collective care, not only in our texts, but also in our practice.

(E)co-Translation

So, what does it require to transform the work of literary translation into the work of cultivating refuge? And how soon is too late in a world that's burning and bleeding and sliding toward barbarism—a world of unmitigated climate breakdown? A moment that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated requires “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society”—that is, *revolution*—if we are to avoid complete collapse (“Summary for Policymakers”). Tending to transnational refuge requires anti-imperialist, anti-racist, feminist, and post-anthropocentric practices because its endpoint is mass liberation within a care-work economy, *because there is no retrofitting capitalism to meet the needs of people*. Like other forms of care work—that is, labor and practice that “involv[es] the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of human and non-human life”—literary translation may be undervalued in our (capitalist) society, but it is everywhere at work (Care Collective). Situating translation as a practice of care work underscores the translator's recreative and resurgent position as an intermediary between the productive and reproductive, the liberatory and the embedded, the agentive and the collaborative, and the visionary and the reparative. We are now, I believe, at the point where we must lean into translation's transformative potential to dream bigger, and working toward livability is, after all, the most important form of care work there is.

In reorienting ourselves, it's clear that there are no easy answers, but there's also no room for nihilistic despair. Tracing the broad strokes of what Bruno Latour calls his “compositionist

manifesto,” the ideas to follow are “a call to attention, so as to *stop* going further *in the same way* as before toward the future” that further seeks to “compose”—in the sense of gathering together—instead of merely performing *critique* (473-5).²⁷ This difficult work entails making forms of relation visible across multiple registers (institutional, historical, philosophical), and struggling against those larger forces that deem to keep us separate. In this sense, I will continue to use Cronin’s broad definition of “eco-translation” while adapting it to draw out a more focused vision of (e)co-translation: a practice that honors our interdependence and that positions the making of literature across languages and borders as a form of care work, as a tending to one another and to our shared home. (E)co-translation, then, includes more than attentive practices of textual translation and what gets translated in the first place, but also the way we care for one another and the land *and* the struggles—in the streets, at home, at work—we take up together in order to move toward a future based on collective stewardship instead of individual desire for distinctiveness. In doing so, we re-commit ourselves to a practice of literary translation that doesn’t just have a claim on the figurative, but that can also carve out a political and ethical space for cultivating refuge.

The following series of essays maps several existing and emerging relations between translational, ecological, decolonial, and literary discourses, and gestures to how (e)co-translation might take shape in conversation with these frameworks. The essay form, in particular, allows me to approach (e)co-translation from an exploratory, speculative, and writerly position, and to draw conclusions as they have emerged from my personal practice instead of set definitions. As such, each essay invites readers into the meaning-making process while it also

²⁷ Here, Latour explains, “The difference [between critique and composition] is not moot, because *what performs a critique cannot also compose*. It is really a mundane question of having the right tools for the right job. With a hammer (or a sledge hammer) in hand you can do a lot of things: break down walls, destroy idols, ridicule prejudices, but you cannot repair, take care, assemble, reassemble, stitch together” (475).

asks them to hold tightly to an overtly optimistic and utopian vision of literary translation that presses up against the limits of our lived realities.

Chapter II: In “(E)co-Translation as Entanglement in Cristina Peri Rossi’s *Strange Flying Objects*,” I reflect on the process of translating Peri Rossi’s speculative fiction into the contemporary context of climate breakdown, while paying special attention to how collaborative translation, as an emergent practice, opens up new possibilities for collective engagement that moves into the realm of political organizing. These collaborations allowed me to re-orient my interlingual translation practice to draw out moments of entanglement between the novella’s human and non-human characters. I end with a close reading suggesting how the suspension of the plot for the *Strange Flying Object*’s female protagonist and the animalized UFO leaves open a space to re-work past injustices into a politics of care that must be negotiated across species.

Chapter III: In “‘Carrying Ourselves Across’: A Self-Translation Workshop,” I draw on my experiences as an intern with 826Michigan in order to situate (e)co-translation, as a practice, within a moment of increased climate migration. In particular, I discuss how I co-designed and facilitated a self-translation workshop for English-language learners at a nearby high school in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Reflecting further on the project, I point to the ways that we might reorganize literary translation workshops to center English-language learners by insisting on pedagogy that embraces their dynamic multilingualism instead of the established directives of mastery and fluency. In a close reading of Noor Ghali’s collaborative self-translation of her Arabic-language poem “Jasmine Tears,” I demonstrate how the intersections between land and body that Noor cultivates within the text become a critical example of what Indigenous scholar Vanessa Watts has described as “Indigenous Place-Thought.” I conclude that Noor’s poem is one example of what Nayanika Mathur calls “climate translation,” where “the task of the climate

translator lies in the transference of stories reflective of people's relationships with the world across domains—such as that of science and myth or quotidian chatter and conservationist discourse—that are normally kept separate” (78).

Chapter IV: In “Careful Collaboration: On *Barings // Bearings*,” I meditate on the process of co-editing the 2019 special issue of *Absinthe: World Literature in Translation* on contemporary Catalan writing by women. While I had been working for several years as a managing editor for *Absinthe*, which is based in my home department of Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan, *Baring // Bearings* represents the culminating project of my tenure at the publication. In particular, I focus on the delicate work of embracing “mutually-supportive practice” in place of competition, which might begin, as I demonstrate, with a single meaningful partnership—in this case, with my then co-editor (and current co-translator of Muriel Villanueva's *The Left Parenthesis*) María Cristina Fernández Hall. In so doing, I discuss how we might position the process of editing an anthology of translations within our current infrastructures as a form of care work, a theme that dovetails with that of the volume itself.

Chapter V: In “The Rise of the Translator Collective,” I document the recent founding of several translator collectives in the Anglophone sphere. Here, I move from thinking about my collaborative practice as a co-editor/translator in the previous essay to the broader community-making practices taken up within collectives. By reflecting on my personal experiences with the Emergent Translators Collective as well as other shared conversations and interviews, I propose how we might open ourselves up to cultivating what Mark Nowak calls the “first-person plural,” a weaving together of a workshop's individual and collective voices, so that the model might become a space to build “emergent solidarities” for future transnational struggle.

Chapter VI: “Cultivating Refuge: Toward a Care-Centered Translation Practice”

develops a framework for approaching translation practice within discourses of ecology. In particular, it examines two theories of translation that emerge from Tsing’s theory of “refugia”: the first, a Plantationocene translation that operates according to the logics of commensurability and equivalence. The second, a “messy,” incommensurate translation that stages encounters of difference and, as such, promotes the cultivation of refugia. Working outward from the second theory, I return to the concept of *oikos*—shared dwelling—to articulate how the practice of literary translation can contribute to “eco-poesis”: the dreaming up of a care-centered socio-economic paradigm.

Chapter VII: Finally, in “Coda: May We Care, May We Repair, May We Liberate Ourselves,” I dream up a day in the life of a translator who lives according to the principles I introduce throughout the essays, including: ecologizing translation as an interlingual practice, reaching out to the broader community through collaborative workshops, and working together in collective formations that contribute to what I describe, in chapter five, as a “care-work economy.”

While the ideas I present may be tentative, what remains clear is that growing into the unknown and making good on translation’s latent collective potential will require leaning into the fact that all labors of translation are fundamentally *material* practices, embedded in our everyday (inter)actions and bodies. It is this very sense of interdependence across difference that foregrounds the ecological ethic of the translator’s task. Understanding that the choices we continue to make can be reoriented to move us toward a better world addresses the answer to the oft-asked question of personal agency: What can one lone translator do in the face of crisis? It is there, at the edge of uncertainty, that translation retains its utopic glint: it is an unreachable

horizon, as Eduardo Galeano's much-loved saying goes, that demands our tireless advance—to one another.

Chapter II
(E)co-Translation as Entanglement in
Cristina Peri Rossi's *Strange Flying Objects*

In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Amitav Ghosh contends that the relative absence of Western literary texts that wrestle with global warming and its compounding effects signals “the broader imaginative and cultural failure that lies at the heart of the climate crisis” (8).²⁸ For Ghosh, making sense of this intellectual “derangement”—a profound will to blindness, a decision *not to see* the mass destruction of our shared terrestrial home—requires:

confront[ing] another of the uncanny effects of the Anthropocene: it was in exactly the period in which human activity was changing the earth’s atmosphere that the literary imagination became radically centered on the human. Inasmuch as the nonhuman was written about at all, it was not within the mansion of serious fiction but rather in the outhouses to which science fiction and fantasy had been banished. (66)

Talk of outhouses aside, Ghosh, in assessing a Western literary imagination that grew out of nineteenth-century European Realism, proposes that the modern novel, in particular, has increasingly come to chronicle the “individual moral adventure,” a phrase he borrows from John

²⁸ While Ghosh’s broad use of “Western” and “European” might certainly draw criticism from those who demand more specificity, it’s worth noting that his analysis does not stop at an imposed linguistic or geographical limit. Indeed, it is more helpful to understand Ghosh’s contentions within Edouard Glissant’s keen observation that “the West is not the West. It is a project, not a place” (2).

Updike (77).²⁹ While I am wary of equating literary realism with an abdication of social responsibility, I find Ghosh's charge that the retreat into the individual psyche has had unintended effects to be a necessary one, for writing of this sort, he argues, has advanced a mode of storytelling that often clears the "collective"—the voice of the "people," the voice of the nonhuman—from its sights. In Ghosh's telling, gone are the tales of the many who made their righteous stand, and gone with those stories, too, are the very imaginative possibilities of our collective liberation (78). It stands to reason, then, that in order to tackle the climate crisis, we need to dream up new ways of acknowledging our entanglement in the world, those that might undo the myth of the individual as the primary agent of change. In doing so, we might also do away with the notion of property that talk of mansions and outhouses encourages and take up the larger question of refuge instead.

In contrast to these "individual moral adventures," genre fiction, argues Ghosh, has offered writers critical imaginative terrain to speculate about the inseparability of human and nonhuman lives in figurations both familiar and unknown. Yet, despite his high regard for genre fiction, Ghosh takes umbrage at the fact that "the mere mention of the subject [climate change] is enough to relegate a novel or a short story to the genre [of science fiction]," thus casting it as an otherworldly problem not meant to be addressed in "serious" fashion. In fact, "It is as though in the literary imagination climate change were somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel" (Ghosh 7). What Ghosh is getting at, here, is that when we understand the climate crisis as something apart from us, as the stuff of fantasy or futurism, we refuse to use the tools at

²⁹ Min Hyung Song expertly summarizes Ghosh's proposed dilemma as one of a kind of deluded self-containment: "The problem for fiction, then, is that it is poorly equipped to take full account of such an estranged world full of once rare occurrences. The novel is so committed to human beings and their small-scale problems, and so defined by the bourgeois uniformitarian view of a regular, unchanging nature, that it finds itself unable to provide an account of a world beset by climate change and the chain of very improbable events that it has set into motion" ("Strange Weather: Fiction and Climate Change").

hand—creative works—to grapple with its present causes and consequences.³⁰ And when we refuse to wholeheartedly reckon with the nonhuman in our own immediate historical context, we remain blind to the fact that the “land is demonstrably alive; that it does not exist solely, or even incidentally, as a stage for the enactment of human history” (6).³¹ Instead, we fall back into what we know—the human, and human relations especially as they emerged within the petro-cultures that took hold with the ascendancy of Modernity. Working from this creative position has left little room, Ghosh asserts, to engage the collective human and non-human entanglements upon which life itself is predicated.

Scholars have both praised and bristled at Ghosh’s claims. Min Hyoung Song, for one, writes that while Ghosh’s argument is “tantalizing” because it does the difficult work of connecting the rise of industrialization, colonialism, and global capitalism to climate collapse, “it is also disappointing because it ignores the fact that realism purged of fantastic or improbable elements is far from the only territory ‘serious fiction’ is claiming these days” (“Strange Weather: Fiction and Climate Change”). In a similar fashion, Kate Marshall reminds us that “serious” fiction needn’t address the climate crisis in name to grapple with its systemic origins—the very concerns of rooted, often racialized, social inequity that Ghosh himself chronicles. “An alternative beginning of the project Ghosh envisions,” writes Marshall, “would be to make a

³⁰ While his consideration of science fiction texts is rather limited, Ghosh proposes that, in general, works of “cli-fi” do not adequately grapple with the climate crisis because their sole focus tends to be on the unraveling of the world in future time instead of in a precarious present. Ghosh asks, “Is it the case that science fiction is better equipped to address the Anthropocene than mainstream literary fiction? This might appear obvious to many. After all, there is now a new genre of science fiction called ‘climate fiction’ or cli-fi. But cli-fi is made up mostly of disaster stories set in the future, and that, to me, is exactly the rub. The future is but one aspect of the Anthropocene: this era also includes the recent past, and, most significantly, the present” (72).

³¹ In line with other critiques of anthropocentrism, Ghosh explains that our era of “derangement”—when “most forms of art and literature were drawn into the modes of concealment that prevented people from recognizing the realities of their plight”—stems from a general inability to move outside the confines of the human and a legacy of Christian dominion (11). Fiction writers, notes Ghosh, particularly those who invest themselves in “European” literary forms like the novel, have largely failed to acknowledge our—that is, humanity’s—collective entanglements in the world, and our relationships to our earthly kin: land, flora, and fauna. In wrestling with the illusory “apartness” that allowed for the “deification of the human,” Ghosh proposes another task: “that of finding other ways in which to imagine the unthinkable beings and events in this era” (33).

stronger case for the literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries whose response to systematic change may not be overt but rather subtly and insistently present, and to look not only for the primary genres of climate” (“Readers of the Future Have Become Shitty Literary Critics”). In other words, the end of the world always appears earlier, and elsewhere—we just have to be able to *recognize* it.

This ability to “see” or “re-visit (*revista*)” in written form may be literary fiction’s greatest power. In Ghosh’s own assessment, literature gains its overt affective dynamism through an ability to facilitate “recognition,” which is necessary if we are to interrogate the climate crisis in fictional works. Ghosh writes,

The most important element of the word *recognition* thus lies in its first syllable, which harks back to something prior, an already existing awareness that makes possible the passage from ignorance to knowledge: a moment of recognition occurs when a prior awareness flashes before us, effecting an instant change in our understanding of that which is beheld. The knowledge that results from recognition, then, is not of the same kind as the discovery of something new: it arises rather from a renewed reckoning with a potentiality that lies within oneself. (4)

Like Ghosh, I believe that stories move us because we’ve been moved before, and because we’re willing to grapple with the very social structures made invisible by their quotidian pervasiveness. Here’s where the above critiques ring true: many types of fiction, most notably those that engage the speculative, facilitate the very acts of recognition that Ghosh so evinces, even if, by their generic classification, they imbue the story with a sense of the “unreal.” While I won’t deny that Ghosh’s interrogation into what kind of fiction might best facilitate recognition is an important one, I also find his efforts to uphold generic categorization to be somewhat misplaced; in a

moment when *time* to act is exactly what we lack, it seems more helpful to look for what strategies of struggle we might gain from fiction of the past than to imagine we have to create it all anew. Recognition, by Ghosh's own admission, is not about the new, but rather an engagement of the past on different terms.

If recognition is a process of understanding what already *is*, even if you haven't "seen" it before, I would argue that the most important element of the process is that any "renewed reckoning" entails understanding one's sense of messy entanglement in the world. As Nicholas Holm and Sy Taffel note in their introduction to *Ecological Entanglements in the Anthropocene*,

Rather than a world populated by already-formed individual agents which interact with one another, entanglement instead posits existence as an unfolding process in which flows of energy and matter cannot be neatly divided into segregated agents who occasionally come together. As opposed to a world where categorically distinct entities—nature and cultures, subjects and objects, or even humans and nonhumans—enter into conflict or concord with one another, entanglement instead suggests that systems must always be conceptualized within collective terms which denotes that existence is a process of acting together. This acting together is inherently a process of producing differences within the world. [...] Entanglement thus parallels certain aspects of ecology, the study of flows of energy through multiscale systems encompassing individual populations (groups of the same species), communities (agglomerations of multiple species) and ecosystems (which explores non-living nonhumans in addition to communities of life). (ix-x)

Recognition, then, does not happen in a vacuum, but rather requires a shift within a densely inhabited multiscale context, and once we begin to recognize entanglement as the very matrix of

life, we can't help but rethink our own positions in a much broader ecology of survival.

Refiguring recognition into an explicitly ecological lens requires a different kind of seeing and a different mode of relating to the world, and entanglement is exactly that many-bodied unfolding into the unknown; instead of willing difference away, it *produces* difference by drawing people into difficulty. For many of us, seeing ourselves in this collective figuration and imagining how we might act with the collective in mind remains the key speculative project of our lifetimes.

While we cannot know exactly what the future of climate breakdown will bring, we can draw on our sense of recognition to speculatively work toward a more just future together, but only when entanglement is taken seriously.

With this in mind, I also bristle at Ghosh's claims over the effectiveness of certain genres to facilitate recognition of the climate crisis because my own began with a work of speculative fiction, Cristina Peri Rossi's *Strange Flying Objects*, though it took me years of translating the novella to understand that the critiques of uneven development and oppression under capitalism made visible by the extraterrestrial might, in fact, be a way of addressing the climate crisis indirectly. As I returned, over and over, to the decades-old novella, I began to recognize that the very same conditions and pressures recounted by Peri Rossi were playing out in the world around me. Here, Marshall's suggestion that responses to the growing crisis in contemporary fiction may have been "subtly and insistently present" seems particularly apt, which also signals an uncomfortable truth: since global warming stems from a long history of extractive, imperialist politics—a sacrificing of life itself for the gain of capital, growth, and domination—there is much work to be done in recognizing those elements if we are to address the crisis in a meaningful way. Newer stories may do the difficult work of registering climate collapse in real time, but older stories may lend a roadmap for liberation if we can translate them in speculative

ways. The work of recognizing entanglement, then, is forever tied to the work of speculative translation, which seeks to convey and complicate literary texts, and to draw out the many relationships impressed within them.

Much as in our own moment, *Strange Flying Objects* also arose at a time of heightening ecological and political crisis.³² Published in 1968, just a few years before the dictatorship under right-wing Uruguayan “president” Juan María Bordaberry, *Strange Flying Objects* recounts the struggles of the peasant farmer Lautaro and his wife María after the arrival of a gray mass in the sky—something they can make out but cannot immediately recognize. While this dislocation perhaps stems from the couple’s old age—both admit that the land has worn their eyes out—Debra Castillo argues that it is exactly these “equivocations of vision [that] provide access to the realm of the fantastic” (31). The creature quickly comes to represent two ways of seeing the world, both of which are related by the novella’s omniscient narrator, who oscillates between the perspectives of Lautaro and María. Upon first locking eyes on the object, María suggests that it’s simply another bird, another creature with whom she shares the desolation of rural life. When Lautaro demands, “Come see what I’m seeing,” she looks up to the sky and responds, ““Now, why do you want me to look at the bird?” When it wasn’t the birds circling mundanely above the trees (above even the oldest and most brilliantly green eucalyptus trees), it was a swarm of locusts getting all they could through their gums” (379). María demonstrates no fear of the unknown, for what use would fear serve? In fear’s stead, there’s a sense of surrender: “Birds or

³² After the election of 1958, when the leading conservative party (Partido Nacional, or Partido Blanco) won the majority over the moderate-liberal party (Partido Colorado), the rise of “free-market” ideology ushered in an era of roll-backs to Uruguay’s social welfare programs and of staggering inflation. Unlike in other Latin American countries (including Venezuela, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico), Uruguayan leaders, many of whom were ranchers and large estate landholders, made sure that no substantial agrarian reforms, which would redistribute land to smaller farmers in more equitable ways, were passed. In the midst of this crisis, many leftist organizations (including the infamous group of urban guerillas, Tupamaros) and unions fought back, though many were imprisoned. Peri Rossi chronicles this tension through the character of Sebastián, Lautaro and María’s son, who is imprisoned after being beaten at a direct action held by his union.

locusts or lizards or dust; you just couldn't keep up" (Peri Rossi 379).



Figure 2.1. Jaipur man warding off locusts, photograph: Vishal Bhatnagar

Lautaro, however, is sure that the flying object cannot be trusted, as the “the presence of the unknown signals a disruption in the orderly organization of the universe” (Castillo 35). Instead of entertaining María’s “simple” ideas, Lautaro confidently responds, “Wrong again. It’s not a bird, you’re just not seeing right. One day you won’t see anything at all” (379). As the story unfolds, the creature becomes a confidant to María, almost a child to replace the one she had lost to the city and its adversarial politics, while, in contrast, it stands as an otherworldly foe to Lautaro, one that he believes is stealing things right from under him—the bed, the hoe, the planter box, and even half of his face. Their initial disagreement over the nature of the unidentifiable flying object comes to signal the degree to which both characters understand their own entanglement in the world around them, and thus determines their eventual fates. As the novella goes on, readers witness Lautaro’s descent into uncertain madness as María fades from view; readers are, effectively, left to imagine María’s future in a world that welcomes human and

nonhuman encounters. The bitter irony, it turns out, is that Lautaro's obsession with the object's alterity portends his eventual blindness; his *individual* fight against the presence does little but wear him down into oblivion, and into a world that is no longer recognizable as the novella draws to a close: "Ahead, behind, the field, the enormous field, deserted, nothingness. [...] No wind, water, well, no trains no sheep bleating their motherless melancholy. When it settled in, he let it weigh down on him. Terrified, he looked up at the sky. The brown object had also disappeared" (Peri Rossi 440).

While Ghosh's analysis lends many entrance points into *Strange Flying Objects*, I am, as I mention above, less concerned than he with determining whether the story's genre (speculative fiction) lends the proper conventions for capturing the climate crisis. Instead, I'm interested in reflecting on the ways that translating texts of the recent past might also facilitate recognition of the crisis as the culmination of a long history of extractivism, or the large scale exploitation of earth—be it human and nonhuman labor, natural resources, or life itself—for domination vis-à-vis capital. Yet, I do believe it is speculative fiction's very openness to the unknown that makes it a power tool for recognizing our current entanglements, and for dreaming up ways of life that might honor those relationships in a careful way.

This embrace of the speculative extends to the practice of literary translation, for in its own way, translation is often an imaginative creative practice that examines and entertains the unknown: it looks to elements of a "source" text, entangled in a past socio-linguistic context, and asks how those entanglements might come to be seen again in a different place and time. What lies latent in the *Strange Flying Objects*, then, becomes fodder for a translatorial reimagining. And because *Strange Flying Objects* is itself a work of speculative fiction, it invites further play, imbuing the translator's task with a certain creative license to extend and transform Peri Rossi's

original critique. Because, as translator, I was reimagining the text into a new linguistic and political context, into a world where the climate crisis was and is advancing at a frantic pace, heralding an unknown future, I saw the process of translation as a way to refashion *Strange Flying Objects* in order to redouble our many entanglements.

Drawing out these entanglements, however, requires more than just refiguring the source text's eco-poetic resonances, which engages in what Michael Cronin has called a form of "eco-translation," or a translation practice guided by the ecological principles of place, resilience, and relatedness; it also entails rethinking the very practice of translation itself. As I will detail below, engaging interdependence means envisioning a more collective model of re-writing that draws on the knowledges of those with whom the translator seeks to be in community, often through collaborative translation or explicit co-translation. In the introduction, I have called this reorientation a move toward "(e)co-translation": a communal practice of translation, worked out in practice, that honors our entanglement and, in doing so, positions the making of literature and life itself across languages and borders as a form of collective care work, as a tending to one another and to our shared home. In the context of reworking *Strange Flying Objects*, the practice of translation became an act of imagination that insisted on community organizing, and this is where I've further engaged the sense of speculation that pervades the text, for as adrienne maree-brown reminds us, "All organizing is science fiction" ("All Organizing"). (E)co-translation, when pursued as way to promote recognition of earthly entanglements alongside a commitment to organizing others to participate in a post-anthropocentric future, joins the speculative movement of a "making ready" for a more just world.

In order to discuss my own movement *toward* (e)co-translation, I will first sketch out my political realignment as I took up the task, and how I began to lean into translation as a form of

collective organizing—as speculative world-making. I will then move through a handful of key moments in *Strange Flying Objects* that present points of interdependence and how attentive strategies of interlingual translation might resituate those eco-poetic resonances to complicate human and non-human entanglement. I end by discussing how the process of translating, as a broader cultural practice, allows us to speculate about the horizon of literary translation, especially when based in Cronin’s third principle of translation ecology: “relatedness.” As Cronin asserts, the “principle of relatedness draws on a posthumanist, post-anthropocentric idea of relatedness where humans see inter-species relatedness as central to new, more ethical forms of behavior” (*Eco-translation* 19). While *Strange Flying Objects* offers only speculative visions of this kind of collaboration, it is, I argue, a call to action that would “radically transform our species-based understanding” (Cronin *Eco-Translation*, 19).

Entangling *Strange Flying Objects*

I first came across Peri Rossi’s *Strange Flying Objects* in 2014, when the editor of Ox & Pigeon Press invited me to translate it after reviewing several of my shorter translations of Peri Rossi’s work, which I had done on spec. Peri Rossi’s work had already occupied my life for some while, and I had gotten to know her (via correspondence and in person) after reaching out in 2010. The long short story, to be published as a novella, was one of her earliest works, and the new terrain was challenging, linguistically and emotionally; it was, in fact, the second work of literature to ever make me cry. (The first being Andre Dubus III’s *House of Sand and Fog*, a tale of eviction and precarious belonging, which I read as a local bank foreclosed on the home I shared with my father in 2006.) After months of intense labor, which I attempted to fit in during the summer months between my first and second year of graduate school, I was met with a

disappointing, yet perhaps not uncommon, reality: before *Strange Flying Objects* could go to press, Ox & Pigeon had to close their operation. I attempted to dampen my heartbreak by burying the translation in a folder on my external hard drive.

When I later returned to the translation in 2017, I had reoriented my life in important ways. By then, I had cast my attention outside my rather insular academic world by attending a meeting of the local chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. By the end of that year, I was running to be the chapter's co-chair, and committing a large chunk of my waking hours not only to activist work around issues of ecosocialism and environmental justice, but also to political organizing more generally—to building shared power and creating prefigurative communities with comrades near and far. The future we envisioned seemed unlikely, but not impossible. And that's where the “science fiction” of organizing, in brown's words, becomes critical; even on the most difficult of days, I still believe that “we are bending the future, together, into something we have never experienced. a world where everyone experiences abundance, access, pleasure, human rights, dignity, freedom, transformative justice, peace. we long for this, we believe it is possible” (brown, “All Organizing”). Organizing is always speculation, informed not only by history, but also a longing for a more just future and the courage to prefigure those ways on living in the present. Organizing is the recognition that we are, and always have been, in this thing called “living together.”

The more I read about the uneven burdens of the climate crisis, the more I was reminded of *Strange Flying Objects*. The political unrest in the Northern Triangle, for example, brought to mind the disastrous legacy of US imperialism in Latin America as the region confronted, with increasing frequency, life-threatening droughts. At home, the failure of certain crops in our community garden due to increased flooding and “pests” reminded me of the failure of crops in

regions without the resources we've accumulated in Midwest. That's the thing about translation, especially (e)co-translation—once you key into the interdependence of things, you can't help but recognize it everywhere; the “unreal” we see in stories as speculation has a tendency to appear, however belatedly, in “real” life. When I eventually moved back into the text, I did so with a recognition that sharpened my translatorial *skopos*: 1) to collaborate more intentionally with others and 2) to heighten the text's existing ecological resonances.

Many theories of translation imagine the primary intimate relationship of the translation process as that between the author, text, and translator (as reader and re-writer), although those alliances are always changing. In fact, Peri Rossi suggests, “The relationship between the translator and writer is an amorous one, a seductive one. [...] The translator often absorbs the imaginative world of the author being translated” (“Traducir, amar”). For many years, I believed Peri Rossi's words to be true: that the relationship between the writer and translator was what mattered most in the creation of a translation—that working together not only secured a certain expertise, a certain accuracy, but that it also nurtured a shared, creative sensibility that would benefit each person involved. While I still believe that such relationships can contribute positively to the translation process, in my time working with Peri Rossi, it also became clear that the dangers of seduction might also end up reifying the uneven power relationships between translator and author, even if the author is happy to relinquish, as Peri Rossi often was, his or her own creative license in the re-writing of the text. The problem with intimacy and seduction, when projected onto the work of translation, is more than that it often sets up a bind where translators are asked to take on work out of love instead of for the pay they deserve, as Peri Rossi herself suggests. It's also that seduction can lead to a skewed vision of what translation is; unlike Peri Rossi, I do not believe that “traducir es poseer, dominar [to translate is to possess, to

master/dominate]” (“Traducir, amar”). On one point, however, Peri Rossi and I still agree: neither the author nor translator is owner of the text.³³

In coming back to the draft of *Strange Flying Objects*, I saw an opportunity to translate the story according to an ecological ethic, that is, in a way that heightened my entangledness in the world around me and that resisted the fantasy of “possession” Peri Rossi notes above. Instead of engaging in the fantasy of “oneness” between author and translator, I began imagining the translation project as one in which I could shed my desire to master the text on my own—to “prove” that I possessed some unique gift that allowed me to translate on my own—by engaging with others, and with others’ versions of the story. Each new person I brought into the web of texts became a critical collaborator, and these collaborators included members of my local ecosocialist working group, bilingual friends with literary inclinations, members of my graduate-student translation workshop, my grandfather (an erstwhile farmer, may he rest in peace), and, most importantly, my dear friend and frequent collaborator, poet and translator María Cristina Hall, whose lucid readings reanimated my own. Each of these people brought their own experiences and their own connections to the world into the process with them, which deepened our sense of commitment to the text and to one another.

While “workshopping” is certainly not uncommon for many translators, I perhaps pursued it with more intention than usual, that is, with a keen attention to how the collaboration brought out certain affective attachments, how it reoriented my need to feel in possession, and how it made me more attentive to the process of cultivating camaraderie with the people I

³³ On this point, it is helpful to read Peri Rossi’s reflections in full: “Sin embargo, hay un momento peligroso en la relación íntima entre el escritor o la escritora y su traductor o traductora. Es cuando el traductor o la traductora se sienten los autores del texto, los creadores. Como traducir es poseer, dominar, a veces puede ocurrir que el traductor o la traductora crean ser los dueños de la obra. Es un pecado de vanidad que hay que cortar de raíz. Ni yo, la autora, soy la autora del texto (en la medida en que tengo infinitas deudas con la realidad, con los demás escritores del pasado o del presente) ni el traductor o la traductora son los dueños del texto al haberlo traducido” (“Traducir, amar”).

brought into my practice by allowing them space to relay their lived expertise. In collaborating with so many people, I found that the joy of translation wasn't getting a word "right," which assumes the possibility of direct linguistic exchange, or mastering the text—a text that, by its very speculative articulations, resists being mastered in the first place—but rather in what the process allowed me to cultivate: community. I learned to feel less beholden to what Peri Rossi might have meant and instead leaned into the messiness of collective engagement, into the many possibilities that might arise for multiple readings. While I eventually had to choose one word over another to turn in a "final" draft—knowing that no translation is ever really finished—I believe that allowing other collaborators to invest themselves into the process of translating *Strange Flying Objects* tied us all closer to one another. And here's where collaborative translation can lead to entanglement: For those in my eco-socialist circles, being part of the rewriting process allowed them to see how crucial translation, literary or otherwise, can be to organizing. Likewise, my translator friends were drawn into conversations about organizing around climate justice. My only regret is that we could not pursue this work all together, in a space or structure—like a translator collective—that would facilitate communal translatorship and mutually-supportive practice more readily.

As I revise *Strange Flying Objects* for publication with another publishing house, it feels strange to me to claim this translation as my own when so many people contributed to the English-language text's deep cultural and cross-linguistic ecologies. I'm not sure, however, if our work might fit into the current construction of a co-translation, which entails an explicit accord between creative practitioners as to the work's final form (and this is not to mention the difficult questions of "ownership" via copyright). Despite this uncertainty, the process points speculatively to a future where explicitly collaborative translation and co-translation—grounded

in an ethic of interdependence and intimacy—is not a question of “whose property?” but, rather, a commonplace, well-compensated labor pursued by those with diverse positionalities caring for one another and for the world through the text. In other words, the task of (e)co-translation, which I will call more clearly into sight in this dissertation’s coda.

For now, these considerations of collective translatorial practice take on special meaning when we consider them within *Strange Flying Objects*, for the text is itself concerned with the ways our lives can never be untangled—not from the past, not from the land or its kin, and certainly not from one another—without the world collapsing in on itself, as it does on Lautaro in the novella’s final scene. In this sense, my eco-poetic readings of *Strange Flying Objects* are also enriched by those of critics Debra A. Castillo, María B. Clark, and Gustavo San Roman, all of whom have understood the text’s speculative turns as a sharp critique of authoritarianism, capitalism, and the patriarchal structures that ensure their reproduction—structures of governance that often seek to invisibilize our connections to one another, and to obstruct any recognition of our entangledness in the so-called “natural” world.³⁴ Moving toward (e)co-translation has allowed me to render these connections visible and to enable a greater recognition of our shared climate crisis, so that we might collectively come to wrestle with its causes and effects. Further, drawing out these connections allows us to speculate on what the novella leaves unresolved—that is, Maria and the UFO’s fate—even if that speculation remains outside of the textual translation process. As Clarke points out, the UFO “resists narrative foreclosure” and thus suggests multiple endings outside of our immediate point of view (106). There is a certain consensus, then, that the novella’s ending—the disappearance of all living things except for

³⁴ María B. Clark attends to María’s eventual disappearance in the storyline—at the point when we are almost completely absorbed by her husband Lautaro’s bodily de-materialization—to argue that the “preoccupation with male subjectivity” is a mechanism through which to read gendered societal structures and their disastrous effects. In a similar fashion, Gustavo San Roman and Debra A. Castillo read the UFO as a symbol of the couple’s cultural-political alienation, visibilized in the spectral splitting of Lautaro’s face.

Lautaro himself—suggests that the closing of an era marked by violent repression will usher in another marked by re-birth.³⁵ This ongoing rebirth, I will argue, is situated within a speculative cross-species entanglement that the novella proposes but leaves for readers—and translators—to imagine and cultivate. In order to foreground this imagined scene, I will first move through a series of close readings that foreground the protagonists’ entanglement and suggest ways to make these moments more recognizable through translation.

As I’ve outlined above, *Strange Flying Objects* begins with the sudden appearance of the gray mass in the sky over the field the couple cultivates. Lautaro, clearly shaken by the unknowable thing—“He didn’t like strange things so close, and he was tired of this thing being there in front of him, watching him go about his business, following his steps, his comings and goings . . .”—quickly attempts to do away with the “magical” bird, while María tries to persuade him of its harmlessness, though her objections ultimately go unheard (Peri Rossi 393). This tension is, time and again, brought to the fore. Early on, for example, Lautaro grabs his shotgun and, in a moment of blind frustration, pulls the trigger, though his shot merely crosses the sky and unsettles the birds—there is no reaching the object so far up in the heavens. María, in contrast, is not unsettled by the bird, but rather by her husband’s increasingly violent and volatile behavior. The fact that “she had never seen anything like it in the air” leads her to think that they should do their best to let the creature be, or even welcome it down to earth; hers is a gesture of openness that resists the imperious impulse to name or claim dominion over.

³⁵ Commenting on the three stories that comprise *Los museos abandonados*, the collection to which “Strange Flying Objects” belongs, Saul Sosnowski writes, “Estos relatos constituyen un índice de la apertura de una literatura madura que desde su especificidad sin claudicaciones ni rezagos traduce su momento y se afirma a una lectura positiva de la historia que vive. Esta lectura es elaborada desde el goce de la lengua, ésa que goza con la presencia del momento que evidencia las transformaciones radicales de una version de la crónica humana que sale del museo para instalarse en la calle que no ha sido abandonada” (155).

María understands that “care,” as Saidiya Hartman evinces, “is the antidote to violence” (“In the Wake”). As with the other animals with whom she shares her life, María almost immediately comes to see the “brown bird” as a welcome presence—a creature whose promise is that of beauty when cast against the unchanging landscape of the pale, barren fields:

“It’s like having company,” she thought. But she couldn’t stop long to study it: she had to keep living, going in and out, preparing the meals, washing clothes, putting away the seed, there was no time to stand there staring, although with time it had turned into something beautiful in its strangeness. Beauty in strangeness. Perhaps it wasn’t that it was so strange, only that they didn’t know anything about anything. Her least of all, always tied up there, like the cow, never leaving, tied to the tree, giving her days, like milk. The cow the milk the days without leaving. (Peri Rossi 394-5)

In attending to all the creatures in her surrounds, María, unlike Lautaro, advances a practice of care that seeks to incorporate strange and different things. Yet her efforts to tend to the object are constantly frustrated by Lautaro, who demands to know if she has shared any secrets with it, and by her own marginalized position on the farm, where she, too, is tied up like the cow, giving her days, like milk, to Lautaro. The strange flying object and María, then, “are drawn together by a bond of sympathy on her part, by her implicit recognition that they are parallel beings: one alien, the other alienated deprived even of the essential functions of her own body” (Castillo 34). And in a way, this condition of the marginalized caregiver speaks directly to the climate crisis: those who seek to tend to a more just earth are often those who find themselves with the least power to do so.

Despite Lautaro’s continued efforts, the aerial object, untouchable at such a far remove, remains. Its presence, while unmoving, manages to open old wounds, which readers discover in a

series of dizzying flashbacks that make up roughly the first third of the novella. In this passage through María's "storehouse of memories"—each precipitated by the phrase "she was old enough to remember"—readers learn that Lautaro and María are united not only by their marriage vows, but also by their relationship to the inhospitable land and the animals and plants that inhabit it (though, by the time the UFO appears, few animals remain, as they too have fled for greener pastures).³⁶ While the couple fights to survive through constant drought and flood, readers glimpse the failure of governance in the region as well; government officials (often large estate landowners themselves) appear only in their capacity to collect on loans that tenant farmers, like Lautaro and María, cannot pay. In these difficult scenes, Peri Rossi expertly registers the travails of rural life, imbuing them with a sense of the real-yet-unreal so characteristic of Magical Realism, which "facilitate[s] the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction" (Zamora and Faris 5-6). Yet, it is also clear that the city is no safer for those without means; after Lautaro and María's son Sebastián escapes to the city among a train wagon full of sheep in pursuit of a better life, he is quickly thrown in jail and beaten for participating in his union's strike efforts—an event that leads to his death soon after the police release him and send him back to the farm.³⁷

With each devastating flashback, it becomes easier to understand María's own initial reaction to the flying creature: "The woman looked up at the gray mass in the sky. It hadn't rained for six

³⁶ When Lautaro grabs the shotgun off the wall, we learn that he has seldom used it in years past, for "in those parts there was no game or anything of the sort to be found. If there had been in other times, he couldn't remember now; no doubt the animals had fled from the village with the famine and drought, seeking out other places when they realized it hardly ever rained" (392). This apparent disappearance of "game" suggests earlier ecosystem collapse in the region.

³⁷ The initial appearance of the "brown bird" causes María to reflect on her forced sterilization: Did the birds, like her, need operations to stop producing children? Were their tubes tied up, like hers, in a chalky hospital, putting that thing between her legs, so no more Luises, Joaquíns, Sebastián's, Césars would come into the world? It was easy having birds by air. An egg would break apart, a head would poke out from under a wing, and that was that: the mother would be off just like before. Shortly after, more eggs, more wings, more embryos that would soon learn to fly, and the world would be on its way. That's how they lived there: going in and out" (382). In a sense, the lives of bird—and the untouchable "brown bird"—come to signal a freedom to which María has never had access, which perhaps foregrounds her own longing to welcome the strange flying object to earth.

whole months and if it went on like that, they'd lose the whole harvest, and if the whole harvest was lost . . . Bah, when it wasn't a drought, it was a flood. That's how you lived: going in and out" (Peri Rossi 379).

Soon after the object's first sighting, María attempts to make sense of Lautaro's obstinacy to fix things around the house by asking whether his malnourishment as a child had caused a life-long illness that could keep him from his duties around the farm. The narrator then interjects with what reads as the story's guiding memory, one that signals how the couple's lives have unfolded *with* the lives of the animals and land they are charged with tending:

("When everyone left the pueblo because of that torrential drought, the field was paler than ever, a terrifying sight, how everything had dried right up, so pale that nothing could take hold and the one remaining cow, in her weary thirst and hunger, stretched out her skeleton along the road, tame with death, with black, docile eyes already staring out from her skeleton, and he had taken to eating the earth he'd stir up beneath the rocks, and when he'd pull out a weed he'd eat that up, though its roots had dried out, he'd eat it up, sucking at the last bits of dampness it had managed to hide away in its milky arteries, but when he saw the only cow, the lone survivor, settled in for death amidst all that white, he was so weak that it didn't even occur to him to kill her. She mooed weakly in his ear, oh, what devastating days, everyone had fled God's light, the cow with her ribs poking out, her bones recounting the days of suffering, he attached himself to the dry udder and a thin stream of green water—a yellowish water, putrefied and earthy—slowly trickled past the eye, dry cheek with tree roots and dust collecting in the corners, through dried-up lips where it would no longer rain.")

The images presented above are distressing, to say the very least; there was even a point—when the words became material, not simply a string of verbs and nouns to be moved across languages—that I felt incapable of translating. This materialization process was a gradual one, that is, a process of slow recognition, heightened by the images I would increasingly confront in the news. When I would sit down to translate, it often appeared there was little I needed to do as translator to draw direct parallels to the scene above, written more than forty years ago, and those we are increasingly witnessing in a world of climate collapse; the very act of carrying the text over to a new context seemed to uncover our collective “derangement” all itself. After all, the end of the world always appears earlier, and elsewhere—we just have to be able to *recognize* it.

María: “If it wasn’t a drought, it was a flood.”



Figure 2.2. Dead cattle after extreme drought (San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua), photograph: Sean Hawkey



Figure 2.3. Dead cattle at Eddington Station (Queensland, Australia), photograph: Rachael Anderson

Yet, as a translator, I knew that the text could not simply speak for itself, and that the process of articulating these parallels was the very work of (e)co-translation. As my collaborators and I returned to the text, we contemplated how experimenting with the English-language version could further draw out a sense of ecological entanglement—of a shared energy that pulsed between the weeds, the cow, and Lautaro. The following lines, which seemed straightforward at first, became a space to play with this cross-species mirroring of body, act, and survival:

[E]l se había puesto a comer la tierra que revolvía debajo de las piedras, cuando desbrozaba una hierba también se la comía, aunque tuviera las raíces secas, se la comía chupándole la poca humedad que pudiera guardar entre los pasillos de la savia . . .

[H]e had taken to eating the earth he'd stir up beneath the rocks, and when he'd pull out a weed he'd eat that up, though its roots had dried out, he'd eat it up, sucking at the last bits of dampness that it could hide away in its milky arteries . . . [381]

I first trained my attention on the phrase “pasillos de la savia,” which might be more literally rendered as “tubes of sap.” Such a phrase, however, does little to convey the very striking *liveness* of the plant in such dire circumstances; after all, “savia” is often used figuratively to describe one’s vitality—one’s lifeblood—whereas “sap,” in its verb form, is often used to describe the opposite effect. I landed on the phrase “milky arteries” in order to evoke an image that would stage a reversal of sorts: whereas the cow’s milk was now “vegetal [earthy],” the plant, which still offered some semblance of nourishment, contained milk within its veins.³⁸ Furthermore, in “animating” the plant—endowing it with “arteries” instead of “tubes”—I sought to heighten the readers’ sense of its sentience, which remained latent in the Spanish; after all, Peri Rossi describes the plant as having managed to “hide away”—“guardar” can mean to “keep” or “store”—its sap when much of the other plant life had died off around it. As studies have show, plants communicate all the time; the large question, then, is not whether plants are conscious beings, but whether our language permits our recognition of this living.³⁹

While one of my aims was to contest a vision of “life” that has typically been reserved for the human, I also had to resist the tendency to anthropomorphize (ascribing human mental

³⁸ Yet, rendering “savia” as “milk” creates an additional wrinkle for those in the ecological know—milky sap is often toxic to human and animals.

³⁹ In their book *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*, Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola propose that “seeing” plants as sentient also requires a different kind of recognition: “Although casual observation may suggest that the plant world’s level of complexity is pretty low, over the centuries the ideas that plants are sentient organisms which can communicate, have a social life, and solve problems by using elegant strategies—that they are, in a word, intelligent—has occasionally raised its head. [...] Until the mid-twentieth century there were only brilliant intuitions. But discoveries over the past fifty years have finally shed light on the subject, compelling us to see the plant world with new eyes . . . [W]e’ll see that even today, arguments for denying plants’ intelligence rely less on scientific data than on cultural projections and influences that have persisted for millennia” (1-2).

states to) the non-human, which would subsume all life into the human sphere and, at its worst, do away with the difference that (e)co-translation seeks to facilitate. Yet, as Vinciane Despret argues, “being anthropomorphic” can also mean “to add new definitions to what it is to be a human being” and can contribute to the human-nonhuman process of “being with” (131).⁴⁰ With this tension in mind, I eventually chose to translate the cow’s possessive pronouns as “her” in most cases—an act that demonstrates the tendency to humanize animals by gendering them—while I also saw in the excerpt’s last few clauses the potential to complicate this linguistic relationship by estranging the human, thus further entangling the two bodies:

[S]e le prendió a la ubre seca y un débil hilo de agua verde—un agua amarilla, putrefacta, vegetal—, le fue lentamente pasando por el ojo seco, la mejilla seca con raíces de árbol y polvo guardado en las comisuras, por el labio reseco donde ya no llovía más.

[H]e attached himself to the dry udder and a thin stream of green water—a yellowish water, putrefied and earthy—slowly trickled past the eye, dry cheek with tree roots and dust collecting in the corners, through dried-up lips where it would no longer rain. (Peri Rossi 381)

In order to better draw out their shared tragedy, I retained the Spanish-language grammatical convention of using articles instead of possessive pronouns with body parts to dissolve the boundary between Lautaro and the cow. While the Spanish text suggests that the milk is running down Lautaro’s face, the English-language rendering attempts to create a certain confusion

⁴⁰ In her article “Humans, Horses, and Hormones: (Trans) Gendering Cross-Species Relationships,” Natalie Corinne Hansen elegantly summarizes Despret’s concept: “The mutual transformation that happens within domestication as anthropo-zoo-genetic practice is what Despret calls a relationship of ‘being-with’ (130–31). ‘Being-with’ involves co-creating, a broadening that maintains discreteness as opposed to a merging or simple identification. Difference is maintained within this relationship and offers the grounds for new learning for both parties. Despret suggests that in the negotiating of differences the body can become a ‘domesticating device’ as it is used ‘as a tool for knowing, as a tool for asking questions, as a means to create a relation that provides new knowledge’ (129)” (98).

between the Lautaro's features and the cow's udder, which might itself be described as cheek-like, and whose teats each end in openings that create a profusion of eyes, covered in "tree roots and collecting dust in the corners." While such a choice defies standard Spanish-language usage, and so risks reading as "error," it also creates an even more grotesque image of ecological and affective attachment, for in describing how the barest of nutrients move, even in putrid form, from one living body to another, Peri Rossi suggests that life in the rural Riverplate region is an inescapable feedback loop of trial and trauma. And this discomfiting vision of life proposes a different way of recognizing the strange brown bird as not separate to this trauma, but long-living within it.

Perhaps the most striking image related in the memory is that of the distended cow, her bones "recounting" the suffering of precarious survival in the barren landscape she shares with Lautaro:

[C]uando vio la vaca, que había quedado, única sobreviviente, sentada a morir en medio de todo lo blanco, estaba tan débil que ni se le ocurrió matarla, y ella le mugió blandamente al oído, que eran esos tiempos tan desolados, todo el mundo se había ido de la claridad de Dios, la vaca con sus costillas contándole los días de martirio . . .

[W]hen he saw the only cow, the lone survivor, settled in for death amidst all that white, he was so weak that it didn't even occur to him to kill her. She mooed weakly in his ear, oh, what devastating days, everyone had fled God's light, the cow with her ribs poking out, her bones recounting the days of suffering . . . (Peri Rossi 381)

Here, Peri Rossi's use of "contar" conjures two different readings. First, there is the depiction of the passing of days leaving more and more ribs visible; the cow's body, in this sense, is keeping earthly—not human—time. Second, in this counting, the cow is also communicating: the cow

recounts her story through both her voice (“mugió blandamente”) and her body. In choosing “recounting,” I wanted to emphasize the agency of the non-human in larger discussions of climate collapse. When once fertile land can no longer produce (due to changing environmental conditions or over-farming in the guise of monocrops and plantations), it communicates. When a cow’s bones are laid bare, they speak. Translation, then, can be an underlying mechanism for mutual comprehension within and across human and nonhuman worlds, though only if we learn new forms of attunement. Learning to recognize, to listen, and to understand how non-human actors “speak” (an unlearning of domination), will be central to seeking enduring cover.⁴¹

Scenes like that of Lautaro and the cow, that is, memories of entangledness and of a shared, doomed destiny, come to inform the events that transpire throughout the rest of the novella, when Lautaro begins to lose his very place in a world readers were led to think was immovable. One morning, as María is contemplating the bird from the window—“It couldn’t have slept any, the poor thing,”—she hears Lautaro scream from the bathroom (Peri Rossi 399). His response is, at first, striking: “A piece of my face is missing” (Peri Rossi 402). While María attempts to calm him, claiming that he was, in fact, “whole,” Lautaro falls into what reads as delirium as he stares into the bathroom mirror. The passage relating Lautaro’s thoughts, which spans more than three pages and is broken only by the occasional semi-colon, underscores that the loss of his face signifies a loss of connection to the world around him:

he was missing the whole left side of his face, that’s to say, he was missing half his forehead right there they’d cut off half of his wrinkles, they’d made off with an eye, a nostril, half of his two lips, and his chin appeared perfectly disfigured down its cleft, he

⁴¹ Eva Meijer investigates one aspect of this ethical injunction in her monograph *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy*. She writes, “A focus on political relations implies the need to think about political communication within and between communities. Other animals have languages and communicate, their voices can and should be political—as constituents of or contributions to political processes—and humans can and should attend to be responsive to these voices as part of a broader conception of interspecies democracy.”

had stayed the same below the neck, that's to say, he still had the two halves that make a body whole and it seemed, for the moment, that he maintained his oneness, it was only his face, and it frightened him because he only had one nostril two trimmed bits of lip that when put together should make an entire one, the upper or lower lip, depending on how you looked at it, which meant that only half the air would go into his lungs and he was already old and he shouldn't be skimping on air, God forbid he suffocate, lose his breath, grow weary and want to inhale and then realize he was suffocating, in other words *only one ear had remained of the two he'd gone to bed with had been born with had married with and heard the passing of the dogs and the horses along the path with and the stirring of the insects as they invaded like blackened clouds charged with electricity sliding through the late afternoon air . . .* (Peri Rossi 403-4, my emphasis)

The passage's last lines brings Lautaro's entangledness to a fine point: his anxiety over the apparent loss of half his face is also the anxiety of losing his place in the world as he has known it, a world where his "wholeness" is contingent on many human and non-human lives. The energy that passes through Lautaro's own body tangles with the animals' bodies in movement, which further generates and links up with the electricity that slides through the clouds. Life itself, Peri Rossi suggests, is that very movement through many bodies, and its power of animation has no limits or punctuation, as the barely interrupted lines seek to convey.

What is further revealed in the Lautaro's passionate remembering is the couple's oppression at the hands of a loose coalition of agents, including landlords and government officials, who see Lautaro's farm not as a space of interspecies entanglement, but rather a *plantation* where human, animal, and plant life is useful only to the extent that it can yield crops for payment:

[When] the seed had come up so poorly and the government had gotten rid of the loans because they said that first they had to pay off their debts to the gentleman abroad, but did the foreigner plant potatoes? The foreigner, did he sow the fields? Did he endure the drought? Perhaps the foreigner had seen his cows dead in the floodwaters? Had most of his sheep been dragged abroad in those waters? The foreigner should be thankful he was a peaceful man, for if not, it could well be said that if he happened upon that foreigner walking through the village you bet he would fire a few good shots so the man would stop mucking around demanding accounts be settled; as for the government, he hadn't been spotted except for a few times in a neighboring town, when he came to give a talk about the sacrifice they had to make so that the country could hold itself together, saying they were the backbone of *la patria*; so he hoped they would make the sacrifice, that way, with their shared sacrifice, they would settle the accounts that had complicated payment to the gentlemen abroad; so he couldn't offer an opinion, but of one thing he was sure: the government was well sheltered in times of flood, and when the drought came, the government was at the beach, taking a dip. (Peri Rossi 405)

These lines have read many ways over the last five years, in part because they are themselves strange and in part because they represent an entrance point in the text where we might not only interrogate Lautaro's entangledness in the world, but the readers' as well. Alongside my collaborators, I searched for a strategy to heighten Western readers' recognition of their own positionality in a thoroughly global system that often seeks to invisibilize the oppression carried out by Western regimes. In this sense, it's not lost on me, a translator from the novel's "abroad," that I form part, albeit disruptively, of this culture of comfort in the Global North—my comforts,

however slight when compared to those of higher socio-economic strata in the US, come at a high ecological and social cost to those in the Global South.

In particular, the confusion around the personification of “el extranjero” (the foreigner/abroad) and “el gobierno” (the government) offers one way to estrange an English-speaking audience. In my first draft, I disrupted the English-language version by playing with neologism, as Peri Rossi herself has done elsewhere in the novella. This version read:

[T]he government that had cut the loans because they said that first they had to pay off the debts to gentleman abroad, but the abroader, did he plant potatoes? The abroader, did he sow the fields? Did he endure the drought? Perhaps the abroader had seen his cows now dead from the floodwater? Had many sheep been dragged abroad by the water?

In first settling on “abroader,” I aimed to draw out the sense of confusion that the abstract concept of the “foreign” or “abroad” often relates. While “foreign” is meant to denote difference, its abstraction doesn’t necessarily push us to recognize actual difference, but instead to focus on the sameness that is related by its opposite—if abroad is “out there,” then those at “home” are often falsely united in their ties to one land. Yet, as a translator who didn’t grow up bilingual, I felt it was important to acknowledge that this solution might not read as the most felicitous, while also remaining insistent that all translation is a series of choices, not an act of direct equivalence.

To explore this tension, I began to ask others what feelings the usage of “el extranjero” conjured within them. Rita Elena Zamora, whom I had crossed paths with at Michigan, responded, “I read your play with ‘abroader,’ which caused some strangeness. I confess I had never seen it before. But what doesn’t cause strangeness in this text? That is the whole purpose.” Yet, not every reader loved my use of “abroader,” as I well expected. During a recent meeting of

the graduate workshop in literary translation, I discussed my own misgivings about “abroader”—namely, that those without any Spanish-language knowledge might not understand the play on words—and so we brainstormed alternatives. Jason Wagner, who translates from Yiddish and Russian, gave an electrifying suggestion: why not use “alien” in place of “foreigner”? My mind went racing: would using “alien” break the unspoken rule of the text, that is, to never explicitly name the “strange flying object” as a UFO? Or would it act as an interpretive lever to subvert reigning notions of the “illegal alien,” humanizing those who are most often given the name (migrant farmers who we might liken to Lautaro himself)? If not, would it read too glibly?

While I have not yet decided on a “final” translation of “el extranjero,” the conversations around how to render the word to promote recognition of our global entangledness and survival suggests a larger question of reparations: of what is owed to whom in order to repair harm. As Lautaro’s memory suggests, debts mar our relationships to the governments charged with caring for us—they are often a form of social control and of possession. And yet there is no denying that in the context of the climate crisis, the United States and the Global North writ large are the systems that owe the largest debts to the peoples who have been ravaged by their imperialist, racialized, and extractivist policies, and yet they are the actors that refuse to make good on them.⁴² The reigning focus is not on repair, but rather on “making things stay the same—no matter how unjust they may be” (Hayes, cited in Miller 34). Conversely, our highest hopes, as literary translators, would be to see our texts change the world for the better, and that desire certainly animates my work. But the text is just the first step toward remediating environmental and interpersonal harm, which will require articulating and fighting for a world without borders, where re-homing is not only possible, but also mutually-beneficial. In a word, it is the horizon of

⁴² As Todd Miller, reading Harsha Walia, points out, it is “the world’s biggest polluters—including the United States, which has emitted more metric tons of greenhouse gas pollution than any other country since the Industrial Revolution—are the same countries constructing unprecedented border regimes” (31).

mass belonging. We might imagine the *process* of (e)co-translation—and the reckoning it incurs—as a recognition of indebtedness and a transference of that debt, especially when translating from one colonial language, like Spanish, into another, more imperious one. Refuge can only ever exist to the extent that we can care for it, and one another, together.

Peri Rossi, however, never offers refuge within the text itself. In the last third of novella, Lautaro takes off toward the city—holding onto his trousers so that the flying object cannot steal them from him—to seek help from the local doctor. And in the doctor’s mirror, he finds some semblance of comfort: his left half of face is seemingly restored. But this comfort, like any reprieve in the novella, is only temporary. The doctor cannot offer the kind of care required to make Lautaro whole again; in its stead, he prescribes the same sedatives he does to all the “country bumpkins” that file into his office. Yet Lautaro remains convinced: “With pills in his stomach, four a day as the doctor ordered, especially before bed, the appearances wouldn’t appear, only the things themselves would” (Peri Rossi 436).

When Lautaro begins his long walk back home, his dreams of “seeing” the world he was once again promised by the doctor darken. As he nears his pueblo, Lautaro notices how even the most familiar outlines, those he had seen on each trip back to his farm, were absent from the sky. And it is not just his eyes that deceive him, but his hands, too: “He reached toward the ground and caressed it. He shuddered in terror upon touching that land peeled bare, without a thing, without a blade of grass; the earth had the stony hardness of rocks, as if a plant had never been able to grow there, from that sterile earth” (Peri Rossi 439). As he flees to the train station, where his son had once hopped a train to escape to the city, Lautaro’s final recognition becomes our own: no one man can fight alone against a dying world. Upon Lautaro’s head, “An enormous silence was descending, like the dome of a church. The silence of the withered world” (Peri

Rossi 440). The rest, we assume, is silence.

If there is hope to glean from *Strange Flying Objects*, it lies in what remains absent at the story's end: the chatter between María, her creature kin, and the UFO. Let us conclude, then, by way of remembrance.

As the days pass by, María grows keener on welcoming the strange bird into her domestic space. Consider, for example, María's daydream, in which she fantasizes about caring for the newcomer, entangling it in cross-species conversation:

[T]hen it would stop circling round, it would settle down in the garden, striking up a conversation with her begonias and jasmine vines and the bougainvillea and the tresses and verbena and the peach tree in bloom with its brown branches and the small pinkish jaspers at the tips, all leaning in to say hello. Then, if it were to come down between the hydrangea on the patio or the flower bed in the garden (the hydrangea would open up its large and rotund corollas, its healthy and spacious leaves there to protect and spoil it, to guard it from curiosity and mistrust of the unknown), if it timidly were to settle in there, even she could perhaps bring it a glass of something, milk or broth, because no matter what kind of animal it was, it was sure to like one of those two things, either broth or milk, savoring it, and afterward, when it felt more comfortable and at peace, slyly, she would casually move in closer, distracted-like (doing harmless things around it, as a kind of bluff, shaking out the old man's clothes, or inspecting the plants to remove dry leaves or a rotten root, for example), until, while looking the other way, she might dare ask what kind of animal could be so rare, that she, old as she was, had never seen anything like it, and it better not go saying it was the only one, because she was well aware that with all animals, absolutely all the sorts of animals she knew of, there was at least a pair of them.

She'd muster up the courage to ask what kind of creature it was, and the animal would probably answer, now that it was more comfortable, or it would help her understand one way or another, with a look or some gesture, like all the others had, so that she could almost always find out something about them. (Peri Rossi 400)

María's desire for intimacy—thwarted as it is by her husband, the city, a man-made world that demands harm over care—finds expression in an imagined mutual surrendering, “messy” or “patchy” as it may tentatively be, among the floral vines, the curious visitor, and herself. This is as much a question of language as it is of careful relations, for, as James Boyd White suggests, “Our language is at the deepest level the expression of a set of motives and gestures we share with all mammals; its radical meaning is social and relational. ‘Who are we to each other?’” (233). It's an ending that Peri Rossi leaves open for us to imagine, and imagine we must: the climate crisis, as an all encompassing crisis through which we might enact liberation, demands that we “join forces to reconstitute refuges” as carefully and collaboratively—and as quickly—as possible (Haraway 160).

As I listen to the birdsong out my window, I can count three distinct chirps in the span of the minute. Yet, as I try to understand them, to translate them, I'm overwhelmed by the fear that there will be a time when birds no longer sing at all. The work of (e)co-translation, however, suggests that surrender is not an option, and that the future will be written in the language of care, even if our capacities to speak other languages are still in formation, entangled in the greater unfolding of all life on planet Earth and beyond.

Chapter III

“Carrying Ourselves Across”: A Self-Translation Workshop⁴³

“Those who seek refuge, who are rarely accorded a voice, are nevertheless the bodies that confront the injustice of the world. They give up their particular claim to sovereignty and cast themselves on the waters. Only when the world is its own refuge will their limitless demand be met.”

McKenzie Wark

In his recent essay “Carrying a Single Life: On Literature and Translation,” Teju Cole ruminates on the role of literature, and literature in translation, in the struggle for free migration. To begin his inquiry, Cole addresses the figure of the translator, whom he casts, from the word’s etymological roots, as a “ferry operator, carrying meaning from words on that shore to words on this shore” (“Carrying”). In mobilizing this metaphor, Cole recognizes the many translators who have labored on his behalf to win him welcome passage in other cultures and languages, those operators who, by their own vital labor, facilitate connections with new readers and make visible aspects of his texts that he may have never noticed himself. By the literary translator’s hand, Cole envisions his work entering into conversation with the many writers who have come before him, and the many readers who will come after. For Cole, these connections come to represent literature’s potential: “Inside this modest thing called literature, I have found reminders to myself

⁴³ My deepest gratitude goes to the entire staff at 826michigan. In particular, I want to thank Megan Gilson and David Hutcheson for co-planning and co-leading the “Carrying Ourselves Across” workshops in 2018 and 2019. I also want to thank Anisa Bega, who generously welcomed us into her classroom, and all of the students and volunteers who made the workshop a success.

to negate frontiers and carry others across, and reminders of others who carry me, too” (“Carrying”).

This vision of literary translation, I believe, is one that many translators are most familiar with: deft reading and re-writing as a form of textual rehousing, which allows writers not simply to speak *through* us, but *alongside* us. It’s in this sense, Cole argues, that literary translation involves a special kind of handling, as it requires “literary analysis mixed with sympathy, a matter for the brain as well as the heart” (“Carrying”). As a literary translator, I, too, see my task as one of the brain and heart, that is, of *care*: moving slowly through the text; of weighing various meanings; of being in conversation with not only the author, but also with potential readers. And I dream of the ways that the text I’m translating might inspire alternative ways of navigating and being in the world, not only for my imagined readers, but also for myself.

Yet, as I’ve gone back to Cole’s essay over the past few months, I’m struck by his insistence on discussing literature “stubbornly in the singular,” that is, centered in the “ever-expanding power of a single life [that] brings to mind a thought that has echoed through the ages” (“Carrying”). Here, the work of the writer also becomes one of translation—of re-articulating ideas that cross not only physical and linguistic barriers, but temporal ones, too. What emerges in Cole’s analysis, however, is an assumption that literature’s potential for collective action comes from the combined efforts of individuals who labor separately from one another in order to dismantle the borders that literally and metaphorically keep us apart. He goes as far to quote Camus, who says that hope “is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history” (“Carrying”). In narrowing the scope of literature’s influence, Cole is attempting to make sense of writing as a kind of self-determination as well as of the limits of

literature to enact larger change, especially as the fight for free migration puts even more lives on the line. “After observing the foreign policies of the so-called developed countries,” Cole writes, I cannot trust any complacent claims about the power to inspire empathy” (“Carrying”).

Ultimately, he finds hope in his calling: While “literature does not stop the persecution of humans or the prosecution of humanitarians,” while it “does not stop the bombs,” it can, Cole argues, “save a life. Just one life at a time” (“Carrying”).

While there is much to be said for saving just one life—of reaching just one reader—this withdrawal into the individual still feels unresolved if the larger goal of translation is to “negate frontiers.” After all, as the examples, including the “No More Deaths—No Más Muertes” project, that he draws on reveal, we can only secure free migration through collective work.⁴⁴

With this in mind, I often find myself wondering: How does literature move from kindling hope in individuals to the harder work of moving people to collective action? What come’s *after* the text? Is there a way to build a more enduring shelter not within the text, which is, by necessity, contained, but through it instead? How might literary translation get us there, or rather, how can we be transformed by the very carrying across that the translation process represents?

A deep interest in moving from hope to action—in order to dismantle unjust borders—weds my labor as a literary translator and a fledgling community organizer focused on issues of environmental justice. As such, my work as a translator has prepared me to approach community

⁴⁴ I first came to know the “No More Deaths—No Más Muertes” project through the work of my friend and fellow translator Kevin “Gerry” Dunn, who would spend half of his week on the Arizona border doing humanitarian work and the other half translating commercial and literary documents. Gerry told me of his experiences leaving out milk jugs full of water for those making the journey across the border, and how gutting it was to see how Border Patrol and its “volunteers” would slash each jug they came across. I want to take this moment to highlight a project Gerry spearheaded, called the “Free Translation of Migration Paperwork Project (FTrMP),” which, he writes, “essentially aims to publish Spanish translations of documents that asylum-seekers (and, to a lesser extent, other folks immigrating for non-professional purposes) need to submit to USCIS. These forms have been downloaded over ten thousand times, and I assume also emailed and shared and photocopied many times over” (“Language Justice Activism”).

organizing as a relationship-building process, of listening to and engaging with others' stories in a careful way. Yet, it is the organizing principle of collective (not individual) action that has more recently allowed me to radically reassess my own approaches to the task of translation. So while I see Cole's essay as an attempt to understand how the labor of the translator troubles the perception of the writer's task as individualistic, I would argue that pursuing collective action necessarily requires thinking outside of solitary contemplation in a more sustained manner; literature, as a source of inspiration and a charting of *aspiration*, can only do so much to move us. What's more, it seems to me that projecting the figure of the solitary writer or reader onto the translator does a disservice to the vast collaborative potential of translation as a creative mode, trapping it within Western, individualistic notions from which modern constructions of "authorship" have emerged.

To complicate things further, viewing literary translation as a practice that is only taken up by individuals who are (formally) trained—in literary analysis, and in the "craft" of translation—obscures the fact that stories are being carried across all the time, and that the world is full of translators of varying capacities. There is a tension, then, between the translator as a singular, trained mediator—like the ferry operator—who is deemed "capable" of carrying stories and the translator as one of *the many*. The image of a lone ferry operator ultimately positions the work of translation as that of a single set of hands confronting an unjust world and doing their best to enact change—a *savior* of sorts. But focusing on the ferry operator as a savior also obscures the agency of those in the crossing. I suppose this tension is why I'm apprehensive of embracing Cole's idea of the translator as ferry operator, even if it does the important work of directly linking the translator to the critical re-homing process amid a global climate emergency of "fires, endless treks, and a changed world" ("Carrying").

My growing sense is that hope lies not in millions of solitary readers investing themselves in an author and translator's text, but in a gathering of the many who invest themselves in one another, with the text as just one site of collaboration in the larger process. And the many are all around us: families, neighbors, and friends recounting the tales that have moved them, literally and affectively. These are our world's most frequent translators, after all, and yet our current publishing systems do not often visibilize or reward their labor (to be sure, when literary translation is remunerated at all, it barely covers the bills). Perhaps that's because their workspaces are informal—as with kitchen-table translation, as Madhu H. Kaza puts it—and their “finished texts” more ephemeral, or perhaps it's because the language they're translating into—often on behalf of loved ones—isn't the one they grew up speaking (Chakrapani). Translation, for all of its rhetoric of collaboration, is not free from the pressures of cultural gatekeeping, especially when you attach the adjective “literary” to it. So while their work isn't always for pay and it doesn't always explicitly fall into neat literary categories, it is translation that gets to the heart of the literary translator's labor: reworking, reimagining, and reviving stories across languages and cultures.

So how can literary translators in the “mainstream” of literary translation—the ferry operators whom Cole has in mind—begin to work with the many in mind, and by our side? How can literary translation contribute to the collective process of cultivating refuge in a world of climate collapse, which will only grow increasingly necessary with the rise of climate-driven migration? How can the process of translation lead to the cultivation of climate refugia that requires acknowledging that we, translators in the Global North, are not saviors, but rather, collaborators in navigating the precarious world we inhabit now, and in dreaming up a better

one? How can the process of translating collectively bind people together, and lead to collective action after the translating is finished?

We might by start, I argue, by leveraging our knowledges outside of the spaces we're most familiar with. In the story I relate below, I describe how we might work alongside community organizations to design self-translation workshops for those who have recently arrived from abroad in an effort to not only amplify their stories and acknowledge that the work they are doing is, in fact, translation, but also to practice more complex forms of collaborative translation ourselves. Doing so requires positioning the translation workshop not as a place to simply produce texts, but rather to work alongside those we might not normally come into contact with in our growing communities. The workshop's focus, then, is less on "mastering" the text and more on how translation, when approached as process, has the potential to cultivate community among communities and to recognize our own entanglement in the world. In this space, none of us are singular "ferry operators," hence the workshop's title: "*Carrying Ourselves Across.*"

The story to follow, a translation of sorts, offers just one attempt to begin cultivating together.

Collaborative Design: Refiguring the Self-Translation Workshop

A few years ago, I began to work with 826michigan, a non-profit organization that "inspires school-aged students to write confidently and skillfully with the help of adult volunteers in their communities" ("About Us"). As an intern at a nearby elementary and middle school, I spent several days a week co-facilitating writing groups and book projects for students between the ages of eight and thirteen. To my surprise, I had been placed in the school in the

district with the highest number of speakers of Spanish, one of the languages from which I translate. While I went out of my way to support all of the students, I found myself often in conversation with a girl who had, alongside her family, recently arrived from Mexico. Let's call her Mar.

Unlike other Spanish-speaking students in class, who had been born in the US, Mar had a difficult time completing her coursework. Mar's teacher could speak a few haphazard phrases in Spanish, but most of the direct attention she received was from the in-school ESL coordinator, who was regularly pushed beyond capacity. On days I was in her classroom, Mar would confide in me about how out-of-place she felt, even when in the company of fellow Spanish speakers in her class, who would occasionally tease her about her English-language use. Writing had become for Mar, as it has for so many others, a space where confidence is not gained, but robbed. But by conversing with Mar in my own imperfect Spanish, which I learned later in life, I was open about my vulnerabilities and proposed to her that "fluency" was always tied to practice rather than a fixed state of expertise. In doing so, I encouraged her to embrace the process even when it made her uncomfortable, and I let her know that I would be there for her when she might not know how to translate her thoughts into English, just as she might help me when I stumbled over a word in Spanish. Being vulnerable, after all, is central to the practice of translation as a form of care work, which seeks to honor our interdependence as we collectively cultivate a more just world.

After a few months into my internship, I became adamant about designing a workshop that would allow Mar and students like her to draw on their heritage languages, much as I had done for college-level students in my home department at the University of Michigan. The driving idea was that English-language learners had much to offer, including the ability to work

in and through the English language from a distinct perspective. My initial proposal was a Spanish-to-English translation workshop in which pairs of older (sixth- and seventh-grade) and younger (third- and fourth-grade) students would read a Spanish-language story together, work out their various interpretations, and then come together to collectively translate the Spanish text into an English-language story all its own. Here, the differences between running a translation workshop for primary-school students instead of college students became clear: How would I manage their attention? How would I handle varying linguistic capacities? What would make for the most comfortable space, where they could lower their affective filters? A space where grammatical infelicity would be an invitation for discussion, and for gauging what might be “untranslatable”? And how could we coordinate bilingual volunteers to see our presence as advancing the notion of care?

While these questions would continue to inform my thinking, my coordinator and I decided that a workshop that incorporated composition in both the students’ heritage languages and English might make for a more accessible activity, as students might be less anxious about translating work they deemed their “own.” (Here, we find the lasting damage of an authorship model based on the illusions of solitary genius.) This decision came at a point when it was also becoming increasingly difficult to secure time to work with our current students on non-curriculum projects, as preparation for standardized testing was the priority (to our dismay, and to that of the teachers we worked with). As 826michigan had recently run a writing project for English-language learners at a high school just a block away from where I was placed at the time, we decided to switch gears. In a matter of weeks, we proposed a preliminary project outline to our potential host teacher at the high school and got to work on preparations.

The first iteration of the “Carrying Ourselves Across” Self-Translation Workshop took place in May 2018, and brought together sixteen students (ranging from ninth-twelfth grade) and seven volunteers, many of whom were graduate students at the University of Michigan. The following year, from February to May 2019, we welcomed even more folks to the gathering: volunteers with no second-language experience, graduate students, a renowned poet and translator who taught in the area, as well as community members who did not often get the chance to draw on their languages in a workshop context. Each volunteer had different linguistic capacities, which drove home the point that there’s no single definition of “fluency”; we were all working through our languages, including English, just as much as the students would be working through theirs. Our commitment, then, was not simply to the translation of texts, but to one another. In this context, the ultimate goal of practicing literary translation was the creation of community itself.



Figure 3.1. First “Carrying Ourselves Across” workshop publication

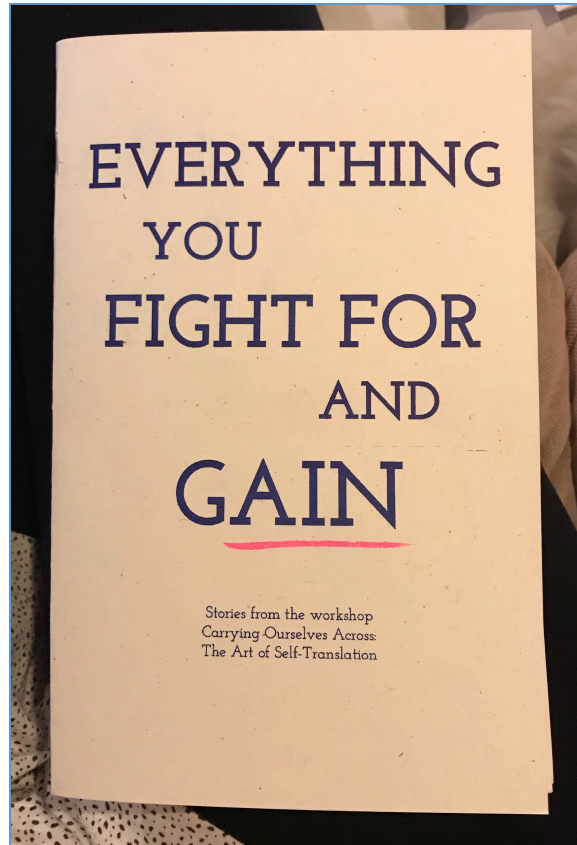


Figure 3.2. Second “Carrying Ourselves Across” workshop publication (2019)

While the second workshop took place over the course of three months instead of one, the process was largely the same: students first composed stories of their own “crossings” in the heritage language of their choice and then worked with multilingual volunteers to find immersive ways to bring out those journeys in English. Some students wrote about the difficult and joyful processes of joining new communities, of eating new foods (raw broccoli dipped in Ranch dressing!) and of playing unfamiliar sports (from “le football” to American football); others reflected candidly about what they had left behind. We challenged students who participated in both workshops to tell their stories in new ways and, for two students in particular, that meant moving into the realm of poetry. Overall, by insisting on heritage-language maintenance as a part of the translation process, we attempted to move away from an environment that reproduces

monolingualism and the separateness it advances through standard-English instruction. For many students, writing and editing in their heritage language was a joyful act, one that they weren't often encouraged to do in a primarily English-language environment. Part and parcel to this process was encouraging "translanguaging," which "privileges speakers' own dynamic linguistic and semiotic practices" and "recognizes the material effects of socially constructed named language categories" (Vogel and Garcia). In other words, we encouraged students to write as they would speak, because using a mix of languages and registers not only took skill, but it also conveyed the rich communication strategies that multilingual students had cultivated in their journeys.

To get a better sense of their task before beginning the translation process, students first meditated on what translation had meant in their own lives. They discussed books that they had come across in translation, and what it was like to translate for their loved ones. I was struck, in one group conversation, about how the anxieties of translating into English were laid bare when students had encountered authority figures—like police officers—in their own communities. But these anxieties also played out in the classroom. Because the Spanish-language students were often less confident in their English-language skills, and because their stories differed widely—the "embodied" aspect of language use—they sometimes feared sharing their stories with other students in the class. (One student even asked to not publish her story in the class anthology because she didn't want those students outside of her language community to read it.) It became clear that to undertake any translation project, we couldn't just assume "community" would happen; instead, we had to work on community building together beforehand. So we made a set of community guidelines that held us all accountable to one another, which upheld the notion of

care above all other goals. Translation, as an intimate, vulnerable practice, requires care at every step.

Once students had drafted their stories in their heritage languages, we came together in small language-based groups to study several English-language versions of a single poem in Arabic, Spanish, Farsi, or French, teasing out the translators' visions and their version's affective resonance. We drew primarily on translations produced by the Poetry Translation Centre, which hosts workshops "where poets, translators and poetry enthusiasts work towards new English versions of poems, starting with a literal or 'close' translation" ("About"). Our discussions, then, looked at the source text, a "bridge" (literal) version translated by one or two translators, and the communal version produced by members of the Poetry Translation Workshop. The decision to present multiple translations was intentional on my part, for, by focusing on multiple versions, each language-specific group of students was encouraged to see translation not only as a process from which many versions might emerge, but also as a community act, an idea that I would come to incorporate in my work as "(e)co-translation."

Building community through careful acts of translation had always been the workshop's implicit goal, and yet we learned much in the process. Many of the graduate-worker volunteers who took part in the process found a new sense of purpose in working with students who were just gaining their bearings in English. Other volunteers, especially those with very little second-language knowledge, came to understand just how difficult the process of navigating unfamiliar linguistic realms could really be. And yet, in translating together, the burden of carrying the stories across was mitigated by the sense of interdependence we were cultivating—a sense that, no matter what, we could prosper *together*, as a community, when all of our knowledges were considered necessary and worth fighting for.

Migration and Climate Translation in a World on Fire

At the same time I was preparing and holding the workshops, I was increasingly involved in climate justice organizing. At the start of the first workshop, I had not imagined that working with English-language learners would directly inform my ecosocialist thinking, even though I understood that “standing with immigrants, migrants, and refugees in the United States is not only standing in alignment with justice, it is also integral to our work as environmental justice advocates” (Fukuchi). By standing with migrants, climate justice organizers acknowledge the fact that the US has been a primary contributor to climate destabilization, not only through the average lifestyle of its citizens, but also through the imperialist, often extractive politics that require so much energy in the first place. (The United States military, for example, is one of the largest carbon emitters in the world.) Part and parcel to this work is amplifying the call for open borders; after all, “some of the individuals who have profited most from the creation of the climate crisis are the same ones demanding that the fictional boundaries that disfigure the planet be reinforced with a violence that is all too real” (Ehrenreich). The work of (e)co-translation, then, must be a movement toward mass-belonging.

As the students invited me into their stories, it became clearer that each recounting could be considered a form of what Nayanika Mathur calls “climate translation,” where “the task of the climate translator lies in the transference of stories reflective of people’s relationships with the world across domains—such as that of science and myth or quotidian chatter and conservationist discourse—that are normally kept separate” (78). Indeed, translation carries the *potential* of shortening the distance that reinforces a blinding status quo, which, we might argue, is what brought these students and their families to the US—into the belly of the imperialist beast—in

the first place. Yet, we only make good on this potential when we position translation as a form of community organizing that prioritizes relationships and collectivity within and *outside* the text. This ecological ethic of collectivity and mutual care is also at the core of (e)co-translation, in that it honors our interdependence and positions the making of literature and life itself across languages and borders as a form of collective care work, as a tending to one another and to our shared home. In the context of the workshop, we might imagine that writing about one’s journey elsewhere in a moment of climate displacement becomes a first movement of (e)co-translation (an embodied recognition, a “climate translation”) that is extended through subsequent intra- and inter-lingual translation (a cultivation of that recognition across languages and across bodies). Undertaking this process in a dynamic setting, where students are asked to work, think, and *be* together with volunteers from their less immediate community, marks the (e)co-translational horizon of the larger rehoming project that climate-driven migration makes necessary.

Central to the (e)co-translational process we took up in workshop was the practice of “disruption,” to use Tejaswini Niranjana’s phrase. As Christi Merrill so elegantly outlines, “[Niranjana’s] solution is to engage in a ‘disruptive’ approach to translation, one which she explains ‘shatters the coherence of the ‘original’ and the ‘invariable identity of sense...’ in a practice in which we constantly interrogate ourselves and our right to speak as and to speak for” (161). Our discussions of translation, then, keyed into strategies of embracing and relating difference—and of strategic *illegibility*—in place of fluent renditions. Yet, when we were immersed in the translation process, these strategies were not often taken up; instead, as many of the students articulated in their translator’s notes, there was a clear desire to speak in a more recognizable—“normative”—English, for doing so represented all of the labor they had thus invested to their studies. This anxiety around “sounding different” was likely tied to how they

envisioned their English usage being perceived by those outside of the classroom, for their work was being published as an anthology, after all. It remains true, I believe, that not everyone is afforded the same freedom of “play” within the English language, even if we try to chip away at those constraints in our workshop.

Encouraging students to embrace disruptive strategies also meant that we, the English-language speakers and volunteers, had to resist the confines of mastery that our attention to English-language poetics, as craft, so often demands. Indeed, resisting the impulse to “correct” language usage engages with one of the key principles of what Michael Cronin has framed as a new translation ecology, that is, “place-based” collaboration. “A place-based rather than ethnos-based sense of identity,” Cronin argues, “allows for the inclusion of all speakers of a language, both natives and newcomers” (*Eco-Translation* 16). Instead of shying away from “error,” students were encouraged to play with language, and to retain any vocabulary and grammatical or syntactical structures that felt important to them when carrying the text into English. This is easy in theory, and yet, it goes against a whole lifetime of socialization that says otherwise. The more established translators, like me, had to stop offering “solutions” that would erase the student-translators’ own experiments and experiences with language. I found that I often had to remind myself that I was there to collaborate with, not to speak on behalf of any student. It’s a lesson that has enriched my practice not only as an editor and translator, but also an organizer.

Niranjana’s inquiry into who has the right to speak *as* and *for* also reminds me of Mathur’s own proposition that “the people who are most vulnerable to global warming have their own readings and narrations of import” (79). And here’s where translation as an embodied and many-bodied practice comes into the workshop: by empowering the newly-arrived students and advocating for self-translation as a staking of presence, we advance the (e)co-translational

project. And this grounded practice of self-translation is far from that of a singular genius brooding by the fireplace, or a “‘transaction’ [that] is more commonly vertical than horizontal, bringing together languages of unequal prestige and status” (Cordingley 354). Instead, it is a creative act that doesn’t reify the categories of “original” and “copy,” but rather that evinces an idea of writing and translating as forever bound in *re*-writing. In this sense, Susan Bassnett argues, the divide between a self-translation and translation might not be all that helpful, “for if all translation is a form of rewriting, then whether that rewriting is done by the person who produced a first version of a text or by someone else is surely not important. What matters are the transformations that the text undergoes, the ways in which it is reshaped for a new readership” (287).

For my part, I can attest to the fact that the students participating in the “Carrying Ourselves Across” workshop aren’t *merely* “self-translators”—they’re translators, full stop. And these translators have hands, names, stories, and knowledge to contribute, and it’s our duty, I believe, to listen. Take Noor, whose story I will consider below. The first time I met her, she was sitting close to her sister and one endearing smile crossed both of their faces. The sisters and their family had come to the US, after a few years moving between countries, to flee the Syrian Civil War—a political crisis exacerbated by the mismanagement of water sources after a record-breaking, years-long drought. As I think back to that initial session now, I remember how patient she and the others were as I attempted to give a general introduction to literary translation in a more accessible way, which is, in itself, another kind of translation; quoting Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” verbatim, for example, just wasn’t going to fly. Here’s the thing, though: as we worked together, it became clear that the students had just as much to show me about

translation—and what a speculative form of (e)co-translation might look like—as I had to show them.

(E)co-translation in Practice

Noor Ghali

(in collaboration with Meg Berkobien, KeAndra Hollis, and Khaled Mattawa)

I write in Arabic and in English and I translate my own writings into these two languages. My poem is a brief description of the reality about what is going on in Syria. This writing helps the reader to know and to visualize the bright and positive image that shows how beautiful my country was before the war and to realize how this image turned into a dark and negative picture while going through my lines. I do that by adding more descriptive words in my writing, plus that this poem is like a mirror that reflects the reality about what has been going on then and now. I draw inspiration and ideas from my memories and the experiences that I have been through.

JASMINE TEARS

I am from the land of jasmine
that decorates every wall and each block of the neighborhood
where goldfinch birds sing and dance on the fragrant old lemon tree,
where the aroma of Arabic bread and coffee beans wafts through the breeze

I am from Syria

Where the Euphrates, the Asi, and the Barada rivers flow

I am from the country of Ugarit

Where the first alphabet was born.

I am from the Umayyad Mosque and the Mariamite Church.

I am from the country of love, peace, and blessings

Where the golden sun rises every morning

sending its rays of love to every family.

Where the children in the alleys play and laugh, from school to school they go.

Where the families go to the Al_Hamidiya Souq, from shop to shop, joyfully shopping for Eid clothes.

How beautiful was Bilad al-Sham.

Everything was perfect and beautiful until suddenly, everything turned into an upside down

disaster,

To start the tragedy, and to bring out the precious blood of our homeland spilled, that each family will get its share of that brutality.

I am from Syria

Eight years and more . . . of a crazy, selfish, and illogical war
Eight years in which souls, hearts, and minds have been destroyed
A war that snuck through the doors stealthily without knocking,
to settle down in the homes and humiliate their owners
A war that brought the nation's mothers to tears
A war that never knew its beginning . . .

I am from Syria

Where a child died of hunger,
Where a baby lost her mother,
Where the children in the alleys run,
from the bombs and destructions, they fearfully flee.
Where the fighters turned into killers.
Where the bombs became the birds of the sky,
and blood into rivers.
Where the buildings turned to rubble,
and schools into stones and its books to ashes.
Where citizens migrated from country to country despairingly looking for shelter or a safe place.
A war dreaming of its end.
Yet, there is still enough love and hope to support us in the face of that heartbreak.
We still remember the beauty of Bilad_al Sham and we will never forget the magical peace and calmness that we felt in its old alleys and houses.
And the question will stay in our minds, my homeland, am I ever going to see you again . . .?
Am I ever going to see you safe, prosperous, triumphant and dignified?
Am I ever going to see you safe, Blessed, Victorious, and Honored?
And the answer will always be: yes we will . . .
We will see you safe, prosperous, triumphant and dignified,
And the sun will shine and rise again after its sunset.

“I am from Syria,” translates eighteen-year-old Noor Ghali, some six thousand miles away from the home that she recalls—and calls into being—in careful poetic line. Working from the Arabic-language version she composed during the first part of our workshop, Noor rewrites the story of her homeland, documenting her life in Damascus and “a war dreaming of its end,” from which she and her family fled some years ago. It is a war precipitated by extended, extreme drought, which has become all too frequent in our era of climate crisis (Fischetti). In turn, her self-translation into English *becomes* that waking dream, a reparative vision across language and time and space; Syria, she implores, will be “safe, prosperous, triumphant and dignified,” and the “sun will shine and rise again after its sunset.” Therein lies the promise of poetry: Imagining a better world is a first step toward building it. Literary translation, then, is an attempt to redouble, unsettle, and make good on those words.

On first read, Noor’s poem “Jasmine Tears” is an elegiac reprisal of the introduction she often gives in class, or rather, an intimate explanation of who she is and why she’s here, in Michigan, and not there, “Where the children in the alleys play and laugh, from school to / school they go. / Where the families go to the Al_Hamidiya Souq, from shop to / shop, joyfully shopping for Eid clothes.” One provisional answer is that “there” no longer offers shelter, and so the poem becomes, as writing has for so many displaced writers, a home unto itself in the in-between. Here, Noor’s words bring to mind those of Iraqi novelist Najem Wali in Jennifer Kapland’s English-language translation: “[I]n the end, the writer’s homeland is the language in which he writes, and his house is the world which he constructs through his work, just as the homeland of the traveler is wherever his feet may fall” (“Homeland as Exile, Exile as Homeland”). Noor knows that her homeland will once more be “safe and blessed,” but in

“Jasmine Tears,” she also shows us just what it means to carry your home with you, and to cross borders—to wherever your feet may safely fall—with a story to tell.

Yet, if Noor’s story remains confined to an imagining in only one language, it risks petrification into an artifact of nostalgia; the dream of the past forecloses on the possibilities of the future in the elsewhere. Here’s where translation, when conceived of as what Clive Scott calls an “ecologizing activity,” becomes crucial: translation insists on cultivating an uncomfortable openness toward the self “in that it alerts us to the reorientation of our being on becoming, on a dynamic of being which never leaves us in the same place. Meaning and identity are prison houses” (77). When Noor performs a self-translation alongside others, including her classmates and workshop volunteers, her story can become “more than an act of making a disappearing tradition survive within a mainstream culture. It seems to be a search for another kind of home and another mode of belonging beyond the boundaries of a singular language, nation, and culture” (Zhang 121). Translation can move us out from the text, and help us make sense of and grow into the new environments we inhabit.

This search for “another mode of belonging” requires the work of many hands, and, as such, engages in the cultivation a broader type of shelter. Here, I propose a reorientation away from the “home” and toward what I call “refuge.” I borrow “refuge” from Anna Tsing’s theory of Holocene resurgence, where *refugia* are the “spaces where those species wiped out elsewhere continued to thrive” (“A Threat” 52). In the context of translation practice, we might conceptualize tending to refuge as a collective process that makes room for care: creative practice that insists on community-building and mutual-aid as a matter of (planetary) care work, that is, low-carbon labor that nurtures the connections between humans as well as the human and non-human environment. And tending to refuge means making space, literally and figuratively,

for those who are and will be increasingly displaced in a world on fire (a number that the UN projects will climb to 250 million by 2050). It should also reshape the political landscape of that “adopted” homeland, too.

While Noor might not mention it explicitly in “Jasmine Tears,” environmental collapse lies at the heart of the Syrian Civil War, which was precipitated by a record-breaking drought in the Fertile Crescent. In this sense, Noor’s story also figures as a “climate translation,” and incorporating stories like Noor’s into our discourses around the climate crisis contributes to stronger frameworks of climate justice for both the human and nonhuman world. “Jasmine Tears” makes clear that planetary care work might also begin with a poem, though our attunement to its message requires a shift in how we journey through the text and how we take action afterward. Here, working in an (e)co-translational mode means collectively feeling out the connections between world, body, and word, and “Jasmine Tears” provides ample terrain for this task. Not only does Noor catalogue the landscape (“Syria . . . where the Euphrates, the Asi, and the Barada rivers flow”), tying it language in the process (“Where the first alphabet was born”), but she also muddles the distinction between human and earth (“To start the tragedy, and to bring out the blood of / our homeland spilled”). In drawing out the eco-poetic resonances of her past life, Noor shows us how land and body are inextricable, a sentiment that mirrors what Vanessa Watts has termed “Indigenous Place-Thought,” or “the non-distinctive space . . . based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extension of these thoughts” (21). Noor’s self-translation is more than a frictional crossing of words, but also a traversing of human and non-human worlds through text. Here, Noor’s eco-poetic offering allows us to understand how “life and thought on earth is animated through and bound to bodies, stories, time, and land” (David and Todd 769-770). Recovering this

connection and re-animating it through translation, I argue, is also an act of building refuge and solidarity. Any act of care depends on it.

Ultimately, all closure is a means of return, which takes us back to the poem's opening title: Jasmine tears or, perhaps, tears of jasmine? Like the goldfinches flitting about in Noor's remembered lemon tree, it's an image that refuses to keep still. At first, it brings to mind the tears of the living and dead as they splash against fallen, white flowers, then it shifts into a body whose tears are petals, like soft slices of fingernail. Finally, the image transforms into a jasmine flower whose yellow, embedded seeds are many eyes looking out at us, and whose death presages ours as well—unless we can move toward a practice of care. In caring for one another and the world, we dream not only of the war's end, but also of a new way of living that might arise in its place; a place and time where the sun might continue to send “its rays of love to every family.”

Unlike Noor, I'm unsure if a return to Syria will soon become possible, despite her deep hopes, and my own, that such a future will become reality. At this uncertain juncture, my own focus is strategizing a way to make space within existing climate-change refugia, those biodiverse sites that might be able to fend off the worst of climate collapse—like Michigan—for socio-cultural diversity and solidarity. In this light, the “Carrying Ourselves Across” self-translation workshop is one example of how we might use literary translation pedagogy and practice to promote a just, inclusive re-homing project in the more temperate regions of the US—one that evinces diversity and “resilience” as the work of building refuge. But making room is only the first step in the larger project of repairing the historical harm—to both bodies and land—that has contributed to the climate crisis in the first place, and that process of repair must also be a collective endeavor. Translating literature, when seen as process, becomes more than a

way to save a single life; it takes up the task of mobilizing the many in the fight for of a more just future.

Chapter IV

Careful Collaboration: On the Making of *Barings* // *Bearings*

Every once and a while, I wonder whether or not calling myself a professional literary translator matches the reality of my work. It has been ten years since I took my first undergraduate literary translation workshop at the University of Michigan, and since then I have published numerous, though largely unpaid, translations in a handful of journals. I've taught several courses on translation theory and practice at the undergraduate level and have held workshops for English-language learners who are navigating their multilingual environments. Last year, I signed a contract for what will be my first book-length co-translation of a Catalan-language novella that was solicited by the publisher. But amid all this labor, I still sometimes feel that there's very little I have to show for myself after dedicating ten years of my life to the practice. And I'm not sure if I'm comforted or not by the fact that I'm not alone in my experience of the "profession."

In his recent essay "The Emerging Translator Valley of Death," Anton Hur describes a similar experience and, in doing so, gives a pointed voice to the many conversational undercurrents that swirl about in gatherings like the American Literary Translators Association's annual conference. Hur writes,

It took nine years from my graduation from the Literature Translation Institute of Korea to the publication of my first book. I call this period my Emerging Literary Translator Valley of Death. Most emerging literary translators simply give up at some

point in the Valley. I did myself, in fact, adding three years to my time within it. And even more translators give up after a slew of magazine publications or after winning a competition or even obtaining a degree. They are simply never heard from again.

Hur's description of what emerging translators do in the Valley—going to graduate school, freelance translation, transitioning into a profession that “pays,” or “supporting a breadwinning spouse”—syncs up with my own knowledge of the Valley's terrain. Indeed, I applied for a spot in a funded Ph.D. program after two years of trying to make literary translation work while I taught abroad and then worked at a local bookstore. But unlike several other translators in my circles, I didn't have the family wealth or the support of a partner with a well-paying job to keep the dream going. In a Ph.D. program, I told myself, I could at least work toward landing my first book deal and establishing myself professionally while writing a dissertation that might allow me to sharpen my craft. Little did I know that I was setting myself up for a small disaster—that is, for an immediate future of constant overwork during which I would never feel like I was doing enough. It looked more and more likely I would leave the Valley without anything to show for myself.

The publication of a translator's first book-length translation may seem an adequate place to mark when a translator has “emerged”; after all, as Hur notes, a slew of opportunities tend to follow that occasion, including residencies, acceptance into the Author's Guild, and a general sense of acceptance from presses that might otherwise shy away from working with an emerging translator. But that's not always the case, either. There are plenty of translators who have just as much trouble placing a second or third book as the first, especially when their first translation doesn't become an immediate “hit” (as very few translations ever do). As Hur reminds us, landing a first contract (or a second, or third) is as much a matter of luck and networking as it is

of talent, because, as he underscores, there are many, many talented translators who never survive the Valley of Death. And winning a book contract through a small-scale competition (as when a publisher will pit two to three translators against one another when they solicit a translation sample) doesn't mean that the "winner" is simply more talented; style, as we know, is always a matter of taste, and taste is just as contingent on norms and structures of power as anything else. The "first book" benchmark, then, can end up reifying the sense that all translation that isn't book-related doesn't quite count, and the sadness and frustration that emerges from that sensibility can be all too much for some. I've certainly felt like giving up during my Valley travels.

When I first read of Hur's essay, I was surprised it summed up so much of what I had been thinking for years, as I had been interested in the plight of the emerging translator for some time, and not only because I was one myself. Sure, part of it came from my own difficulties "breaking through" which is due, in part, to the precarity of the publishing (in translation) industry more broadly, and also because I had stopped doing unpaid work (samples and short stories) because I simply couldn't afford to. (Here, I'll note that the first contract I excitedly co-signed in Cristina Peri Rossi's apartment in Barcelona was rendered void when the publisher had to close unexpectedly.) More generally, though, I also began to question how we tend to equate success with publishing book-length projects instead of shorter publications, which, again, often go unpaid. Many of us come to internalize these standards and then project them onto our own trajectories. And while I was generally fine second-guessing my own work, I simply couldn't abide other translators, especially my friends, doing the same. I was especially dismayed when members of the graduate translators' workshop I co-founded with Emily Goedde would do so—

how could any of these brilliant thinkers believe that they weren't *really* translators, when their work said otherwise?

In many ways, competition still structures the literary translation industry. This isn't because we are intrinsically competitive people, far from it; rather, the industry largely remains a "closed system," as Chad Post once told me, with not enough funds to go around. Even though there are more and more presses dedicated to literary translation, there are also more and more talented translators on the scene, which means that it has not simply become easier to place translations, especially in publications that pay their contributors. What's more, in some language pairs, the lion's share of the paid contracts still goes to a handful of established translators. That's certainly the case, at least, for literary translators working from Catalan to English. So, while some in our broader US-based translation "community"—those who tend to participate in the annual ALTA conference, which, of course, has its own power asymmetries that make accountability difficult—believe that attracting more readers will help alleviate the problem, I tend to understand the issue of funding as symptomatic of a capitalist system that strategically starves underrepresented creative pursuits and that forecloses on collaborative processes more generally. And if we understand capitalism as a core ailment to our social body, we also understand that competition is not "human nature," but rather a drive toward hierarchy that has hardened and adapted over centuries of socialization.

When I first started studying Catalan, I believed that working from a minoritized language would not only be intellectually rewarding, but would also make my path through the Valley less onerous and less competitive. After all, the market for translations from Spanish, which I also worked from, already seemed quite saturated, and I hated the feeling that I might step on someone's toes unknowingly. (This, to my dismay, did end up happening, after an author

let another translator and I both translate her work at the same time; I just ended up being the first one to place the stories.) Perhaps not unsurprisingly, this did not prove the case—I realized that there were already many translators of Catalan-language literature at work, even if they had labored without much publishing success. And for all the rhetoric of collaboration that surrounds translation, I increasingly found it difficult to “share” authors, as I imagine many translators do, owing to the deep sense of dedication that most translators feel toward their labor, but also to the demands placed on translators to publish constantly if they want to eat and pay rent. What I grew to hate was the way that I had to compete with others for contracts, and the feelings of rancor and hopelessness that this competitive drive inspired within me. As someone who takes collaboration seriously, I did not want to see other translators as obstacles to my own success. And I did not believe that any “success” that came at the price of competition was worth it.

The only treatment for these ugly feelings was, at least for me, honest introspection: to take a step back, assess the terrain, and wrestle with my own actions. When I emerged from this process, I decided to lean into existing collaborative projects and dream up new ones. This commitment to working in community with other emerging and early-career translators, and to promoting mutually-supportive practice writ large, is what brought into being the special volume of *Absinthe* on contemporary Catalan-language writing by women, titled *Barings // Bearings*.

While the story of *Barings // Bearings* might begin at several points, the most important, at least from my perspective, was when I met poet and translator María Cristina Hall (Cristy, for short) at the 2015 American Literary Translators Association annual conference in Tucson, Arizona. I remember that Cristy had started following me on Twitter after I was awarded an ALTA Travel Fellowship for my translations from the Catalan a year beforehand, but it wasn't until I met her in person that I could really grasp her poetic brilliance and her warm, inviting

energy. Since we were at ALTA, one of the first things we spoke about was how she had applied for the Travel Fellowship that year but that the odds hadn't been in her favor, largely because those types of awards tended not to go to translators from the same minoritized languages two years in a row. Since I had won the year before, I was already, and without knowing, placed in “competition” with someone who deserved support and recognition just as much as I had, and I felt a certain sadness that she couldn't share in that spotlight with me, or in spite of me.

Sometimes, it can feel like translators in your language pair are eager to hear about your work in order to scope you out. I never felt as much when spending time with Cristy—not for a minute. In fact, I spent most of my time wishing we had met even sooner. And even though we didn't quite remain in touch directly after the 2015 ALTA conference—I was less focused on translating in that moment and more concerned with writing my dissertation topics paper—she remained someone that I followed with keen interest.

When we reconnected in 2017, I was in Barcelona on a research fellowship and had just attended the release party for the English-language anthology *Women Writing in Catalan: Fifty Authors You Need to Know, Plus the Ten Classics You Can't Miss*. While I was excited about the publication, its release had come as a surprise to me, owing to the fact that it was brought out by a Catalan-language publisher (Raig Verd). When I received my free copy at the reading, I was momentarily stunned to see that a short excerpt of Lluïcia Ramis's *All That Died Among the Bicycles That Afternoon*, an excerpt I had translated and published myself in 2015, now reappeared in another's translation, and that I had never heard of the translator before. My first reaction was sharp sadness—I supposed that something must have been seriously wrong with my translation for them to ignore it entirely in an anthology that was meant to promote the

translation of Catalan-language works abroad. I was so embarrassed that for the first time in a year, I bought a pack of cigarettes and smoked on my long walk home.

After I had wrestled with my feelings of insecurity for a while, I sent Cristy an email. At that time, Cristy was working for the Institut Ramon Llull (IRL) and had a better lay of the publishing land than I did. To my surprise, Cristy had done some freelance editing on the Raig Verd project, and could answer some the questions that were whizzing around my head. As it turned out, the editors had used very few pre-existing translations and, what's more, they were likely unaware that any had existed. This was important to note, Cristy added, because it meant that other translators had been passed over, too, including a group of emerging translators who, in 2015, had participated in the IRL's first semester-long online seminar for Catalan-to-English translators, which culminated in an in-person workshop and publishing meet & greet in Barcelona.

While I don't want to dwell too long on the volume's downsides—in part because I understand that working with a professional team of translators instead of an assemblage of individual translators no doubt made Raig Verd's job easier, and in part because I genuinely like many of the translations—it emblemizes a not-uncommon dynamic in the translation publishing world: that translations (here, the oft-neglected Catalan-language writing of women) matters more than the translators who were laboring, oftentimes in the Valley of Death, to bring that literature into being in the English-language—in this case, the many emerging translators who had already dedicated a chunk of their working lives to Catalan-language translating. That, as Alex Zucker puts it, we too often talk about the values of translation instead of the labor of translators. If the goal of the Raig Verd anthology was to facilitate the publishing of these Catalan-language women writers in translation, then it may still reach its goal; if it was to

celebrate the actual translation process, and the intercultural relationships that translation inspires and promotes, then, in my opinion, it missed its mark.

I mention these misgivings because they encouraged me to propose to Cristy the creation of potential “counter” anthology. At first, I thought we could bring together the translations that had emerged from the IRL seminar into a folio for the Emerging Translators Collective, which was still getting off the ground. As I considered it further, though, I began wondering if those initial translations, almost entirely by women writers in Catalan, carried into English by the all-women cohort of the Llull translation course, could form part of a special issue of *Absinthe*, a journal of “World Literature in Translation” that I helped manage at the University of Michigan. Going that route would give us more institutional support, which would, in turn, help us secure honoraria for our translators, which had long been a crucial concern of mine. If we wanted to invest in translation, we could no longer afford to ignore the often-unpaid labor of the translators who made translation possible in the first place.

I knew immediately that I would want Cristy on board as my co-editor if we were to take on the project, and I was relieved that she quickly accepted. From then on out, we would bring our respective communities together; she would work with the translators from the IRL course, many of whom I had not had the chance to meet, to gather the anthology’s initial texts and I would work with my Department to set up the framework for taking on the issue of *Absinthe*. Things began to fall into place.

Since several crucial anthologies on Catalan women’s writing from earlier in the twentieth-century already existed—including *On Our Own Behalf: Women’s Tales from Catalonia*, edited by one of my mentors and heroes, Kathleen McNerney—Cristy and I decided that our editorial focus would be on contemporary women writers in Catalan. With that broad

directive in mind, we also created a short-list of authors whose work would complement those stories already chosen by the Lull translators. During the year that followed, we brought together an incredible range of stories and poems, all of which provided a snapshot of the wealth of literary writing in the Catalan language today. The selection included more familiar names like Najat El Hachmi, Marta Rojals, Lluçia Ramis, and Bel Olid, as well as others who had only been translated into English in bits and pieces, such as Anna Pantinat, Esperança Camps, Alba Dedeu, and Laia Martínez i Lopez. The stories were at turns grim, unsettling, and revelatory. And we sought to bring these many sentiments to life by pairing them with illustrations by Elisa Munsó, who I had met doing research for my dissertation, and who had a special talent for drawing out the everyday entanglements of women. All in all, the anthology featured the work of sixteen women writers and fifteen emerging and early-career translators, the majority of whom were women.

Cristy and I put untold hours into reading and editing the volume, and our emails are an archive of the difficult, yet always generative, linguistic and affective negotiations that bringing out translations requires. Beyond that more direct collaboration, putting the issue together also helped me to reassess how I conceived of literary translation as a collective process that upheld care as a guiding ethic. During the selection process, for example, I had to push against my own constructed notions of what made for “publishable” literature in translation. Like most translators, I carried within me a firm conviction of what made for “good” reading (I’m one for the eerie, the uncomfortable, and the unconventional). Collaborating on *Barings // Bearings*, however, helped me discern just how limiting my own tastes could be, and I leaned into Cristy’s and the other translators’ expertise to do and see what I could not.

Similarly, it's not uncommon for a translator to "collect" potential works that they would like to translate—a wish list of sorts. Each year I would go to Barcelona to conduct research, I would find poetry collections and books that had spoken to my own poetic sensibilities, and I'd add them to my "to translate" pile. At first I was hesitant about mentioning those works when Cristy and I began to brainstorm pieces to include in the anthology. I'm not sure when in the process, but I suddenly began to let go of those feelings of possession and became more interested in how other translators would take up the challenge of translating them. I began to think about how a certain piece would match another translator's style. I leaned into a thought that had often crossed my mind: that the diversity of authors should be matched by a diversity of translators, which, at least in our Catalan to English translation circles, was important, since so many published titles in translation usually carry just a few established translators' names. In particular, I asked Gaby Martin if she would translate Anna Patinant's prose-poems and Cristy if she would translate select poems from Mireia Vidal Conte's *Ouse*. While I had always imagined these lovely works coming into English by my own hand, their translations by Gaby and Cristy now seem nothing less than a gift.

As editors, Cristy and I also attempted to think *with* our co-translators. This may seem like common sense, but, as an editor *and* translator, it can be difficult to do in practice. Oftentimes while editing I would hear a voice in my head suggesting how *I* would have translated a line, and I had to be careful not to project my own vision onto a translator's work. Being able to negotiate these myriad voices—author, editor, translator, reader—in their rich contours was not unlike a workshop experience. Yet, the demands that the process made on me, as an individual who needed to relinquish her individual authority in place of a shared sense of "making," also felt like a first step toward a more rigorous practice of communal translatorship.

Indeed, as I focused more and more on the process of translation as an ongoing conversation, it became clearer to me which translation of my own I should include: the same excerpt of Lluçia Ramis's story I had previously published online and that had been translated in the Raig Verd anthology. Seeing the same excerpt translated beautifully by another person encouraged me to take more chances in my own work. While his translation sought to highlight the vernacular Mallorcan by echoing into a similarly vernacular dialect of British English, I sought to highlight how the Spanish, Catalan, and Mallorcan languages played out in the story, a strategy that took into account that the most likely readers of *Barings // Bearings* would be other translators with a familiarity with Catalan and Spanish. We are our most cherished, careful readers.

We didn't land on a title for the issue until near the end of the editing process, when Cristy suggested using "barings" in some combination. "Barings," a word taken from Scott Shanahan's translation of Laia Martínez i López's poem cycle *Venus Spins*, captured the sense of vulnerability that's central to translation as care work while it also animated the link between the wound (vulnus) as vulva or womb. "Bearings," in turn, echoes back the Latin sense of "carrying across" while it evokes the historical burdens that women have had to face. The title, then, captures the pointed sentiment we convey in our introduction, which I share below: how the labors of the translator have always crossed and colored those of women—in fact, a majority of literary translators identify as women—and only by leaning into this careful, affective space could we ever recognize the importance of both. Ours was not a critique that we should simply reorient the translator's task as one of "authorial" creativity; rather, we believed we had to reassess how care work has been historically devalued and find ways to dismantle the hierarchal systems that uphold such beliefs.

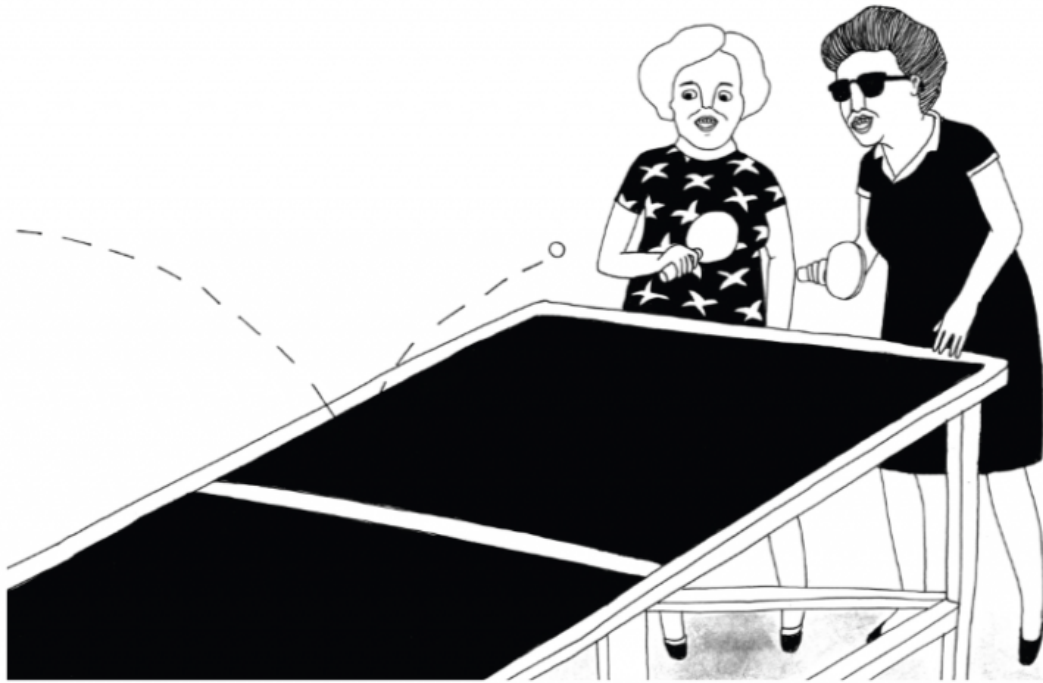


Figure 4.1. "Ping" by Elisa Munsó

This tension animates the anthology's featured image, Munsó's "Ping." Here we spy two women, Ping-Pong paddles in hand, anticipating their next moves. While they are on the same team, we aren't led to imagine that they are vying *against* others, but simply at play. In a way, I imagine Cristy and myself in their places. I've come to see *Barings // Bearings* not as a "counter" volume to Raig Verd's anthology, but as another volley in that playful exchange.⁴⁵

And it's in tracking such "constant reciprocal change"—the very oscillation between what is and

⁴⁵ In her article "Toward the Eco-Narrative, Rethinking the Role of Conflict in Storytelling," Corine Donly suggests that any narrative that seeks to follow an ecological dynamic must shift from a framework of conflict to that of "infinite play": "A template for cooperation in the absence of known outcome, infinite play thus becomes the basis for the eco-narrative—a storytelling framework flexible enough to cocreate with nonhumanity, even during an environmental moment characterized by crisis" (1).

what could be—that we come closer to an “ecologizing” translation practice that upholds collaboration as a creative, caring force (Scott 63).

*

FROM THE EDITORS:

Over forty years ago, in the midst of the democratic transition following the death of dictator Francisco Franco, author and activist Montserrat Roig contemplated her duties as an “ésser civic” in a moment of intense cultural and political change:

Escriure en català és una afirmació de supervivència, i no solament literària. Ganes “d’existir” privadament i col·lectivament [...] Si tot va bé, escriure en català ja no serà un acte de “salvació” sinó un acte natural, un acte intern i privat que dóna coherència als sentiments i a les frustracions personals.

[To write in Catalan is an affirmation of survival—and not just in literature. A will “to exist” privately and collectively [. . .] If everything works out, writing in Catalan will no longer constitute an act of “salvation,” but a natural endeavor, an internal and private act that makes sense of our feelings and personal frustrations.]

For years, communicating in Catalan was an act of witnessing—of lending testimony to an ever-precarious past and present. While this understanding of Catalan as resistance is necessary, Roig contends that mere survival has never—will never—be enough. Instead, a language of the living should reflect the feeling of its people. And perhaps it’s no surprise that this kind of writing is typically coded as feminine.

While our political and cultural context is decades and miles different from Roig's, our work, too, was born out of desire: to render visible the many labors of contemporary women writing in Catalan, and that of the many translators who craft their stories into English. Many of the texts here highlight and grapple with emotional labor and other responsibilities traditionally assigned to women, and what connects the struggle presented by Roig and our own is the labor of our craft: translation as a way to keep our worlds vital, empathetic, and expressive—a rewarding yet woefully unrecognized toil.

In several ways, *Barings // Bearings* is a response to another remarkable anthology titled *Women Writers in Catalan*, which was put out recently by the Catalan publishing house Raig Verd. A sharp response to a cultural context still dominated by male writers, it comes as no surprise that the anthology's editors were duly concerned with visibility, as captured in the common refrain at the release party: “Celebrem que existim!” (“We celebrate our existence!”). Yet, most of the excerpts appear in English by way of a handful of hired translators, who, by no fault of their own, remained largely unaware of the many translators who were already undertaking the endeavor. In many ways, this volume of *Absinthe* is a site for these fabulous translators to make clear that they exist, too, giving them the chance to break into the competitive world of literary translation.

Barings // Bearings is a testament to the thriving worlds of women's writing in Catalan, with time-travelling fiction by Bel Olid (tr. Bethan Cunningham), regrets on pregnancy sublimated into an airborne taxi ride in a story by Tina Vallès (tr. Jennifer Arnold), Mireia Vidal-Conte's poetry reflecting on Virginia Woolf's suicide (tr. María Cristina Hall), a story of revenge on an abusive elderly woman by Anna Maria Villalonga (tr. Natasha Tanna), as well as reflections on war, bookstores, and generational conflict in post-Franco Spain. These often

surreal pieces of Catalan fiction are informed by several essays and works of literary memoir, including those by Marta Rojals (tr. Alicia Meier) on the state of the Catalan language, Lluïcia Ramis (tr. Megan Berkobien) on the memory wars across the dictatorship and into today, and Najat El Hachmi (tr. Julia Sanches) on the conditions of growing up in Catalonia as the daughter of Moroccan parents. These latter pieces resist and explore the contours of multilingualism, highlighting the intra- and interlingual reality of spoken Catalan alongside Spanish and Amazigh.

For the early-career translators in this issue, this publication follows years of immersion in Catalan culture, countless hours honing our translation skills, and much solidarity. We only hope this issue will highlight and commend the important work these writers and translators are building today. So give yourself over to feeling, for, as Montserrat Roig reminds us: “La cultura és l’opció política més revolucionària a llarg termini,” or, “In the long run, culture is our most revolutionary political option.”

Megan Berkobien & María Cristina Hall

Chapter V

The Rise of the Translator Collective

“It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism.”
Angela Davis

When Frank Barat recently asked long-time community organizer and abolitionist Angela Davis what keeps her optimistic about the future, her answer is unsurprisingly simple:

Well, I don't think we have any alternative other than remaining optimistic. Optimism is an absolute necessity, even if it's only optimism of the will, as Gramsci said, and pessimism of the intellect. What has kept me going has been the development of new modes of community. I don't know whether I would have survived had not movements survived, had not communities of resistance, communities of struggle. So whatever I'm doing I always feel myself directly connected to those communities and I think that this is an era where we have to encourage that sense of community particularly at a time when neoliberalism attempts to force people to think of themselves only in individual terms and not in collective terms. It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism.

(49)

For Davis, the only way to bring collective liberation, however precariously, into being is to cultivate it in the here and now. Hers is not a performative solidarity, and it shows; the very strength she has to remain in the struggle is tied to the depth of her interpersonal work, and her ability to uphold emerging community-making efforts—like those around prison abolition, which animate our current political moment—even when they inevitably move past her. And I

hear Angela's insistence on the collective in another quote, from fellow abolitionist Mariame Kaba, which daily lends me inspiration: "Everything worthwhile is done with other people" (quoted in Ewing).

Both Davis's and Kaba's insistence on collective work color my commitment to wed my convictions as an organizer to those of my translation practice. Of course, not every translator is invested in doing so and, even when they are, it's all much easier said than done. Sometimes, though, all it takes to start imagining oneself as part of the collective is an act of courage. I was recently struck, for example, by the honest responses to a tweet thread in which Ayça Türkoğlu, who translates from Turkish and German into English, describes her acute sense of imposter syndrome: "Do any other translators have a total fear of either speaking or writing or JUST GENERALLY USING their other languages? I hate it. I feel like an enormous fraud. When will I be found out? I mean, now probably" (@acya_tur). In the dozens of responses that followed, many translators expressed their relief at being able to let down their guard of expertise. Some translators replied that the thread, and Türkoğlu's willingness to be vulnerable on such a public platform, gave them "life"; others, like Anton Hur, underscored how the expectations and misconceptions of fluency skewed their lived realities. Being a translator, then, can mean acknowledging the limits of one's individual knowledge, as well as those of the broader cultural imaginary, as a source of comfort and strength; if translation is generally a collaborative task, as many scholars agree, then we can lean into our collective experiences of vulnerability to make this collaboration even more expansive and diverse.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ While I explicitly draw on the work of Anthony Cordingley, Céline Frigau Manning, Emily Apter, Michael Cronin, and Joanna Trzeciak Huss throughout this dissertation to underscore translation's collaborative ethos, especially in the publication process, there are many other scholars who take translatorial collaboration seriously in their studies—far too many to name, in fact. In particular, the work of Christi Merrill, who troubles the written "I" with the performed "we" in the context of Rajasthani literature, has greatly influenced my own approach. For more, see her article "The Death of the Authors, a.k.a. Twilight of the Translators."

I'm heartened by the thread because it captures so much of the anxiety that, however invisibilized, surrounds literary translation and language usage in general.⁴⁷ More pointedly, Türkoğlu's vulnerability invites us to engage those difficult questions in our own practices, as it also reveals the extent to which our working lives, as translators, are enriched by the relationships we have with other translators who share similar goals, fascinations, and anxieties. Türkoğlu may have initially felt like she was alone in these struggles, but the collective response from other translators underscores, if only in its limited instance, the transformational idea that Davis constantly draws our attention to—that solidarity is the antidote to a culture of individuality and the alienation it incurs.

I believe, however naïvely optimistic it may sound, that we are living through a moment when it feels possible to reassert translatorial practice as an *overtly* collaborative cultural project. As a recent description for a panel on “Translating the Future, Building Translator Communities and Communities for Translation” at the Graduate Center at CUNY reads:

Literary translation was once a lonely profession but translators no longer need toil in isolation. All manner of communities have sprung up to support translators and literature in translation. These speakers have founded blogs, publications, and databases, as well as collectives and reading series—both virtual and local—to fill the gaps and meet the needs of translators, editors, booksellers, and readers.

⁴⁷ In second language acquisition pedagogy, the “affective filter hypothesis,” first proposed by Heidi Dulay and Marina Burt and further theorized by Stephen Krashen, describes the ways a student's attitudes toward the use or practice of a language informs the acquisition process. In particular, if a student is feeling stressed or anxious about their own abilities, or the *perception* of their own abilities, their affective filters are higher, which, in turn, makes it more difficult for the information to stick: “Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter—even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device” (Krashen 31).

We could argue about whether or not the use of “lonely” above feels appropriate. On the one hand, as I’ve cited elsewhere in the dissertation, “the popular image of the lonely translator is strikingly at odds with the reality of his or her work within the profession” (Cordingley and Manning 2). This is to say that literary translation has long been a collective enterprise, even if the focus on collaboration has been obscured in the past. On the other hand, we would be wrong to dismiss the feelings of loneliness that many contemporary freelance translators might feel as they toil away in cafés or living rooms to bring about what is an ostensibly collaborative document. My own hope, then, lies in burgeoning efforts to experiment with modes of community, especially through the recent swelling of interest in translator collectives—that is, formalized groups of translators that are democratically run to serve the needs of its members—that affirms the very horizon of translation as a communal practice. These collectives, I feel, will lend the necessary frameworks that so many of us long for—not only to work together on translation projects, but also to work through our anxieties together. Working together, in an explicit and healthy manner, requires both self- and group-reflection, which, in turn, permits us to negotiate our difficult feelings in ways that lend strength to our projects instead of detracting from them.

I learned this first hand in the graduate workshop in literary translation that I co-founded with Emily Goedde in 2013. Over the workshop’s last seven years, our group has invited its new and established members to share unfinished works and to approach vulnerability and openness as critical, creative modes. Competition, we all agreed, had no place in our shared space. Save for a few instances, each member, I believe, has come to the table we share in our department library ready to invest themselves as completely into their fellow translator’s text as they would

their own. And every time we managed, together, to come across the most felicitous word choice or linguistic construction, a bolt of lightning cut through us, energizing us in its passing.

Nevertheless, it can be difficult to talk about collaborative translation, not only because it is more difficult to document, but also because we have often lacked the frameworks to discuss translatorship outside of an individualist model of authorship, as Claire Davison suggests.⁴⁸ In light of these complications, my project does not seek to define “collaborative translation,” especially given that “the field of collaborative translation understood as an enumeration of practices resists nominal definition” (Cordingley and Manning 23). In place of offering a fixed notion of collaboration, I will call attention to the term’s ambiguity as a creative directive, for, as Ellen de Wachter underscores in *Co-Art*, we should embrace the openness of the “the term ‘collaboration,’” for it “is both useful and vague: the ‘co-’ prefix is at the root of many terms, each of which provides a different nuance on the meaning of creating together: collective, communal, common, cooperative, coordinated, combined. In practice, each group finds its own language to describe its particular kind of collaboration” (19). Central to de Wachter’s observation is that collaboration is always an in-process activity that is worked out in practice. And such collaboration, writes the artist collective Press Press in their *Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, and Collaborative Cultural Work*, requires intimacy, adaptability, honest communication, an explicit delineation and negotiation of roles and hierarchies, and, above all, accountability, to function in a lasting way.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ In her work on modernist translation collaborations, Davison calls this the “‘isolated paradox’: despite the consensus surrounding a collective cultural interchange, translators themselves tend to be evoked in isolation. *The temptation to draw up hierarchies and to resort to binary qualitative assessments also feeds this ‘isolated paradox’*” (5).

⁴⁹ Press Press’s *Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, and Collaborative Cultural Work* is one of the foremost resources for collectives to chart their process, and is organized according to four stages: prep work, ground work, growth work, and expanded work.

What I would like to propose is that coming together as a collective is also a creative mode—a process of *affective*, interpersonal translation in and of itself. In this sense, understanding the translator collective as “an artwork in its own right” dovetails with a central argument of this dissertation: that the work of translation can and should be the work of engaging and creating community through collective practice (de Wachter 13). What’s more, given that the collective model carries with it a political history, we cannot ignore that the work we are taking on now unfolds in a particular time and place—the age of climate collapse. Creating an open-ended community that is concerned with care for the many, I argue, animates the “co-” in “(e)co-translation.” Translation practice that takes ecological thinking seriously must, then, insist on collective labor and co-translation, a move that recognizes that a translation’s greatest potential may be realized in its collaborative potential to create resilient communities. And at its most intimate, co-translation and collaborative translation facilitate what Marc Fischer calls “mutually-supportive practice,” dispensing with the tired enmities of competition and mastery, especially as they are expressed through the constructions of authorship.

The following essay charts the recent rise of translator collectives in a set of transnational contexts to give a sense of brilliance they contain. Drawing on my own experience as a founder of the Emergent Translators Collective, which grew out of the graduate workshop in literary translation I mention above, as well as the various conversations among collectives that have taken place over the past few years at the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) annual conference, I outline why there is so much to optimistic about even in a moment that feels, turn after turn, increasingly bleak. The future of translation, I believe, is already with us.

The Emergent Translators Collective

The Emergent Translator’s Collective, formerly the *Emerging* Translators Collective, is a micro press and workshop that supports translators as they put out limited-edition prints, chapbooks, broadsides, and ephemera.⁵⁰ The premise of the collective is simple, perhaps deceptively so: ours is a horizontal model—where all those involved have a say in the pitching, editing, and making of the publications—that embraces mutually-supportive practice: creative relationships that reject competition as an “innovative” logic and that instead seek to build long-term infrastructures to promote an alternative cultural climate based on collaboration. Like many of the translator collectives that have emerged in the past few years, the ETC is still very much a work in process—it can, at times, feel impossible to keep a project running smoothly when it’s not your first, or even second, job. (In fact, many translators often have a “day job” that helps fund the translation work that they pursue after hours.) This open-endedness is as much any collective’s strength as is it a constant challenge.

The founding of the ETC might, at first glance, appear to be the story of just one individual translator’s intellectual trajectory. In some ways, that’s true: the ETC began to take shape as my final project for María Eugenia Cotera’s class on digital memory and oral history. For the seminar, Cotera brought together readings on “history from below” that I had largely never encountered, especially those that aligned with her own collaborative “Chicana Por Mi Raza” project documenting Chicana feminist activism in the US throughout the twentieth century. When Cotera asked us to imagine documenting the work of a community to which we belonged, I immediately thought of all the emerging translators I had engaged with in my

⁵⁰ The move to “emergent” stems from my ongoing engagement with adrienne maree brown’s concept of “emergent strategy,” which attends to the ways that we organizers must constantly remain open to “how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for.” In particular, I find brown’s insistence on collaborative ideation in the “imaginative battle” we currently face to be particularly compelling because I, too, believe that “the more people that collaborate on that ideation, the more that people will be served by the resulting world(s)” (19).

undergraduate classes and at the American Literary Translators Association’s annual conference. In particular, I benefitted from many long conversations with Allison Charette, who had, at the time, just recently launched the Emerging Literary Translators Network of America (ELTNA), an organization modeled after the work of the UK-based Emerging Translators Network (ETN).⁵¹ The ETC rightfully began, then, with the series of interviews I collected for the project as well as the many informal conversations I entered into with translators who identified as “emerging” or “early career” and who wanted to register their experiences, if only anonymously.

In its first iteration as a proto-archive and essay-manifesto, the ETC gave me a framework to put these diverse experiences in conversation with other labor and media critiques of the publishing industry, especially as I was negotiating what Anton Hur has since called the “emerging translator valley of death”: the arduous stretch of time between a translator’s training and their first paying book contract. Throughout this process of introspection, I started coming to terms with the fact that I just couldn’t see myself continuing on as a literary translator in a profession that felt, at times, to be adversely competitive, and where even the publication of a work in which you invested so much labor never quite felt like enough. I thought that, even if I were to quit the profession, laying the groundwork for the ETC would allow me to envision an alternate future where the “emerging” stage of the professionalization process was an overtly fertile one—a time to dream up new possibilities instead of conforming to prevailing norms.

⁵¹ Both ELTNA and the ETN, which was co-founded by Jamie Lee Searle, Rosalind Harvey, and Anna Holmwood, are, first and foremost, web platforms for emerging and early-career literary translators to share their experiences and leverage their collective knowledges. The archived conversations act as an informal “guide” to the profession, especially for those who might not have had the chance to participate in a Master’s program that aids in the “professionalization” process.

ALL TRANSLATION SHOULD BE PAID TRANSLATION	WE MUST SEEK INNOVATIVE MEDIA AND GENERIC FORMS TO CONVEY OUR TRANSLATIONS	TRANSLATIONS ARE NOT ETERNAL
WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE CURRENT INCREASE IN TRANSLATIONS, BUT WE SHOULD ALSO CELEBRATE THE SMALL	THE BESTSELLER LIST IS NOT A MEASURE OF SUCCESS	THE NOVEL IS BUT ONE FORM OF STORYTELLING
TRANSLATION ISN'T RELEGATED TO THE BOOK	TRANSLATORS SHOULD LOOK TO THE MAKER	TRANSLATION IS ALWAYS A PROCESS OF COLLABORATION AND WE SHOULD INSIST ON MORE OF IT

Figure 5.1. ETC manifesto (2015)

Calling the ETC’s founding a work of my own would also erase the many collaborations that shaped the collective’s priorities. In fact, the ETC, as an “emergent” idea, grew out of publishing experiments that I took on with other members of the graduate workshop in literary translation at the University of Michigan. What’s more, the ETC also contains a history of the various translational activities that I had participated in my undergraduate years, including seminars, conferences, and the founding of another publishing project, *Canon Translation Review*, which I co-edited with Marisa Gies. Yet, it wasn’t until Emily Goedde and I co-founded the graduate workshop that I began to see translation as an explicitly collaborative, instead of a necessarily *evaluative*, task. From Emily I learned to approach literary translation as more than just a conversation between an author, translator, and imagine reader, but rather as an ongoing experiment in translation as process—as a critical form of listening and of imagining what could be.⁵²

By the time I had more formally introduced the concept of the ETC to the graduate workshop in Fall 2016, I was increasingly interested in alternative publication practices, which

⁵² Ever the collaborator, Emily suggested that the graduate workshop in translation hold the 5th Biennial Graduate Student Translation Conference in May of 2015. The conference, which was proposed by Michael Henry Heim, originated at UCLA in 2004, and has also been held at the University of Colombia and, more recently, the University of Texas-Dallas. Emily and Corine Tachtiris, along with other graduate workers in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan, had held the 4th Biennial Conference in 2010, and I was lucky, as a rising senior, to participate.

stemmed from my doctoral research on nineteenth-century and contemporary printing projects in Catalonia, especially the extraordinary multilingual publications associated with the many “DIY” publishing scene that enlivens Catalan counter-culture (largely separate from, though sometimes intersecting with, Catalonia’s institutional nation-building projects) today. Perhaps there’s no better showing of this commitment than the ETC’s invocation of “Do-It-Together” (DIT) publishing, a term I first encountered in the work of Meekling Press.⁵³ The acronym captures the dynamic of many operating small & micro-presses whose members edit and create editions by hand using a host of DIY “zine” publishing practices, including letterpress, Risograph, blockprint, Xerox reproduction methods, among others. It also signals an instance on publishing as process—an embrace of the messiness that makes poesis so vital and difficult.

Within the context of the broader alternative publishing scene, it’s impossible to speak of the ETC without recognizing that there have been many attempts to gather translators into collective formations and experiment with the translator’s task, even if those projects have been short lived and under documented. As for those projects that continue on today, four carry particular importance to the ETC’s model, as they have constantly offer space for collaboration among translators. They include: Ugly Duckling Presse, Antena Aire, Cardboard House Press’s Cartonera Collective, and Harlequin Creature (also founded by University of Michigan graduate workers). Each of these presses engage in collective book production, often through a mix of DIT publication methods, and are projects that incorporate transnational publishing histories and methodologies, with a particular attention to the histories of samizdat (Ugly Duckling Presse)

⁵³ While Meekling Press, a micro-press out of Chicago known for its handmade, letterpressed zine and chapbook creations, is the only press I know that explicitly names their method “Do-It-Together,” there are many publishing projects that fit into the paradigm.

and the recent Cartonera movement in Latin America (CHP Cartonera Collective).⁵⁴ In the cases of both Antena Aire and Harlequin Creature, language justice and social transformation are named as explicit, motivating principles. Antena Aire’s *Manifesto for Ultratranslation*, for example, remains one of the most rigorous re-imaginings of the translator’s task to day. I find hope in their insistence that “ultratranslation is built from radicalism, ultraism, anti-racism, anti-superiority, antiassimilation. We recognize and respect words, details, and impulses that cannot be translated: a constant divide. Both translation and its riotous cousin ultratranslation provide tools for crossing or not crossing. Whether or not we cross, we need the tools” (3). DIT publishing, then, is about uncovering these tools and learning to use them together.

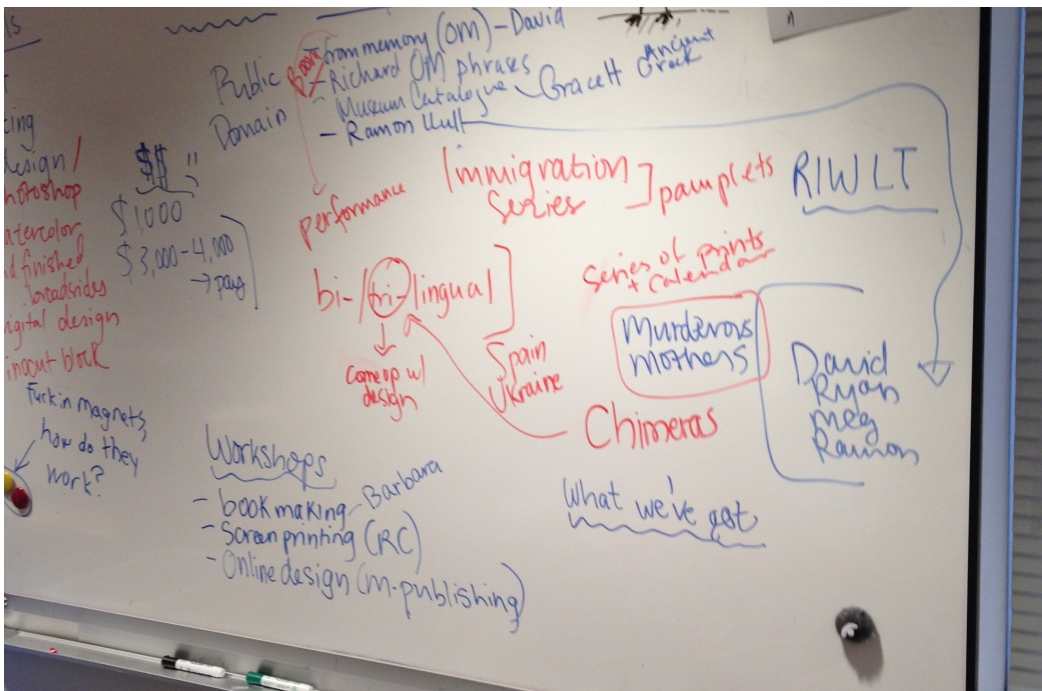


Figure 5.2. ETC brainstorming session (2016)

⁵⁴ I learned of the Argentine publishing cooperative Eloísa Cartonera from Hilarly Levinson, who had encountered them on her research fellowship. Amid the 2001 crisis, a group of writers and artists began creating books with cardboard covers, which allowed them to offer “cartoneros” (cardboarders), who gathered and sold cardboard to recycling facilities, a higher rate (Bell, Flynn, O’Hare).

Given that many of us had encountered the aforementioned projects beforehand—we would even invite Matvei Yankelevich of Ugly Duckling Presse to workshop with us later that year—it seemed almost natural for our graduate workshop to begin our own DIT experiments. The prospect of “making” was so compelling to us, I believe, in part because dissertation work can take years to produce, and smaller projects like the ones we had in mind offered creative relief in the interim. What’s more, learning DIT methods would also allow us to branch out in the University of Michigan community, as we did in the following spring semester when we had the chance to work alongside Fritz Swanson at Wolverine Press to hand set the first anthology of our translations, titled *Polyphonia*. Under Fritz’s supervision, we spent more than twenty staggered hours to publish six broadsides, a task that taught us to expect—and even embrace—the experience of error. (And to avoid touching your mouth or eyes after handling lead type.) To round out our skills, we also held a bookmaking workshop with Barbara Brown, who, at the time, taught book arts at the Penny Stamps School of Art and Design.

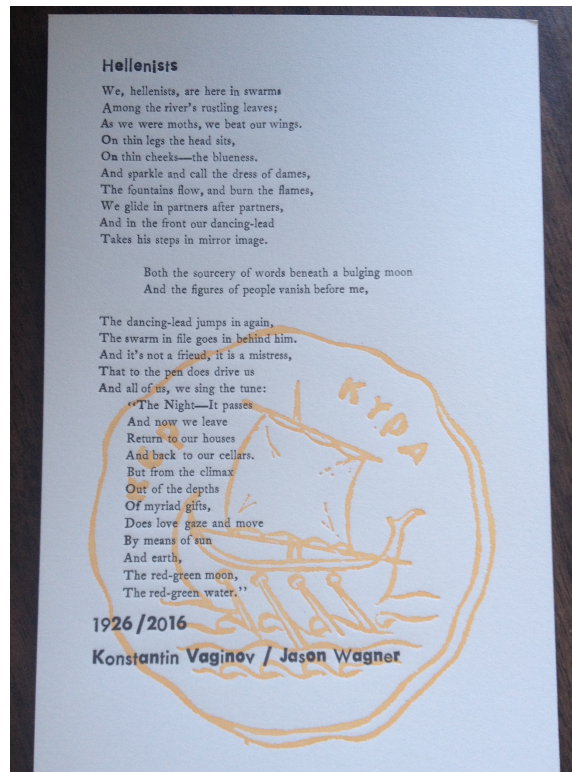


Figure 5.3. Broadside from *Polyphonia* issue one

For our first “solo” experiment in early 2016, we set up Gocco printers and a Kelsey tabletop press in a member’s living room and got the ink rolling. Each of us—David Martin, Hilary Levinson, Grace Mahoney, Yael Kenan, Jason Wagner, and I—had chosen an excerpt of a translation-in-progress as well as an accompanying image to represent the story, which figured as a media translation of sorts. It can be difficult to talk about these collaborations because we were all so wrapped up in what we were doing to document our process. And I’ll be the first to admit that the resulting mini-broadside were far from perfect; I remember feeling exasperated that we couldn’t get the press to spread the pressure out evenly. But at the end of the evening, the general consensus was that any imperfection was also a visible, lingering trace of our process—a medial clue we’d leave behind for all of those who might later encounter our work. And as with all

experiments, it's really the joy of getting our hands dirty that sticks with me when I reflect on that snowy Saturday afternoon together.

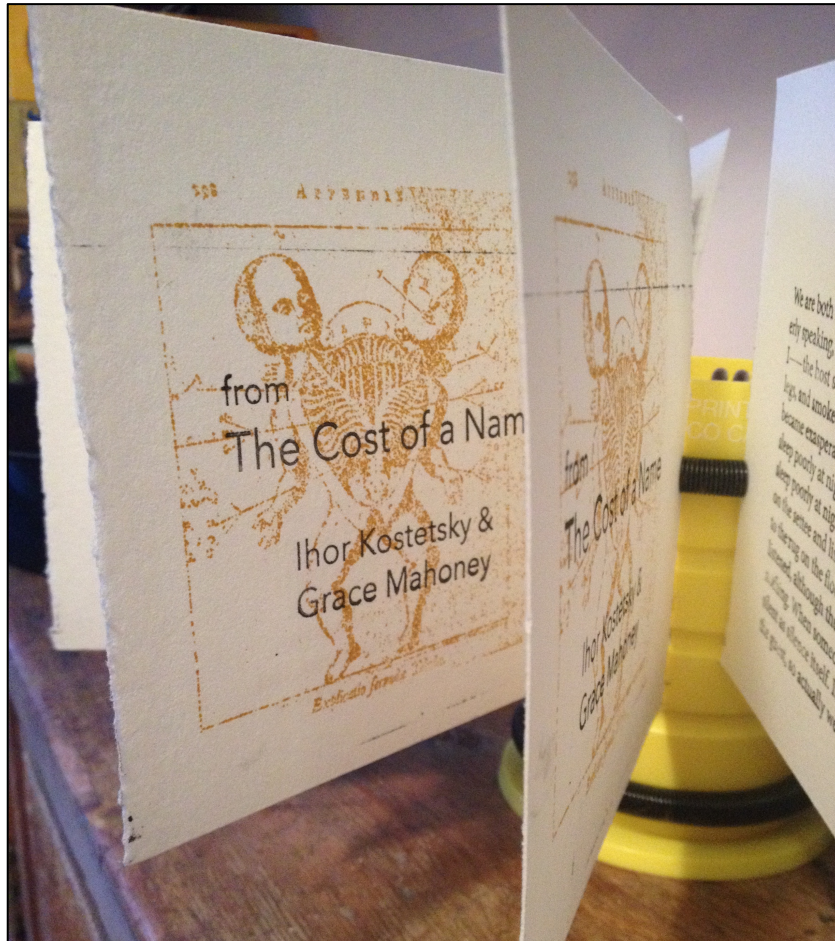


Figure 5.4. Ephemera printed by tabletop letterpress and Gocco duplicator

Working with older printing technologies like the Kelsey tabletop press was certainly exhilarating, but we quickly realized that if we were to take on any larger projects, we would need to incorporate other technologies, too. (We would have been happy to continue working with Wolverine Press, but it was near impossible to ask Fritz and his team to take on our projects on top of those they had committed to as part of the Zell's Writing Program.) After returning home from my research fellowship in Barcelona in 2017, I decided, rather impulsively, to invest in a Risograph duplicator, which combines the ease of Xerox printers with the quality of screen-

and offset printing. I had first encountered Risograph methods in the work of *dotheprint*, a Catalan-language press and workshop that I had been writing about in my erstwhile dissertation. Having taken a class on screen- and block-printing the year beforehand, I was amazed at how effortless the Risograph reproduction process was, which lends to its popularity among the many collective publishing experiments that, to summarize the sentiments of Half-Letter Press, wish to pursue self-publishing as a way to bypass established cultural gatekeeping.



Figure 5.5. Half-Letter Press poster, illustrated by Kione Kochi

In the following year, the graduate workshop endeavored its second publication, a collection of broadsides that featured the work of current and past members. Once again, we began pouring through open-source illustrations to pair with our works, and even began to make up our own (thanks to the flexibility of the Risograph). In the span of just a few hours in my hot-house of an apartment, Zoë McLaughlin, Annie Boletin, Jason Wagner, and I brought all of our work together in *Polyphonia* issue two.



Figure 5.6. Annie Boletin looks for inspiration

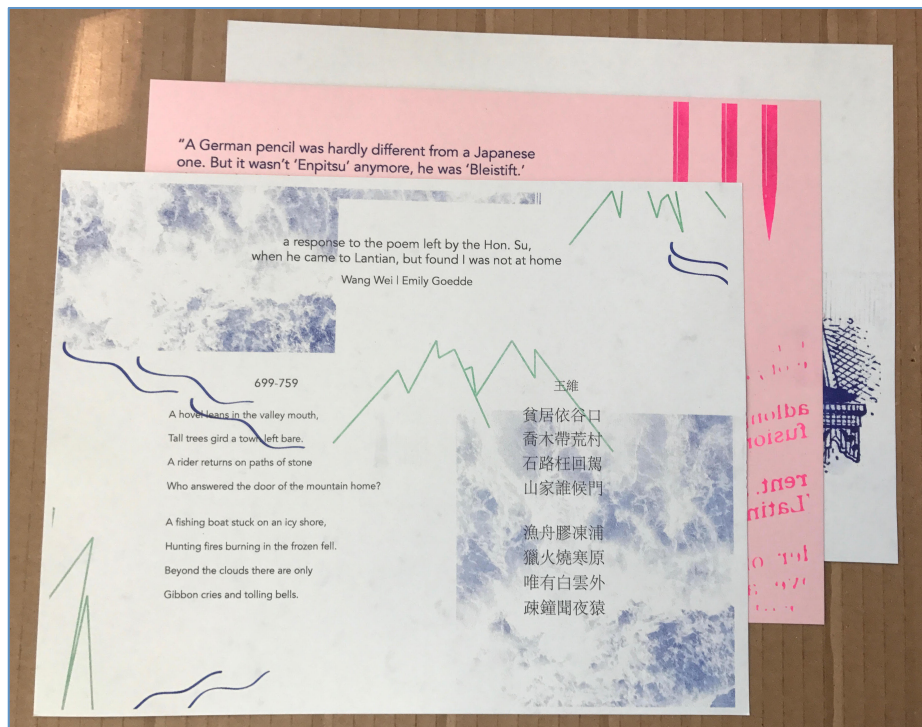


Figure 5.7. Various broadsides from *Polyphonia* issue two

Due to the ease of the Risograph process, the ETC could also start getting more adventurous in its planning. In late 2017, we invited the first “outside” translator, Neil Anderson, to collaborate on a chapbook of his own choosing. (One of the ETC’s principles is that the “lead” translator on any project can propose whichever work they’re interested in—that we must trust one another in all aspects of the publication process.) While Neil wasn’t officially part of the ETC, I was eager to work with him after encountering his translations in an issue of *Absinthe: World Literature in Translation*, which had recently been acquired by my Department. To my delight, Neil chose to translate Luz Pichel’s Galician poems into English, and we were thrilled when Spanish-language translator Ángela Segovia consented to including hers as well.



Figure 5.8. *Co Co Co U*

All in all, the sense of “togetherness” in DIT publishing strengthens bonds among its practitioners while also encouraging them to dream up ways to seek out new collaborators, even those who might not be formally trained in the profession but whose experience living in-between languages has bearing nonetheless. In this sense, the collective model (and artistic collaboration more generally) is one way to honor the translator’s task as we have inherited it while also holding it open for emancipatory transformation. As such, it represented, for me, one way to resist deeply-rooted constructions of Western authorship and the sense of property and propriety they re-inscribe—topics we addressed in graduate seminars on literary translation, but for which no concrete alternatives were offered. And as I dug into the histories of alternative collaborative workshops, including the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, the early work of the Nuyorican Poets’ Café, and the Basement Workshop, it became clear that the collective model was clearly as much a political process as it was an artistic one. As de Wachter herself underscores, “collectives have always been linked with a leftwing outlook” where artists prioritize praxis over empty statements of solidarity (quoted in Basciano).⁵⁵ In this sense, the act of coming together as a collective can be an important political statement and, even more importantly, a staking out of an alternative future.

Contemporary Landscape

At the same time the ETC was taking shape, I got word from a mentor of mine, Alex Zucker, that another translator collective was in development in New York City: Cedilla & Co., a project spearheaded by Sean Byes and Julia Sanches, alongside their other founding members

⁵⁵ In describing how four artists—Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Helen Cammock, Oscar Murillo, and Tai Shani—who had been individually nominated for the 2019 Turner Prize formed a collective to win as a group and split the prize equally, de Wachter writes, “Historically . . . collectives have always been linked with a leftwing outlook. These four artists didn’t just talk the talk, they walked it – and they made a sacrifice. Theirs was a dadaist gesture that exposes how absurd the value system in art is” (quoted in Basciano).

Alta Price, Allison Markin Powell, Lissie Jacquette, Heather Cleary, Jeffrey Zuckerman, and Marshall Yarbrough. (Alex would later join the collective when he finished his term as co-chair of the PEN America Translation Committee.) Cedilla and Co., Alex remarked, would be explicitly focused on the professional labor of literary translators, and I rushed to assure him that was the ETC's case as well, even if our descriptions could get a bit flowery. In that evening conversation, Alex and I talked of his recent appearance on the Three Percent Podcast to discuss "Translators, Rates, Money, and Unions" as well as the uphill battle of making a living wage as a translator.⁵⁶ In particular, I remember rambling on to him about how the collective model might permit literary translators to better identify *as workers* in the first place, which would allow us to labor in solidarity with other workers (a nod to Alex's own comments, on the podcast, about how dockworkers are often better paid than translators, thanks, in part, to their unions). It was in this way that early discussions about the collective model emerged in conversation with concerns about working conditions in a field that has historically lacked the presence of unions.

A long-time advocate of *translators*, not just translation, as he often puts it, Alex had earlier proposed a panel on the question of labor and community infrastructure for the then upcoming 2016 ALTA conference. Since he had already been working with Marcia Lynx Qualey (founder of the blog and quarterly *Arab Lit*), Deborah Smith (Tilted Axis Press's founder and publisher), and Cedilla & Co. to conceptualize the panel, I asked if I could join the line-up of what ultimately became "Beyond #NameTheTranslator: New Forms of Translator Advocacy."⁵⁷ Despite the fact that ours was the last panel on the last day of the conference, the room was packed. In the hour that followed, each panelist discussed how we could build upon previous advocacy efforts that had largely focused on ensuring the adequate representation of translators

⁵⁶ The episode's transcript, which is very much worth reading in full, is available on PEN's website: pen.org/transcript-of-three-percent-podcast-no-91-translators-rates-money-and-unions/.

⁵⁷ For a full review of the panel, see Alex's short essay "Beyond Name the Translator."

in the media and on book covers. While we covered a range of topics, I found that focusing on the wider context of labor relations pressed us to contextualize literary translation within a broader moment of renewed labor organizing in the arts and, in particular, the fight for literary translation to become a profession that might boast a living wage for more than just the handful of translators who can currently work in such a way.⁵⁸ In this sense, I voiced a not uncommon sentiment that our current labor structure allows only those who can “afford” to translate literary works to fully enter the profession (that is, many translators must often have separate “day jobs” or count on independent or familial wealth to subsidize their translation work). That our profession, which is premised on intercultural and translingual diversity, is also largely white seemed not unrelated to this question of “affordance,” especially as breaking into the field requires vast amounts of unpaid labor in the first five-ten years.⁵⁹ And because these labor conditions are in no way exclusive to the literary translation sphere, we all anchored our critiques in the struggles for transformation happening in the publishing industry writ large. When we opened up the panel for group discussion, it became clear that both panelists and audience members were hungry for change.

After that first panel in 2016, and thanks to some good press, the collective model started to take hold. In early 2017, I learned that a group of London-based translators—Zöe Perry, Ruth Clarke, Paul Russell Garrett, Roland Glasser, and Morgan Giles—were starting another

⁵⁸ It is difficult to ground this largely anecdotal knowledge of working conditions in numbers, though as the 2017 Author Guild Survey of Literary Translators Working Condition reveals, only 7% of respondents report that they “derive 100% of their income from literary translation or related activities (workshops, lecture, readings, book reviews and so forth).”

⁵⁹ Earlier in the day, the ALTA organizing community had convened to discuss the noticeable *lack* of diversity among literary translators, and proposed to found a fellowship that would fund the travel of an emerging translator of color or a translator working from an underrepresented diaspora or stateless language (“Jansen Fellowship”). While anecdotal, this lack of diversity is borne out by initial data from the 2017 Author Guild Survey of Literary Translators Working Condition: of the 205 literary translators who responded to the survey, these were the numbers reported: 83% White, 6.5% Hispanic or Latinx, 1.5% Black/African American, 1.5% Asian American, 1% Native American (the remaining respondents selected “other” or “prefer not to say”).

collective, modeled after Cedilla & Co., called “The Starling Bureau.”⁶⁰ By 2018, there were five official collectives. In order to document our experiences, I joined a group of six translators at the 2018 ALTA annual conference to discuss the rise of the “collective” as a model for future practice. Our panel, “A Collection of Collectives,” brought together members of five nascent translators collectives from across the US—the Third Coast Translators Collective (TCTC), Cedilla & Co., the Emergent Translators Collective (ETC), Boston Area Literary Translators Group (BALTG), and the DC-Area Literary Translators Network (DC-ALT)—to discuss our histories, missions, and visions for more rigorous collaboration. The energy was palpable, even at 11 o’clock in the morning, as each member described their respective collective’s founding: some had been around for more than a year (Cedilla & Co.; ETC); another had just recently pooled their energies into a more formalized entity (TCTC); while others still had been running local workshops for more than two decades and were now growing into organizations that would lend their members more agency in the publishing realm (BALTG; DC-ALT). By sharing our trajectories, we hoped to inspire translators in the audience to reach out to other translators in their own communities.

We all attended to the ways in which the formation of any collective requires an open-ended process, much as any translatorial practice might demand. The collective model, in this sense, is rather flexible, though we agreed that it generally entails the purposeful gathering of a community of translators who seek to collaborate on the many labors that go into the twenty-first-century translation process: research, translation proper, editing, pitching, negotiating contracts, and marketing. This kind of community building, we underscored, is not necessarily new; translators have been co-translating and collaborating, as well as sharing advice and

⁶⁰ For more on Cedilla & Co.’s model, see Calvin Reid’s article, “Cedilla & Co. Unveils Collective Model for Translation.”

resources, for as long as translation, in its many guises, has been practiced (Cordingely and Manning 19).⁶¹ What appears different in the twenty-first-century context is that the collective model offers a structured environment that, by and large, remains unattached to institutions, even if some of the translators involved participate in other academic and cultural institutions for what might be best described as their “day jobs” (Tiang 2). Cedilla and Co., for example, spoke of their mission as “pooling resources” and offering “market intelligence.” In a similar vein, the TCTC discussed their efforts as way to “facilitate pathways to publication” as they built relationships both within their workshop and in the wider communities of Chicago. DC-ALT likewise called for “foster[ing] a community of literary translators” as it also “promote[d] the art of literary translation in the Greater Washington, DC, area.” Collectives, then, have become a space in which we might hold one another accountable in our collaborative enterprise, making good on earlier efforts to establish formal “inter-translator, translinguistic collaboration” (Huss 457).⁶²

When it was my turn to give the Emergent Translators Collective’s mission, I smiled and remarked that translators should own the means of production, as it would allow us more control in deciding which works we could take on. Many of the other collectives had flirted with the idea, but, as Jeremy Tiang remarked, the production aspect might come to overshadow all other activities. (He’s certainly correct.) More than the aspects of production, however, I was keen to propose that once we centered solidarity as essential to building community, which I understand

⁶¹ As Anthony Cordingley and Céline Frigau Manning write in their introduction to *Collaborative Translation*, “From Antiquity to the Renaissance, translation was frequently practised by groups comprised of specialists of different languages and with varied skills. At the centre of translation teams, experts from various cultures came together to find solutions to translation problems, and the acts of reading and rewriting were often separated and multiplied between participants. Yet, during the Renaissance, prefaces and tracts which discussed translation tended to elide these collaborative practices to promote a singular act” (19).

⁶² In her review of forms of collaborative translation, Huss draws our attention to the collaboration between translators of Umberto Eco, Günter Grass, and Haruki Murakami as contemporary examples of community making in the wider translation community (456-458).

as a key component of the translator's task, we might just be able to achieve the kinds of collaboration that so many of us dream of.

While other speakers at our 2018 panel were rightly concerned with the literary translation industry as we experience it today, I felt that what I could best contribute to the discussion was a list of aspirations, which were, to me, expressly political. (Among the different collectives, the ETC is best known for its leftist leanings, which makes sense given that those of us involved are interested in how translation might advance the cause of liberation and of transformative community-making.) Earlier that morning, I had scribbled down a list of "demands," much as I had been trained to do through my work as a community organizer. They included: the move to "mutually-supportive practice" as an antidote to competition; a return to local, handmade production, and to small-batch publishing; the use of radical attribution, citing all members of the workshop, as well as all forms of labor that went into the publication, in the credits or on the back cover; a call to break the taboo of self-publishing, which would allow us to better visiblize and critique the gatekeeping in our own circles; an effort to imagine translation within future solidarity and care-based economies; and an insistence on care-centered workshops instead of product-oriented ones. I saw many heads nodding in the audience, though I noted at least one anxious glance from an independent publisher when I mentioned the need for translators to run their own publishing projects instead of seeking out established platforms. (While I in no way feel that we should do away with independent presses, I also wanted to underscore that now is the moment to start having these difficult conversations about intra-industry relations, especially in regard to the ways that collectives can facilitate new forms of relation that promote equity more broadly.) After all, as Anjalika Sagar asserts, "Collectives contain the threat of the commons, and that scares the right people, that people can come

together and produce complex methods of thinking that might work against capitalism” and the non-profit project that a capitalist order incorporates (quoted in Basciano).

The following year, our collectives coordinated a follow-up panel at the 2019 ALTA conference to assess the challenges we had faced and the successes that had energized us. In this iteration, the panel, titled “A Collective of Collectives,” was moderated by Heather Cleary (Cedilla & Co.) and featured Zoë Perry (the Starling Bureau), Sophie Bowman (the Smoking Tigers), Kaija Straumanis (Plüb), Ellen Elias-Bursac (BALT), Shelley Fairweather-Vega (NLT), and me (ETC). In his write-up of the event, Jason Grunebaum (TCTC) reports:

Each of these collectives operates a little differently. Some are open to new members and hold public meetings, while others have a fixed membership. One has its own publishing arm, and another emerged from the question of why it’s so hard for literary translators to find agents. Some help educate the public about literary translation. Most organize public readings.

What all of them have in common—including the Chicago-based Third Coast Translators Collective (TCTC) I’m lucky to be a part of—is a sense of shared purpose and collaborative spirit prevalent among literary translators.

We workshop one another’s drafts. We help with each other’s pitches. We share professional contacts and celebrate accomplishments. We feel deep in our bones that every new book published in translation creates a new space for a new translation.

Whatever the opposite of a zero-sum game is, that’s the one we play. (“Translators and Collective Action”)

I quote Grunebaum’s summary not only because it captures the general sense of things, but also because it communicates the sheer energy that emerges every time our collectives share space.

Collectives are, in many ways, a place of constant negotiation and celebration where we encourage one another to resist the logics of competition that so structure our working lives—yes, even in a field like ours, which is often assumed to be predicated entirely on collaboration.

In the lead up to that 2019 ALTA panel, Jeremy Tiang (Cedilla & Co.) coordinated a series of interviews with nine participating collectives for the ALTA blog.⁶³ Taken together, the interviews lend a larger sense of the collectives’ profound commitment to their members, and their dedication to bringing the task of literary translation to life in the many communities in which they operate. Many of the collectives, for example, have built relationships with local bookshops and creative organization not only to promote their own work, but also to highlight the cultural spaces of their local settings. While there appears to be general consensus that “collectivism does seem to be in the air at the moment,” as the members of Strong Women, Soft Power note, there’s also the sense that the collective model has enjoyed its recent success because it’s an extension of the community-building work that many translators had long been pursuing in organizations such as ALTA or the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT). Perhaps the members of BALT put it most clearly, for, when asked what they believed were the essential resources for translators in their collective, they replied, “Each other, first and foremost” (Boston-Area Literary Translators).

I’m heartened that more and more of us are willing to have these (sometimes difficult) discussions in public, and there’s no sign that our ideas will be going away any time soon. As of last year, there are now twelve official collectives associated with ALTA, and the list is growing: Austin LitSig, Boston-Area Literary Translators, Cedilla & Co., DC-ALT, Emergent Translators Collective, Northwest Literary Translators, Paper Republic, Plüb, the Starling Bureau, the

⁶³ All of the interviews are available on ALTA’s blog: literarytranslators.org/members-area/collectives.

Smoking Tigers, Strong Women, Soft Power, and Third Coast Translators Collective. Not unsurprisingly, these collectives are marked by the diversity of their members. Each collective brings groups of three to fifteen translators together, even if only a handful of translators are able to represent their respective projects at ALTA panels. While some of the collectives are place-based, others have leaned into the digital affordances of an increasingly networked culture to organize their participation. Several of the collectives emerged from the Cedilla & Co. model, which is focused on increasing translator participation in the current publishing industry; these include The Starling Bureau and the Smoking Tigers, who explicitly evoke one another as a reason for their founding. Others, like Austin LitSig, the ETC, Boston-Area Literary Translators, Third Coast Translators Collective, DC-ALT emerged from existing translator workshops. Two are directly affiliated with institutions, including Plüb (the workshop of the Master of Arts in Literary Translation at the University of Rochester) and the Northwest Literary Translators (a project that grew out of the local chapter of the American Translators Association, called the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society). Finally, some are organized according to language, as is the case of Paper Republic (Chinese), the Smoking Tigers (Korean), and Strong Women, Soft Power (Japanese), while the others bring together translators who work across languages.

In a moment of such ample possibility, it only makes sense to start reflecting on our labor and its implications for future experimentation. While I've had several conversations about whether or not the use of "collective" is fitting for the assemblages and communities popping up, I am, in general, not interested in policing what a collective is or isn't. Instead, I'm constantly asking myself: What does it mean to come together, as translators, to dream up and to advance a more caring practice of translation? To what extent can we lean into collaboration, one that seeks

not only to bring insightful works of literature into many-languaged afterlives, but also to uplift the many-bodied collaboration that pushes against the limits of “solitary” translation as we know it now? Finally, how can we further this collective project and encourage experimentation rather than stunt its growth?

Community Workshops

While each translator collective has carved out its own mission, they all utilize the translation workshop as a collaborative activity in which members gather in community to share their works in progress. Moreover, the fact that many of the translator collectives considered above grew directly out of a mix of in-person and digital workshops makes it fertile ground for assessing and reimagining the translator’s task. At their best, workshops represent both a practice and a gathering in which translators might receive feedback from like-minded “intimate readers,” to use Gayatri Spivak’s term, as they experiment with strategies for drawing out the many relationships uncovered in the translation process. Yet, like other social modes, I would argue that the success of the workshop model doesn’t lie simply in the publishable products that emerge from it; instead, we might evaluate a workshop’s strength by the depth of community bonds that the gathering inspires and sustains, and the vibrant action that emerges from that solidarity.

In *Social Poetics*, Mark Nowak writes of how the term “workshop” carries with it a tangled history of both collective and individual formations (85). Once regarded as an “uncouth space” for workers, where it functioned “historically as a space for collective action,” it transformed, in the twentieth century, into something “distance[d] from working class-life,” that is, a creative laboratory that “illustrates the term’s full transition from the uncouth to the refined” (85-86). Nowak continues:

Today, our usage of workshop openly embraces these divisions, hierarchies and debts. Using the term in pairings like ‘poetry workshop’ or ‘fiction workshop’ not only hides but actively suppresses and erases the noun’s rich working-class social history. Our usages have transitioned from a “sticky” space for possible working-class solidarities and collective action to geographies of individual self-improvement and neoliberal economic systems of exchange. (86)

While there is certainly room for disagreement, one of Nowak’s primary provocations is that within “institutional sites such as the MFA program and the elite residency, the workshop form privileges individual growth” (179). Drawing on Mark McGurl’s *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*, Nowak writes that contemporary creative writing programs tend to “revolve around a tri-nodal axis of individual experience (i.e. authenticity), individual creativity (freedom), and a highly edited and controlled notion of craft (tradition).”⁶⁴ For Nowak, this individuality is expressed through what Bakhtin first conceptualized as the “stylistics of ‘private craftsmanship’” in contrast to art that was in explicit “social dialogue” (179).

As someone who has had access to what some might call “elite” university spaces, I believe it’s worth dwelling on the question of the institutional workshop not only because it emblemizes a specific approach to translation-via-creative-writing pedagogy in university settings, but also because the creative writing workshop “returned”—to use Richard Hugo’s

⁶⁴ Here, Nowak’s full quote is helpful: “The central practices of creative writing workshops today, as Mark McGurl argues in *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*, revolve around a tri-nodal axis of individual experience (i.e. authenticity), individual creativity (freedom), and a highly edited and controlled notion of craft (tradition). Each of these nodes has long been and continues to be carefully disarticulated from the historic definition and use of *workshop* as a space of distinctively working-class collective political activities. Today, these erasures and disarticulations of *workshop* from the term’s working-class history can make workshops feel to some participants like ‘productive forces,’ as Marx writes in his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, that ‘turns into their fetters.’ Yet, as Marx reminds us in the very next sentence, ‘Then begins an era of social revolution’” (88).

phrase—to these spaces in what Eric Bennet, in his study of programs at Iowa and Stanford, argues was an overtly anti-collectivist political moment (Bennett 3).⁶⁵ (While I find Bennet’s discussion of the Iowa and Stanford Writing Workshops to be compelling, I want to acknowledge that his framework might obscure the fact that creative writing workshops are not necessarily new, and have existed in many guises in educational curriculum of the English-speaking world over the past 400 years (Hugo 53).⁶⁶) And the “return” of the workshop model in US educational institutions has been decisive: it is now “the largest system of literary patronage for living writers that the world has ever seen” (McGurl 24). Yet, this does not mean that the patronage system grew due to an innate social goodness, of bettering the world; as Viet Than Nyugen clarifies, “As an institution, the workshop reproduces its ideology, which pretends that ‘Show, don’t tell’ is universal when it is, in fact, the expression of a particular population, the white majority, typically at least middle-class and often, but not exclusively, male” (“Viet Thanh Nguyen Reveals How Writers’ Workshops Can Be Hostile”).

While no two workshops are explicitly alike, perhaps the most well-known model remains the “traditional” format associated with the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, even as its

⁶⁵ As Bennet further explains in his monograph *Workshops of Empire: Stegner, Engle, and American Creative Writing During the Cold War*, “For a decade after the war [WWII], in the name of peace and excellence, overt commitments to collectivist ideals were banished from the American literary mainstream” (3). Iowa’s Workshop was established in 1936 and is considered, alongside the Creative Writing Program at Stanford University, one of the founding programs for creative writing in the nation. In the 1960s, the influence of Iowa’s Workshop grew extensively under the directorship of “do-it-yourself Cold Warrior” Paul Engle, largely thanks to an influx of funds from conservative businessmen, foundations, and even the CIA who wished to “fortif[y] democratic values at home and abroad” (Bennett, *How Iowa Flattened Literature*). “The Iowa Workshop,” writes Eric Bennett, “attained national eminence by capitalizing on the fears and hopes of the Cold War” (“How Iowa”). This ideological framing was, of course, not limited to the creative writing world. As de Wachter underscores, “Under the American capitalist model, the individual ‘genius’ artist became a brand, and there was a great deal of suspicion of collective work. It was dangerous even to operate collaboratively. Because collectivisation was seen as a Soviet thing, artists ran the risk of being branded as “red.” (“Artists Assemble!”).

⁶⁶ Specifically, Hugo writes, “For around 400 years it was a requirement of every student's education. In the English-speaking world, the curriculum for grammar and high school students included the writing of “verses.” In the nineteenth century, when literary education weakened or was dropped from elementary and secondary education, colleges picked it up, all but the creative writing. Creative writing was missing for 100 years or so, but in the past 40 years it has returned. It was never really missing, just missing from educational institutions” (53-4). Bennet’s study, then, is specifically interested in the political environment that ushered in this “return.”

popularity declines.⁶⁷ (Its constant reproduction might well be due to the fact that a “people’s history of community-based creative writing workshops, a ‘history from below’ that regularly emerges in tandem with social rebellions across the United States and across the globe” has largely remained “un-chronicled” and, hence, little known (Nowak 7).) The tradition, in Iowa’s case, is selective silence; otherwise known as the “gag rule,” the Iowa model asks the writer whose work is being considered to remain silent during the first period of critique.⁶⁸ The silent model has been a subject of much critique for some time now, as graduates of MFAs across the US have often discussed how the model amplifies the racial, gender, and class divides already existent in these institutional spaces.⁶⁹ And while the silencing of the author whose work is being reviewed may have originally been an attempt to lift up the collective voice of all workshop participants, Nyugen points out that it also means that that such a chorus might end up redoubling dominant norms against which the author is trying to write.⁷⁰ In this sense, the rule of

⁶⁷ Edward Delaney notes, “What does now seem out of fashion is the no-holds-barred approach of past decades when it came to voicing comments and criticism, which could be unnecessarily bruising” (“Where Great Writers”).

⁶⁸ Jim Nelson’s description of the Iowa format reveals the sense of alienation that the workshop engenders: “A writer distributes their story or chapter to the rest of a group ahead of the meeting. Each workshop member reads the story on their own, away from the group. Each member writes a critical response, usually one page single-spaced. Often readers will mark up the manuscript as well: spelling, grammar, word choice, typos. They’ll highlight passages that are interesting or vivid, cross out passages that seem unnecessary or inappropriate, write question marks near confusing passages, and so on. Then the group meets. The author quietly sits for twenty to thirty minutes while a half-dozen or more people critically pick apart what may be the most heartfelt and personal story he or she has ever written. The author is forbidden from speaking during this time. The discussion almost sounds as if the author is not present. He or she listens and takes notes while the rest of the room casually dissects hours, maybe tens of hours, of work. Just about any critical opinion that jumps to mind may be aired without fear of crossing a boundary. With the right people, it can be ruthless. After the discussion, the writer may ask the group questions, and the session concludes” (“Three Alternatives to the Iowa Writing Workshop Format”). It’s easy to dismiss Nelson’s comments as the writing of a wounded artist. But if we approach them from the position that “good” writing is always dependent on evolving cultural norms, Nelson’s observations reveal a deep, discomfiting fact: that writing workshops can operate as places where a disregard for feelings—under the cover of critique or “making something its best”—can serve the politics of genius instead of community-making.

⁶⁹ The most cited critiques include: Claire Vaye Watkins, Junot Díaz, Matthew Salesses, Jen Corrigan, Viet Than Nguyen, and, most recently, Beth Nguyen.

⁷⁰ Noting a disagreement that arose from her use of “dim sum” in a story, which she was unable to explain or defend during the workshop process, Nguyen writes, “In this workshop format, the idea of what constituted basic knowledge did not include dim sum. They, the rest of the people in the workshop, decided what constituted basic knowledge. And yes, they were white except for one other person and I was not (though you already knew that). The group’s knowledge was knowledge. I was the outsider, the strange Asian who needed to adapt my work to what they understood. This wasn’t intentional malice; it was baseline assumption. This is also the kind of unchecked, micro-

silence attempts to fix a problem that might only be fixed by embracing more, not less, collaboration throughout every stage of the writing process, including composition, not just editing. Of course, the workshop format is not the only reason for what has been described as a distinctly competitive dynamic in such MFA programs, as funding and often un-spoken, embodied hierarchies can shape the way a workshop setting is experienced and what its goals are.⁷¹ Nevertheless, it appears that the legacy of the model is often reported to further entrench its members in an expressly competitive set of relations, which, at its best, can inspire students with an appetite for rivalry but, at its worst, can prove alienating and may even empty the workshop process of a general sense of collaboration and community.⁷²

What's more, because graduates of the Iowa Writers' Workshop founded many of the creative writers programs that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, and because the first US Program in Literary Translation was also established at Iowa, the model has been reproduced and

aggressive yet forceful imbalance of power that is the typical workshop environment. It is undoubtedly experienced in some way by everyone but profoundly so for writers of color, especially since creative writing programs, nationally, are 74 percent white" ("Unsilencing"). And the worst of it, Nguyen explains, is that she came to reproduce this model in her own classroom because it was what she knew. "This system is so powerful, so much the core of what some call the creative writing industrial complex," writes Nguyen, "that even today the majority of creative writing instructors adhere to it" ("Unsilencing"). Eventually, though, Nguyen began facilitating workshops that leaned into the personal—that is, a format that "respected each other's individual histories, backgrounds, and experiences and understood that our critiques and suggestions were informed by our own backgrounds and experiences" ("Unsilencing").

⁷¹ In his article "Where Great Writers are Made: Assessing America's Top Writing Programs," Edward Delaney echoes the deep sense of competition that has colored workshop spaces in his profile of graduate writing programs in the US, where he describes the experience of past graduate and currently Iowa faculty member Ethan Canin, who expresses that the competitive environment of the Workshop was "humiliating and degrading" ("Where Great Writers are Made").

⁷² As I note above, this sense of competition likely grows out of a general socialization that attends to the individual over the collective. This dynamic can be expressed in different relationships. McGurl, for example, notes, "The most reliable source of negativity in the graduate workshop is no doubt other students—the competition—not the teacher" (17). Of course, some writers thrive in this environment, even as they accept its flaws; Delaney, for example, quotes Peter Ho Davies, who is a faculty member of the University of Michigan's Helen Zell's Writers' Program, as having remarked, "BU was a pretty competitive environment—a real and helpful spur to me, though I'm not sure it was an ideal environment for all."

adapted across the US (Bennett, “How Iowa Flattened Literature”).⁷³ I, myself, encountered the silent model in my first ever translator’s workshop-seminar during my undergraduate career at the University of Michigan. When I reflect on that experience, I suppose I’m largely left with feelings of ambivalence. My classmates’ feedback was, in many ways, valuable, but I also remember the sting of making errors in public, and the frustration of not being able to explain my choices. While I can’t recall if I inadvertently commented in a harmful way in my own critiques of others’ manuscripts, it’s safe to say that I most likely did. Most of all, I remember there not being all that much camaraderie among the workshops participants unless they had known one another beforehand. For that reason, when I finally began to teach my own translation workshop and participate in our graduate workshop in literary translation, I decided to search for alternative formats that might better facilitate community building through a sense of shared respect and trust.

Almost immediately, my research led me to June Jordan’s “Poetry for the People” workshops. From Jordan’s practice I learned strategies for building communities of trust within the workshop space “despite serious and sometimes conflictual baseline components of diversity: race, language, sexuality, class, age, and gender” (2). Moreover, following Jordan, I wanted to ensure that “student poets become teacher poets,” which meant overcoming my own tendencies to center my experience over those I was collaborating with (Jordan 2). These and other tenets of building collectivities became my new pedagogical foundation, which I brought into my own undergraduate classroom, as well as into the “Carrying Ourselves Across”: self-translation workshop.

⁷³ In his article “How Iowa Flattened Literature,” Bennet details how, following Engle’s tenure as director, the Iowa workshop model continued to spread, largely because “more than half of the second-wave programs, about 50 of which appeared by 1970, were founded by Iowa graduates.”

More recently, I have found Nowak's reflections on the workshops he had designed and facilitated for the Union of Radical Writers and the Worker Writer Schools to be particularly energizing, in large part because I believe that, in charting potential trajectories for translator collectives, we would be wise to draw on these alternative models for their politically-engaged practices. In a word, such workshops uphold collective emancipation as a horizon. In particular, I've been fascinated by Nowak's workshop design as a space to broach conversations about building "a society of free workers," a critical question he draws from Rancière:

How can one establish, in the intervals of servitude, the new time of liberation: not the insurrection of slaves but the advent of a new sociability between individuals who have already, each on his own, thrown off the servile passions that are indefinitely reproduced by the rhythm of work hours, the cycles of activity and rest, and the alternations of employment and unemployment? A society of free workers, you see. (quoted in Nowak 146).

As I reflect on this passage, a series of questions press into my mind: What good is poetry if it remains the terrain of those who can afford to write it? What good is literary translation if those who translate everyday are boxed out of its formal domains of practice? And what good is boxing in the field of literary translation, of holding it captive by means of credentialization, if such action only serves to strengthen the borders that keep "professionals" separate from the many?

In order to break down these domains, Nowak describes three principles according to which he organizes poetry workshops: "the first-person plural," "consonance," and "emergent solidarities." What binds these concepts together is the ways in which we might negotiate our messiness as individuals who often long for "self-determination"—which is particularly

important for participants who have forced to the margins of society, including immigrant taxi drivers and care workers—within the broader movement toward communal and translingual practice. It's in this sense, Nowak writes, that

Social poetics...seeks to reimagine the poetry workshop as a radical tactic by which the production of new poems by immigrant workers, migrant workers, refugee workers, and others are who are precariously under-and unemployed becomes the root and foundation of any new definitions and practices of working-class literature as well as a new tactic within global working-class resistance movements. (209)

For Nowak, the “first-person plural” characterizes a form of communal writing that doesn't dispense with the “first-person singular” form that is often utilized in workshop, but rather, seeks to weaves those “singulars” together. And this weaving together has never been more important, Nowak argues, as we face a series of intersecting crises that threatens to leave no life untouched. Poetry, Nowak argues, should not be engaged as something outside of the world or distinct from the social body, but rather as a tool of liberation that can remake the world through the first-person plural.

In order to reach this greater collective, Nowak argues, we must move to practices of “consonance”—of seeking out of those transformations between the individual and collective across time and space (202). As such, a creative politics of consonance positions the workshop as a space for negotiation, in which “individuals or tiny pairings of individuals” are conceived not as “movement leaders (a role already filled by alliteration) but as active, equal participants in the establishment of new solidarities of consonance” (203). Crucial, here, is that consonant solidarities are not a “conventional” notion in which “members are expected to sacrifice their own identities, desires and opinions for the good of the group” but rather, they are “reflective

solidarities,” that “recognize that members and participants are always insiders and outsiders” (Dean, quoted in Nowak 203). And this sense of comradeship, as I note in the introduction, is a relationship of cover and of cultivating refugia.

So what does this mean for workshops that take place within translator collectives? Perhaps we might start with the fact that, from the conversations I’ve had with members from the translators collectives cited above, as well as from their interviews, it’s clear that an informal, dialogical model is already the most popular option. Part of this is due to the fact that most of the collectives exist outside of an explicitly academic setting, which can often cast workshops in evaluative terms. Conversation and conviviality, then, are central to the workshops put on by translator collectives, with most of the workshops taking place in familiar space, like a member’s house or a nearby pub.

A workshop’s success, I’ve argued above, often depends upon a sense of trust shared amongst all participants. It’s no surprise, then, that almost every collective emerged from an already-established or emergent group of friends and/or colleagues. In the case of the Starling Bureau, the transition to a collective was facilitated by the bonds they had forged in years beforehand: “The fact that we were all friends certainly made it easier to get the collective rolling. We all have quite strong personalities—which provides a useful creative friction—but we’re very supportive of each other. It’s a good balance” (The Starling Bureau).⁷⁴ Of course, the implicit bonds of friendship and solidarity take work to build and maintain.

But what kind of explicit cultivation does relationship-building entail? As Press Press’s *Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, and Collaborative Cultural Work* reveals, working as a

⁷⁴ As members of the Starling Bureau put it, “Our collective is first and foremost about us, a group of close colleagues, and though we were keen to cover a variety of languages (seven), we felt that being able to work together and trust and support each other was more important than covering every ‘major’ language” (“CC: An Interview with The Starling Bureau”).

collective requires more than just being friends—it takes honest and deliberate communication around issues of hierarchy and accountability. It’s perhaps no surprise that they address the question of hierarchy in their first section on “groundwork”:

There are different forms of explicit and embodied hierarchies that may emerge in groups. Explicit hierarchies are ones that we may acknowledge or agree to, such as allowing certain group members to take on certain tasks on behalf of the group, while embodied hierarchies, which sometimes overlap with the explicit hierarchies, can be understood as forms of entitlement that are either unconsciously or consciously internalized by group members. When explicit hierarchies are not acknowledged, we revert to the embodied hierarchies that exist in the group. These may be based on socioeconomic categories, such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. It is crucial to build a culture of open and courageous communication between group members in order to be able to thoughtfully negotiate the tensions and anxieties that may arise around explicit and embodied hierarchies. If you regularly check in with group members and critically consider your role in the group, you may be able to preempt issues around social hierarchies that may arise. It’s also helpful to regularly reflect on your own role in the group: What roles do you find yourself in, intentionally and unintentionally? What conditions and identities allow you to take up space in the way that you do? What power do you hold? What kinds of situations and conversations make you feel comfort and discomfort?

In a word, simply pretending that hierarchies do not exist ensures only that we fall back on the social expectations that we are actively trying to rewrite in our collaborations. The key to

working together, then, remains a collective commitment to individual and group reflection, even, and perhaps most importantly, when it causes discomfort.

Luckily, because the translator's task is already, at least implicitly, an expression of the "first-person plural"—as translators must negotiate the voice of the author and their own—many of us are trained in strategies of creative mediation. After all, translation always occurs in those intermediary spaces between productive and reproductive, agentive and collaborator spheres. As I will outline in the next section, I am particularly interested in how we might explicitly weave the lives of translators together. Here, Nowak's three areas of experimentation might inform our future publishing practices, and so I give particular attention to communal translatorship, the embrace of "mutually-supportive practice" in place of competition, and the building solidarity within the wider communities we inhabit. In taking up these issues, we experiment with the collective as a creative mode that prioritizes community-making instead of production of translation for the purposes of consumption.

Horizons

In the spring of 2020, I had the chance to interview three literary translators about their experiences in their respective collectives: Jeremy Tiang (Cedilla & Co.), Anton Hur (Smoking Tigers), and Alex Zucker (Cedilla & Co.). [See appendices for full interviews.] While each interview is necessarily subjective, taken as a whole, they shed light on the engaging process of coming together in their communities, and what challenges lay ahead. In particular, I outlined two overlapping areas of concern for each interviewee to address, namely, how the collective model might: 1) help us to dream up alternative forms of communal translatorship and 2) to create a space of solidarity that might then be leveraged to imagine taking on activist work that might not be directly related to the texts we translate (that is, creates something akin to an

"affinity group" to pursue action in broader political movements). I offer their answers alongside my own answers about how the ETC engages these concerns.

Communal Translatorship

The issue of promoting communal translatorship—that is, presenting translations under a collective’s name instead of those of an individual or set of individuals—is a particularly thorny question for translators. This complication stems, in part, from translators’ historical invisibility and the positioning of their work as a “secondary” or “derivative” activity codified by laws in the West (Chamberlain 455). When confronted with this erasure within our current paradigm of authorship, it’s reasonable to assume that, as Michael Cronin notes, “a narrative of heroic individualism appears to be the only way of ensuring both professional recognition and remuneration and an acknowledgement of historical dues” (*Eco-Translation* 15). In this sense, while we are aware that authorship is a historically contingent construct, there remains a fear that leaning too far into the collaborative nature of translation might “run the risk of undoing the gains in the status of the translator” (Huss 451).⁷⁵

In our interview, Jeremy Tiang (Cedilla & Co.) relayed a similar sense of concern toward the use of a collective identifier when publishing translations. While he expressed nothing but

⁷⁵ Joanna Trzeciak Huss charts how the way we teach translation theory tends to reify the image of translation as a singular agent. Yet, she remarks, “Recent work – and nearly all of it is recent – has also endeavoured to show that in the same way that the myth of sole authorship of the literary text has both obscured the centrality of collaboration in its production (while underwriting its unity for hermeneutic investigation; see Stillinger 1991), the myth of the solitary literary translator has rendered collaboration with editors, publishers, informants and others largely invisible (Cordingley and Manning 2017)” (449). Cordingley and Manning, in particular, reveal the historical excision of collaborative translation in order to shore up a text’s singular authority, which, in turn, could further reinforce existing power structures.⁷⁵ “The many hands that had frequently contributed to the production of a translation,” write Cordingley and Manning, “were not replaced by a more expert, singular genius; rather, the discourses around translation sought to suppress them so as to posit the translator as surrogate author” (20).

admiration for collective workshops, especially Paper Republic's recent "Have a Go" project, which brought together 124 translators for a joint publication, he added:

I guess there are two things at odds here. When something is genuinely collaborative, it is very exciting and it's often more than the sum of its parts. But I think that bumps up against the other project in which a lot of people in the community are involved, which is increasing the visibility of the translators and, therefore, translation. By putting the translator's name on the cover, which I think, overall, has been great and necessary because by putting a face to the practice, you render the practice more visible and start more conversations about it. But it does elevate the translator as an individual.

Here, the proposition that putting a face to a translation humanizes the act is an important one, not in the least because humanizing translation means, in so many ways, attending to translation as a process and not simply a product. This squares with Tiang's likening of the translator's task to that of a performer who works with all who participate in the production to give a lasting, while at the same time ephemeral, quality. In doing so, Tiang underscores, that the most central thing is that all labor that goes into a translation be recognized without ceding sole credit to an individual.

In this sense, Tiang's concerns map onto what Cordingley and Manning frame as the stakes for translators who wish to engage in collective work:

When multiple translators work together, is the translator's authority and status multiplied? Is it divided, be it in symbolic, semantic, legal or financial terms? If the translator already suffers from a lesser authority, is this weakness increased by a plurality of translators? Discourses around collaborative translation regularly posit its many practices either as a galvanizing force or as a source of division. Might the recognition of

the collaborative aspect of translation, however, threaten the hard-won recognition of the translator's creativity? And while some voices in translation studies aspire for translators to be considered in terms comparable to those used for single authors, this has occurred at a moment when the very model of single authorship is being called into question. (25)

My own recommendation is that, in this moment of possibility, we move not from a position of loss—that is, the possibility of losing the hard-won visibility we've fought for—but that we seek to embrace the hopefulness that collaboration and collective translatorship can generate. Again, I in no way want to suggest the invocation of collaborative work is easy; in fact, it requires negotiation around issues of social and financial capital before the translation is undertaken, especially when individuals seek to publicize their own contribution in public spaces (Press Press).⁷⁶

Collective translatorship, then, is not simply a matter of translators being able to position their work within current authorship paradigms. As De Wachter notes, oftentimes there is systemic pressure (from markets, institutions, etc.) to attribute artworks to individuals, even when collaborators actively seek to promote their work in collective terms (15). Such resistance plays into the continual projection of genius onto singular figures and the desires that individualism creates and reinforces. As I've argued elsewhere, systemic problems requires systemic answers, namely, the creation of new paradigms, for, as Cronin ultimately contends,

⁷⁶ In their *Toolkit*, the members of Press Press write, "Ownership, authorship, and boundaries around the usage of the work towards personal career ends should be pre-negotiated before entering the project, cooperative, or working relationship. Make sure to address this at the beginning and throughout the project's duration. It's always helpful to ask your collaborators before using the material for personal career goals through various means and credit your collaborators in every use of the materials. Tensions often arise for group members who represent the broader group in settings outside of the group work itself. This is because those group members may be embodying the symbolic capital of the group itself. In order to navigate this tension, those group members can mention and center the contributions of their collaborators, share their direct contacts, and share any resources that emerge from the outside interactions with their group members who were not there. It's important to give space for each group member to represent their broader group in some outside setting that makes sense for that person."

“The individual assignation of identity and value in the liberal, utilitarian paradigm would seem then to be in obvious tension with the collective embrace of the relational that is seen as part of the utopian promise of translation” (15).

One example of this type of collective negotiation can be found in *chogwa zine*, a project founded by Smoking Tigers member So J. Lee. Each issue of *chogwa zine* features a single poem translated into multiple versions by a collection of translators, as well as a cover design based on an invited artist’s engagement with the poem. In general, the translators seek to bring out as many interpretations as possible, which are explained in So J.’s introduction to the zine as well as her marginal comments on each translator’s version. *Chogwa zine*, then, invites us to think about the multiplicity of translations that arise from any text, and the richness of interpretation that publishing in collaboration encourages. After all, as the publication’s website reads: “The existence of other translations can embolden us as translators, dare us to be a little cheekier. (But you should’ve used a different word...) Translating by could, not should. The more translations there are, the more room they create for play and experimentation” (*chogwa zine*). Overall, while the publication still presents individual translations, its publication format points toward one way to weave their voices together in the first-person plural.

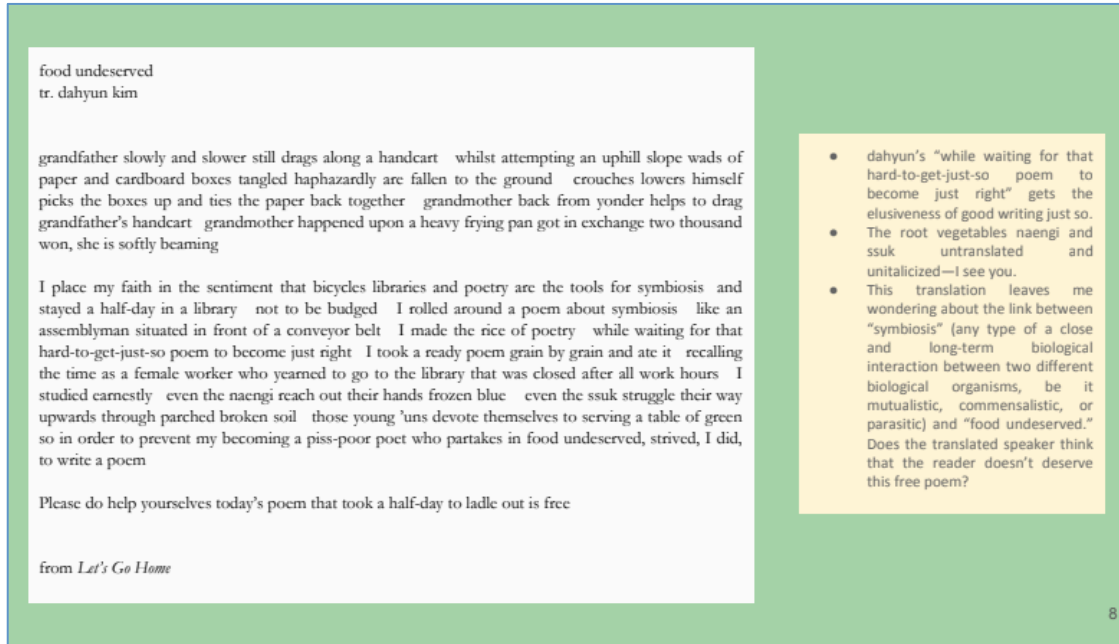


Figure 5.9. *chogwa zine* issue three (February 2020)

Within the ETC workshop, one of the solutions we've dreamed up is to print both the lead translator *and* "the Emergent Translators Collective" on the cover, with all our workshop participants named on the inside flap. When we have more time to dedicate to the project, we would like to introduce each publication with a collective statement on the process of workshopping the text in question, which will allow us to chronicle and document our history together. Similarly, we aim to name all forms of labor, and the estimated amount of time that went into that labor, in the credits. The figures below, for example, offer a *limited* preview of what such statements might look like. To be sure, there remains much room for experimentation in documenting and complicating efforts of collective labor and translatorship.

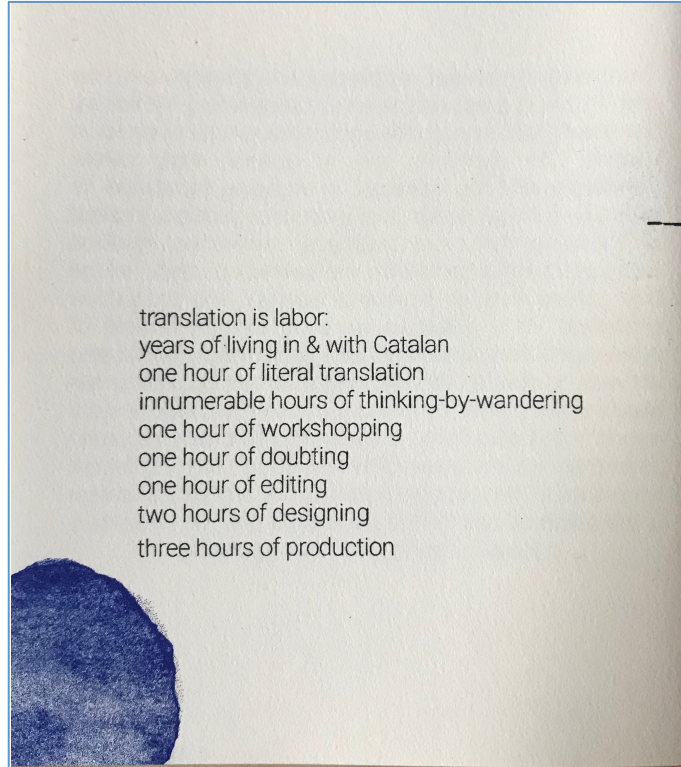


Figure 5.10. Back cover of *Cold to the Eye*

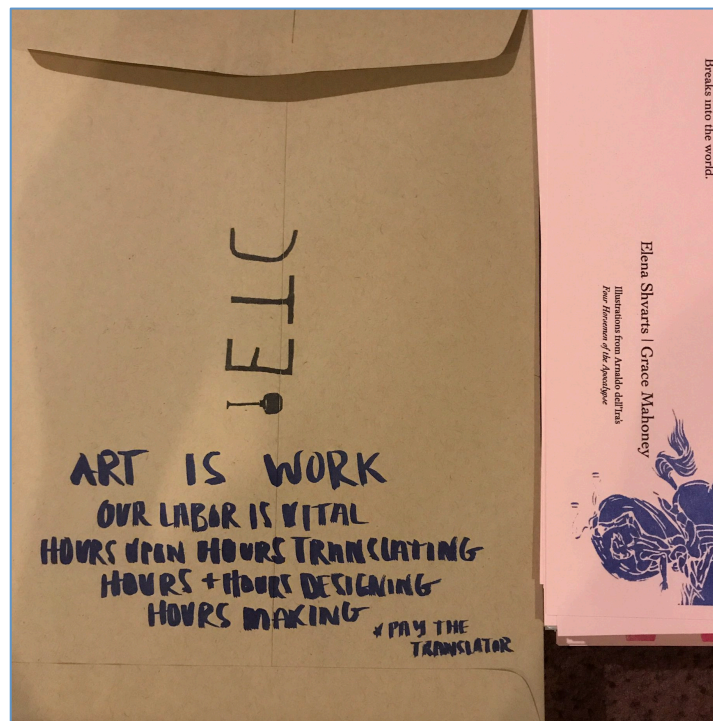


Figure 5.11. Envelope cover of *Polyphonia* issue two

Building Solidarity in the Collective

As I mentioned above, many of the collectives grew out of existing networks and friendships. This was certainly the case of the Smoking Tigers, whose members include Sophie Bowman, Victoria Caudel, Anton Hur, Agnel Joseph, Slin Jung, Stella Kim, Sandy Joosun Lee, So J. Lee, and Sung Ryu. In our interview, Anton Hur spoke of how the collective grew out years of informally working together in workshops in both Korea and the UK. Yet, as the collective wrote in a recent interview, members must learn how to “work with each other before working with each other. The ability to work together—manage expectations, respect boundaries and confidentiality, respect other people’s time—is a separate set of skills that have nothing to do with how fabulously bilingual you are and how easily you can change Korean words into English” (The Smoking Tigers).

Many of the collectives are still reassessing the limits of individual craftsmanship so that their projects aren’t just a collection of disparate parts but rather collaborations that are “more than the sum of its parts” (Tiang). In my interview with Alex Zucker, we tried to identify moments when this work was actively taking place. Curiously, Alex mentioned Kelley Hayes’s recent interview with Mariame Kaba, who has likewise inspired my own political trajectory, as a moment when he grasped just what “coming together” requires, namely, that we build relationships by doing things with people, and that we shouldn’t establish relationships just to have them do the things we desire of them (Zucker). Here, too, the logic of process over product is apparent—we don’t build community by wishing it into existence; we must, instead, invest ourselves in the process, even if that means centering feelings and interactions instead of the creation of a text or desired outcome (including the idea of the collective itself).

Cedilla & Co. pursues this mode of community building by creating space for both work and play. In particular, Alex spoke about a recent retreat that brought the members together in a cabin outside of the city. While all of the members were free to pursue their own projects during the day, they came together over dinner to discuss their experiences and plans. As Alex reports, “We had some kind of loose topics for discussion, but we also did a lot of personal sharing about our lives. We bought groceries together [...] That was really powerful for me, at least” (Zucker). Cultivating these everyday bonds not only strengthen the collaborative work that Cedilla & Co. take on (whether in coordinating readings, workshopping, or drawing up their newsletter), but also helps them when the question of competing for resources inevitably arises. While the members of Cedilla & Co. explicitly made sure that there were no overlapping language pairs at the outset—with the exception of Spanish—the depths of their commitment to one another also means, as Jeremy puts it, that “[they] could have dispensed with that regulation, with that precaution, and it would have been fine. I don’t think we would ever seen ourselves in competition with each other” (Tiang).

As a language-based collective, the Smoking Tigers cannot afford to ignore the systemic pressures that give rise to competition. In fact, they are often asked how their members negotiate intra-collective competition when they seek out funding, which he and Sophie, in a blog post on the subject, joking refer to as the “Hunger Games” situation (“On Being a Language-Specific Translator Collective”). Despite the discomfort that conversations might produce, they underscore that

in practice, we find that the positives of competition balance out the negatives. It is inspirational to see how creative people are in your language group, opening up new possibilities for your work. At least for Korean literature, which has been relatively

under-translated in the past, there's still much to work on and everyone's different tastes take them to different work; knowing what people are actually working on makes it feel less like we're in competition. And even if you "lose" to a Smoking Tiger, you can still bask in reflected glory, because at the end of the day, we're all friends who are genuinely glad to see each other succeed.

While I would bristle against the idea that competition is necessarily the source of creative interpretation—that is, that having to compete makes you “innovate”—I find hope in their commitment to basking in the shared glory of all the Smoking Tigers. And the fact that many translators I've had the pleasure of working with feel the same way, even when they are placed directly in competition with another for a contract or other funding, confirms that there is nothing “natural” about competition.

Finally, as Nowak's emphasis on poetry for *all* workers underscores, perhaps the most urgent challenge facing translators is how we might begin to build stronger networks of solidarity across our literary translator communities, so that we might extend those networks into larger community efforts for justice and equity. As Nowak writes,

The plural is a collective with an innate potential to embrace, augment, and amplify our imaginings in way impossible for the singular. If capitalism, neoliberalism, and empire place their sole emphasis on my and mine, the social (within any socialism and any social poetics) must insist on shifting emphases in the direction of the pronouns of the first-person plural, toward we and us and they, toward our, ours, and ourselves. The result of the social shift will be that my burden becomes our burden, my precarity becomes our precarity, my climate and Anthropocene becomes our climate and Anthropocene, my

multipayer health care becomes our single-payer healthcare, my future becomes our future, my joy becomes our joy. (177).

Again, here's where the larger meaning of "co-" as "collective, communal, common, cooperative, coordinated, combined" comes into play. In order to achieve the right conditions for a truly collaborative form of translatorship, we must engage in the struggle for a care-centered economy in our changing world. And because collectives may come to function as one kind of "political home," they are also spaces to engage with one another about the broader political issues that members are invested in.

Cedilla and Co. gives us one example of how such political communing might play out. As Alex recounted, it's not always easy to combine his anti-racist activism with his work as a translator:

Yes, I'm a translator and I've been doing social justice, on and off, since I was in college, before I was translating. But I've never felt like they've gone together that well. I don't feel like my translation work has all that much to do with that [social justice work] very much, and I'm not necessarily trying to make it do that, because the reason I translate is satisfying a different part of my brain. I'm using different aptitudes. Which is also not the same as the advocacy I've done for translators.

For Alex, there is no explicit reason to combine his translation work with his social justice work. Yet, as Cedilla and Co. has been meeting more frequently in more recent months, Alex has also invited his fellow members to participate in SURJ's decarceration campaign for racial and economic justice. As just about any new activist or organizer knows, calling people into a political campaign can be challenging—it takes courage to speak openly and vulnerably about personal political commitments in a social context where politics are often deemed "improper"

for polite and professional conversation. In this sense, the collective is a space outside of traditional workplace hierarchies where our political lives can enrich our translatorial practice.

For his part, Jeremy has found Alex's invitation into SURJ's campaign to be an important one. As Jeremy puts it,

For me personally, it's given me a way to feel like I belong here [in the US] a little more. You know, I'm not a citizen. I don't get a vote. I have really been feeling like I live here, but I don't really have a say in what's happening. This is one way of trying to make a small difference that needs making. And it's, I guess, really the only thing I can do. I think that it's an important thing to do in and of itself, but it's also important to us because it's important to Alex. (12)

I find the sentiment that Jeremy expresses in that last line to be particularly moving because it shows the extent to which solidarity can turn ideas into action. In a world where there are too many causes to address, sometimes the thing that calls us in is our bounds to those we are in community with. And, as Jeremy adds, "Even if it's not directly translation related, I do think that, like all artistic practice, the way you think and the totality of how you live your life is going to find its way into the art you make. And that includes translation" (6).

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to Nowak's concept of emergent solidarity as a transnational tactic for global transformation from below. I take inspiration from Nowak's writing workshops, which bring together workers from various trades, the majority of whom are immigrants, to take on communal writing projects that celebrate their crossings and struggles. In reflecting on these projects, Nowak remarks on how "workers want to tell their stories—stories about the past, present-day stories, stories that imagine different futures" (82). It's not outrageous, I believe, to think that forming collectives might also be a first step of transforming

what is so often held up as an “elite” occupation into a practice that could invite “the many”— literary translators, but also readers and writers from all walks of life—into the meaning-making process through multilingual translation and bookmaking workshops and performances.

Collectives, I hope, might be a place to welcome these everyday translators into the “literary” fold and, in so doing, cultivate the spaces of refuge we so clearly need.

Chapter VI
Cultivating Refuge:
Toward a Care-Centered Translation Practice⁷⁷

“One morning my birth is an ink line / in the language of plantations.”
Zaina Alsous, “Description de l’Égypte”

Climate breakdown is a crisis of separateness—a separateness, both real and imagined, that instantiates itself through the belief that an individual’s life is independent from the many peoples, animals, and lands that mark our earthly entanglement. A piercing claim. It’s piercing because it hurts; relinquishing one’s sense of untethered singularity is not only a difficult undertaking, but a potentially painful one; it is something many actively resist because it challenges the epistemological foundations of their very sense of self and place in the world. For central to the logic of separation is the dream of self-containment, the fantastical conceit that who one is exists entirely within themselves, within the closed borders of skin, and that one merely moves and acts in the world as opposed to becoming through their entanglements with it. It is precisely this logic of separation that upholds prevailing notions of “Nature” as something that exists apart from us, instead of a larger process of change and developing potentialities that humans participant in.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ My deepest gratitude goes to Ingrid Diran, who helped me to articulate my own emergent ideas about translation as a practice of cultivating refuge within a broader vocabulary of ecological thinking.

⁷⁸ Anna L. Tsing discusses this phenomenon in terms of what she calls “self-containment.” Tsing argues: “Scholars have imagined survival as the advancement of individual interests—whether ‘individuals’ are species, populations, organisms, or genes—human or otherwise. Consider the twin master sciences of the twentieth century, neoclassical

It's also piercing because this logic does real harm. The fantasy of apartness that contours (and limits) our socio-political imaginary has emerged from centuries of socialization through which relations premised on hierarchical domination have been imposed and thoroughly institutionalized. Not only are these embodied hierarchies gendered, but they are also racialized, ableist, and classed. Women and peoples of color have historically been cast as less “civilized”—as less than human and thus closer to wilderness—and this distorted positioning has long served to determine and justify hierarchical arrangements in which certain lives, experiences, forms of labor, and even claims to humanity and human rights have mattered more than others.⁷⁹ It has also, moreover, served to individuate the collective social ills it causes; the logic of separateness, that is, has always been integral to the process of blaming othered, oppressed, and dehumanized populations for the conditions of their own dehumanization, of authoritatively determining that the key to improving their lot can only reside somewhere within their self-contained being, and of affirming that those whose prosperity, privilege, and power are fundamentally bound up with the disempowerment of others bear no socially entangled responsibility to the latter. In the twenty-first century, the logic of separateness remains a formidable barrier to generating the kind of drastic political change required to substantively address the most existentially pressing threat facing humanity (but not only humanity) today. Even if we attempt to effect change in the narrow breadth of our own lives, our built environments and socio-economic infrastructures

economics and populations genetics. At the heart of each is the self-contained individual actor, out to maximize personal interests, whether for reproduction or wealth . . . Thinking through self-containment and thus the self-interest of individuals (at whatever scale) made it possible to ignore contamination” (*The Mushroom at the End of the World* 28).

⁷⁹ I find Press Press’s distinction between “explicit” and “embodied” hierarchies to be particularly helpful in our current moment. The artists who contributed to their *Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, and Collaborative Cultural Work* write, “There are different forms of explicit and embodied hierarchies that may emerge in groups. Explicit hierarchies are ones that we may acknowledge or agree to, such as allowing certain group members to take on certain tasks on behalf of the group, while embodied hierarchies, which sometimes overlap with the explicit hierarchies, can be understood as forms of entitlement that are either unconsciously or consciously internalized by group members. When explicit hierarchies are not acknowledged, we revert to the embodied hierarchies that exist in the group. These may be based on socioeconomic categories, such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and so on.”

continue to enforce distance and atomization, all the while keeping the origins of ecological collapse out of view, leading us to believe there is nothing we can meaningfully do to course correct; the problem is just “too big”—a “hyperobject,” in Timothy Morton’s term—for any one person to tackle on their own (1). It’s no wonder, then, that we have trouble imagining a better world as individuals—this has always been a collective task.

While our institutionalized separation ensures that many of us in the wealthy, developed nations of the Global North might not witness direct ecological devastation in our immediate environments, the destruction continues on, often under the guise of “development” in the Global South.⁸⁰ Multinational corporations, for example, are razing forests in the US, Southeast Asia, Romania, and Amazonia at an increasing rate, displacing both wildlife and the Indigenous peoples who have long stewarded the lands in order to convert “wild” spaces into extractive sites or modern-day plantations of monocrops like palm oil. (Another testament to the logic of entanglement: it is no small thing that deforestation is also a contributor to pandemics like that of COVID-19, which we are living—and dying—through as I write this essay.⁸¹) Oceans continue

⁸⁰ While there are, of course, infelicities in how the Global North/South binary plays out—the US, for example, is an example of one place where the binary is complicated by regional inequities and “underdevelopment”—I find the distinction generally useful as a way to underscore the power asymmetries between nations in the global context of climate breakdown (Hurley and Carr 99). In employing the term “Global South,” specifically, I draw on Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan, and Vidya Sarveswaran’s “three loci of enunciation”: “(1) The Global South as an entity that has been invented in the struggle between imperial global domination and decolonial forces which resist global designs through their emancipatory articulations. 2) The Global South as a geopolitical concept replacing the ‘Third World’ after the collapse of the Soviet Union. From this perspective, the Global South is the location of underdevelopment and emerging nations that need ‘support.’ 3) A third trajectory is the Global South within the North enacted by massive migration from Africa, Asia, South-Central America, the Caribbean, and the ‘former Soviet Union.’ The ‘manywheres’ of the ‘global’ South acts as a springboard for critical imaginations of environmental consciousness and race. The imbrications of the social and ecological in the Global South pose important questions for ecocriticism. The complex relationship between literary texts from developing regions of the world and the threatened environment that produced them suggests the need for new practices of reading both the texts themselves and the place of humans in nature more generally. *Ecocriticism of the Global South* examines the close relationship between ‘ecology and the politics of survival’ (to use the title of Vandana Shiva’s 1991 book). It takes on the task of articulating the socio-ecological plight of the world’s poor by drawing attention to the fact that the uneven patterns of neoliberal development in the Global South threaten the millions who depend upon access to natural resources for their survival” (2-3).

⁸¹ In his recent article “Coronavirus and the Need for Social Ecology,” E.G. Smith states, “Pandemics are ecological issues. Viral outbreaks often emerge at the intersection of human society and wildlife, and a relationship of

to warm, turning acidic and inhospitable to marine life in the process, while what in the past would be considered unprecedented coastal storms have today become perennial events. Droughts, desertification, and floods threaten to displace upward of 250 million people by 2050, a number much too large to imagine and yet still too conservative, considering that, since governmental bodies are dragging their feet on decarbonizing now, the scope of this impending crisis is likely to widen in the future (Brown 11). And the biodiversity crisis has clarified that (the sixth mass) extinction is not some far-off event, but something that we're living—and that we're not necessarily going to live—*through*. Trying to take all these realities in at once can be numbing. While communities in the Global South bear the worst of the breakdown, the world's largest polluting nations are also already feeling effects in the North: flooding and derecho, for example, have made farming nearly impossible across some states in the American Midwest. The institutionalized inhospitality of the logic of separateness has long justified the shortsighted instrumentalizing of the world and its resources by nations, corporations, and individuals for whom the reality of entanglement—the consequences (ecological, demographic, etc.) of treating the world as an endless reserve and realizing too late that it isn't—was never a primary concern. And such institutionalized inhospitality has been rooted in and justified by, among other things, the (historically white, male, bourgeois) fantasies of untethered individualism, by colonialist principles of property and ownership, and by hegemonic political economies designed to sanctify and protect the pursuit of profit above all else.

Crucially, dismantling these systems requires interrogating the very concept of borders—that which enacts and enforces separation in the first place. In lieu of an ecological framework

domination that the former has with the latter. [...] But this is not the fault of the animals, the bodies of which most of these microbes live harmlessly in without posing any particular danger to us. 'The problem,' according to *The Nation*, 'is the way that cutting down forests and expanding towns, cities, and industrial activities creates pathways for animal microbes to adapt to the human body.'"

that attains balance through diversity, cooperation, and care for our mutual interdependence, the Global North's is a paradigm predicated on the hierarchal logics of domination that enforce separation and give way to alienation (forced separateness alienates us from the essential togetherness of our being)—hierarchical logics that will only be more ruthlessly enforced in the midst of climate collapse if not challenged today. So challenge we must. But to truly challenge the same destructive logics (and their destructive consequences) that have brought us to this point means reckoning with the fact that we cannot do so within the epistemological and political confines of those same logics—"the master's tools," Audre Lorde famously noted, "will never dismantle the master's house" (102). A politics of separateness cannot bring us together, and together is the only way we can make it through this. Again, engaging in the process of unlearning and *disentangling* ourselves from the logic of separateness can be painful, but there are epistemological frameworks we can and should draw from. Here, it is helpful to take up what Harsha Walia calls the framework of border imperialism within the context of decolonization, which "offers a positive and concrete prefigurative vision . . . that necessitates undoing the borders between one another" (23-4). A supplementary definition comes from Nick Estes, who contends, "If settler colonialism is the elimination of the Native, decolonization is the structural and legal elimination of settler privilege and settler domination," with the understanding that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event ("Indigenous Socialism").⁸² With these definitions in mind, Walia's framework "disrupts the myth of Western benevolence toward migrants" and "depicts the processes by which the violences and precarities of displacement and migration are structurally created as well as maintained" (16).⁸³ In this sense, decolonization interrupts the

⁸² I borrow a version of this phrase from Patrick Wolf, whose *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Racism* argues that settler colonialism is reproduced primarily through institutions, especially legal codes.

⁸³ In her description of the function of "border imperialism," Harsha Walia identifies "four overlapping and concurrent structurings: first, the mass displacement of impoverished and colonized communities resulting from

logics of separation by upholding the needs of the collective over the colonial fantasies of individual agency and deservingness.

In a similar manner, Vandana Shiva explains how this separation has already taken particularly cruel shape amid climate breakdown as a function of “eco-apartheid,” which refers to the ecological separation of humans from nature in the mechanical, reductionist worldview, which is resulting in the multiplicity of the eco-crisis that is threatening human survival—climate catastrophe, species extinction, water depletion and pollution, desertification of our soils, and acidification and pollution of our oceans. It also refers to the apartheid created between corporations and citizens, between rich and poor on the basis of the appropriation of the Earth’s resources by a few and denial to the rest of their rights to access the Earth’s gifts for sustenance of all life, including human life. (“From Eco-Apartheid to Earth Democracy”)

While “most non-Western cultures have been based on the democracy of all life” (Shiva 265), it is clear that human exceptionalism suffuses our most intimate and deeply ingrained conceptions of life in the US today—a phenomenon that can be acutely observed in the reckless and insatiable abandon with which our government and its private-industry partners constantly pursue of extractive projects at home and abroad, from the Keystone Pipeline to the Iraq War, because such imperialist extraction is the basis upon which our modern systems of selective

asymmetrical relations of global power, and the simultaneous securitization of the border against those migrants whom capitalism and empire have displaced; second, the criminalization of migration with severe punishment and discipline of those deemed ‘alien’ or ‘illegal’; third, the entrenchment of a racialized hierarchy of citizenship by arbitrating who legitimately constitutes the nation-state; and fourth, the state-mediated exploitation of migrant labor, akin to conditions of slavery and servitude, by capitalist interests. While borders are understood as lines demarcating territory, an analysis of border imperialism interrogates the modes and networks of governance that determine how bodies will be included within the nation-state, and how territory will be controlled within and in conjunction with the dictates of global empire and transnational capitalism” (16-17).

abundance and ease are predicated.⁸⁴ These interlocking logics of separateness and extraction permeate our cultural lives as well, for “fossil fuels” and the dependencies they create “have also shaped our values, practices, habits, beliefs, and feelings,” especially in regard to our sense of autonomy and hypermobility (Szeman et al. 9-10). Even the most fundamental totem of American mythology—the homestead, “the house with a white picket fence,” a place to call “one’s own”—can only exist as a fantastical sanctuary, an imagined world apart, insofar as it can suppress its own dependence on the energetic fruits of extraction. This is not intended to minimize the efforts individuals and individual households take of their own accord to responsibly consume that which cannot be responsibly maintained; rather, it is meant to emphasize, once again, the fantastical and illusory nature of the logic of separateness, and to assert both the reality of our interdependent entanglements and, thus, the necessity of collective action. Taking meaningful action cannot be limited to individual acts; instead, we must work in solidarity to address the larger systems that made us believe that individual responsibility is the only mechanism of response and resistance in the first place.

The interlocking problem of collective survival, then, is a matter of recognizing interdependence and care within the context of nature as an always-emergent process, which anthropologist Anna L. Tsing, like Arundhati Roy, casts in terms of cover. With eyes locked on the shifting ruins of capitalism, Tsing argues that the increasingly rapid destruction of Holocene *refugia*—the forests, wetlands, and ecosystems that are shaped by and encourage biodiversity—is indicative of our presence in what scholars have called the “Anthropocene”: an age where “Man” has made his geological mark (“A Threat” 53-4). But the Anthropocene writ large might be better conceptualized as a place where there are no sites of refuge left at all—only temporary

⁸⁴ “Decolonization in the North,” Shiva explains, “is also essential because processes of wealth creation] simultaneously create poverty, processes of knowledge creation simultaneously generate ignorance, and processes for the creation of freedom simultaneously generate un-freedom” (264).

shelters that those with enough money and connections can seek out in the midst of collapse. Even at the ends of civilization, the logic of separateness is a fantasy. To put a fine point on it: at this moment, in 2020, around 1% of earth “is a barely livable hot zone,” and that number will likely climb to around 19% by 2070, if not sooner (Lustgarten). What this means is that a great many of us—a multi-species contingent—will have no bunker in which to seek shelter when breakdown becomes too difficult to bear.

As Walia suggests, we can begin this movement—towards a collective survival premised on care for each other and for our ecological interdependences—by acknowledging our own vulnerability and by undoing the borders between ourselves and others (24). By doing so, we begin to prefigure the world we hope to bring into being:

In the face of omnipresent physical and psychological colonialism, decolonization traverses the political and personal realms of our lives, and honors diverse articulations of nonhierarchical and nonoppressive association. Decolonization movements create an alternative to power through committed struggle against settler colonialism, border imperialism, capitalism, and oppression, as well as through concrete practices that center other ways of laboring, thinking, loving, stewarding, and living. Ultimately, decolonization grounds us in gratitude and humility through the realization that we are but one part of the land and its creation, and encourages us to constitute our kinship and movement networks based on shared affinities as well as responsible solidarities. (24-25)

In order to re-build sites of refuge for the present and future, we must tend to the open wounds that instituted this separation in the first place as we dream up new, sustainable systems in which inter- and intra-species and land-based care are prioritized. Translation can and must be integral to this process of dreaming and building. Because our desires are encoded and reproduced

through language, translation, as a linguistic and cultural practice, has been and continues to be an important terrain of struggle for dreaming up a future without border imperialism.

As literary translators in the US, it may seem difficult to understand our role in this process. After all, isn't the linguistic and cultural work we do already collaborative? Doesn't it already problematize borders? Isn't it already a form of "caring" for the text and its context? My answer to all of these questions is: yes . . . to some extent. The seeds of change are there, are here, within us. As translators, we are used to the exigencies of care: of tending to the text with concern and tenderness, and to the many relationships that translation incurs: authors, editors, publishers, readers, community members, and to other translators. Yet, if, as scholars of post-colonial translation have argued, translation is part of how our complicity in systems of domination is achieved, finding a different way to translate can be the path to shifting our relation to these same systems. And it is exactly these larger systems that we need re-evaluate. This, of course, is not to say that the "local" context doesn't matter; in fact, any larger change will only emerge through a bottom-up approach to the way we tend to our relations. All politics, after all, are local.

In the essay below, I will discuss two models of translation that are rooted in Tsing's theory of refugia: the first, a theory of "Plantationocene" translation that is oriented toward product and, as such, upholds the logic of separation by producing the appearance of commensurability and equivalence. In many ways, such thinking links up to the workings of metaphor—the Greek word for "translation"—that suggests that living things can be substituted for another—that you can transform one thing into another seemingly without remainder. But Plantationocene translation takes this substitution even farther, into the terrain of subtraction, which seeks to excise from a being—taken as an "asset"—its entangled context, and its human

and non-human connections that emerge from land-based relationships. Plantationocene translation, then, undergirds the colonial-capitalist matrix that structures so much of life today by foreclosing on care as a practice of cultivating land-based life across generations.

The second theory, an emergent, “messy,” and speculative approach to translation, which I align with cultivating refugia, is that which engages in the difficult demands of decolonization by de-metaphorizing translation. De-metaphorized translation does not attempt to equate terms, but rather stages encounters with difference, and as such, takes place within not only systems of linguistic transformation, but also cultural and political regimes of practice. My use of de-metaphorizing, in this case, attends not only to a process-oriented theory of translation that seeks to cultivate the human and non-human entanglements involved in transforming a text or concept across languages and time, but also to underscore the material context of the translator’s labor. In other words, that “the totality of how you live your life is going to find its way into the art you make” (Tiang). It stands, then, that if translators wish to pursue a practice of translation that cultivates refugia, they must not treat it as a metaphor, which allows the “easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization” as “yet another form of settler appropriation” (Tuck and Yang).⁸⁵ To de-metaphorize translation is to understand that a translator’s labor is not limited to ideas; instead, translators might also engage in the struggle for liberation by fighting alongside established and emerging movements for free migration, Indigenous and Black power,

⁸⁵ In “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang detail how “the metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or ‘settler moves to innocence,’ that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity” (1). “When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future” (3). A complicated inquiry within their argument is how settlers might work in coalition with indigenous peoples to uproot settler-colonialism. They write, “Clearly, we are advocates for the analysis of settler colonialism within education and education research and we position the work of Indigenous thinkers as central in unlocking the confounding aspects of public schooling. We, at least in part, want others to join us in these efforts, so that settler colonial structuring and Indigenous critiques of that structuring are no longer rendered invisible. Yet, this joining cannot be too easy, too open, too settled. Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict. There are parts of the decolonization project that are not easily absorbed by human rights or civil rights based approaches to educational equity” (3).

workers' rights, among many others, making good on "eco-poiesis" in the process. While dreaming together is critical to imagining a new world, it is, on its own, no substitute for action. Translating as a form of refuge-tending requires confronting and working within an ecological set of interdependencies, which means taking into account the "externalities—the social and environmental costs—of making artwork that concerns itself with ecology" (Brett Bloom and Nuno Sacramento).⁸⁶

More pointedly, translators might cultivate refugia by not only engaging with texts in an "ecologizing manner"—what Michael Cronin calls "eco-translation," or practices that interrogate human-induced climate change as they are expressed through literary formations—but also by cultivating alternative structures that promote collective meaning-making and collaboration—what I call "(e)co-translation"—that actively resist the fantasy of self-containment. As this essay will show, I see the seeds of eco-translation in the work of a number of activists and scholars who, while not always specifically engaging translation as a concept, nevertheless insist on care and collaboration as a central politic for the transition to a just socio-ecological future. Ultimately, I argue, both "eco-translation" and "(e)co-translation" contribute to our entanglement in the world by allowing us to take up translation as difficult, embodied practice that holds us accountable to the communities in which we work—that is, as rigorous praxis.

Separation Has a History: Plantationocene Translation

As I note above, the concept of the Anthropocene has gained increasing purchase in the past two decades and, in many ways, marks the endgame of a doctrine of human dominion over

⁸⁶ Brett Bloom and Nuno Sacramento break down their discussion guide "Breakdown: Questions for Evaluating Art that Concerns Itself with Ecology," into three parts: "1. To what extent does an artwork replicate or enact the same types of ecological relationships that it seeks to address? 2. What are the externalities—the social and the environmental costs—of making artwork that concerns itself with ecology? 3. What role does culture (art) have in shifting our society away from one that is fossil-fuel based towards whatever is emerging?" (3-8).

all earthly things; here, dominion demands separation as it institutes hierarchy to facilitate its reproduction. While Tsing has noted that the Anthropocene, as a framework, is not without its generative contradictions, she argues that it also obscures the vast systems of alienation that have effectively led to the global crisis of livability. The Anthropocene framework, then, inadvertently allows agents at the helm of those powerful systems to deem that *all* humans have had the same impact on the climate in an effort to retain control. As individuals, we are lead to believe that we are at equal fault—and that we must focus on our own consumption habits instead of reckoning with the harmful relations that grew out of colonialism and the Enlightenment from which global capitalism emerged and adapted.⁸⁷

In response, and in conversation with Jason Moore's and Andreas Malm's usage of the "Capitalocene," Tsing and Donna Haraway employ the term "Plantationocene" to "evoke the heritage of a particular set of histories involving what happened after the European invasion of the New World" (Haraway and Tsing 6). Such a framing dovetails into calls from Indigenous Studies scholars like Zoe Todd and Heather Davis, who locate the "beginning" of the Anthropocene during the colonization of the Americas, marked, as it was, by the genocide of Indigenous populations and their ways of life in order to pave the way for a new-world system based on the alienation of "Nature."⁸⁸ In effect, the problem we are facing, Haraway asserts, is

⁸⁷ As Tsing further explains, "There are two reasons that I use the word anyway. [...] The first is that it's the term that allows interdisciplinary conversation between natural scientists and humanists, and I think that conversation is essential to learning anything about what's going on in our planet these days. The second reason has to do with some of the very worst things about the term's Enlightenment legacy. The term appeals to a false universal of homogenous "Man," which was created with a white, Christian, heterosexual male person as the basis for the universal. Paying attention to that legacy can help us to figure out what's happening on the planet. It allows us to ask, for example, why so many landscape modification projects were made without thinking at all about what their effects might be on the people who live around them as well as local ecologies. That problematic legacy can help us focus in on the uneven, unequal features of planetary environmental issues" (*The Mushroom* 3).

⁸⁸ Speaking against the wider calls from institutional scientific communities to date the beginning of the Anthropocene to the mid-Twentieth century, anthropologists Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, citing an earlier proposition from geographers Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, locate the "golden spike" in the colonization of the Americas and the Columbian Exchange (1610). In their telling, which understands that land and body cannot be read apart, the regeneration of forests following the colonization of the Americas also signals a violent disappearing:

not a “species act,” in which all humans are equally culpable, but a “situated historical set of conjunctures [. . .] that break generations, that radically simplify ecologies, that drastically force labor in a mass way that creates a kind of global transformation and global wealth that is in and of itself genocidal and extinctionist” (4-5).

Instead of cultivating interdependence, the plantation, as both site and mode, determines a being’s (tree, human, frog) worth in relation to its status as an “asset” and then separates them into distinct fields or plantations, disposing of that which might threaten those proposed values (Tsing “A Threat,” 51-52). A being’s value, then, is translated, without attending to its context and *life*, within a system of profit. The plantation is a foundational zone of separation, and further reproduces separation through the forced production of commensurability via translation. Plantationocene translation, then, allows for the removal of life from whence it came under the assumption that it can *remain the same*, or be equivalent, in its separateness. For example, instead of honoring and participating in the natural relationships that develop among the diverse plants, frogs, aphids, and other organisms in a complex agricultural landscape, farmers are often locked into monoculture systems heavily regulated by dangerous herbicides and/or the difficult work carried out by migrants who are paid a pittance for their vital labor. It’s in this sense that the Plantationocene attends to the “radical simplification” of plantation economies: “the substitution of peoples, crops, microbes, and life forms; forced labor; and, crucially, the disordering of times of generation across species, including human beings (Haraway and Tsing 5).

the mass genocide of indigenous peoples in the Americas (766). Seen in this light, the dream of planting a billion trees to save us from climate breakdown is, in a way, just that—a dream. Only directly recognizing these uneven burdens of re-wilding can save us from a neo-Mathusian vision of eco-fascism, where the world’s poorest, often Black and brown peoples, are sacrificed for the “good” of humanity.

The consequence, Haraway argues, has been a “*radical interruption of the possibility of the care of generations* and, as Anna taught me, the breaking of the tie to place—that the capacity to love and care for place is radically incompatible with the plantation” (Haraway and Tsing 5, my emphasis). The plantation is a place devoid of care, and a system in which “the entanglements of living did not matter” (Tsing *The Mushroom*, 5). The version of translation that undergirds the plantation, that which provides the very conditions for the alienation of nature, is one that works according to the easy conversion of life into exchange value. Such a translation mode, then, eradicates entanglements, it ensures that no life can be fully lived, and that life on Earth might not be possible at all.

Furthermore, because this plantation system of relation “sponsors new ecologies of proliferation,” it isn’t simply bound to agricultural production; instead, it also undergirds the ways that we’re forced, as workers with various livelihoods, to see ourselves as laboring in often specialized, separate fields of concern and action for the accumulation of capital.⁸⁹ As Carrie Freshour and Brian Williams explain,

The plantation mode of social organization is founded on a perverse and inverse relationship between the foundational work necessary to life itself, and the uneven valuation of work, people, and places. In other words, this work has long been undervalued and underpaid largely because of who does this work and where they do it. (“Abolition in the Time of Covid-19”)

⁸⁹ Tying together the logics of dispossession, capital, and labor, Tsing writes, “I’ll just add two small points. One is to recall into the conversation anthropologist Sidney Mintz’s argument that plantation enslaved labor inspired factory wage labor through its model of discipline and alienation. Wage labor, which of course followed plantation labor, was modeled on two aspects of it, discipline and alienation, so that even with wage labor we live in that legacy of the plantation. The second point is the importance, which I think Donna already mentioned, of displacement and dispossession. In every case I can think of, plantations dispossess both Indigenous people and indigenous ecologies and bring in not only exotic plants but people from other places” (Tsing and Haraway 8).

In effect, those who perform labor in the essential fields that focus on communal care and that permit life as we know it to continue in the first place—often referred to as “social reproduction”—face the greatest burdens in making their own life livable.⁹⁰ “Care,” in this sense, “is not only the ‘hands-on’ care people do when directly looking after the physical and emotional needs of others. ‘Care’ is also an enduring social capacity and practice involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of human and non-human life” (Care Collective). To focus on care is to focus on the process—the unfolding—of our lives, not the products of our labor that are consumed without thought to their cultivation.⁹¹

By focusing on the plantation as a site of these colonial processes of alienation, Tsing traces a model of “scalability” out of which what we know as capitalism—and its perverse logic of growth at all costs—has developed.⁹² This expectation of “scaling up,” which Tsing argues informs not only economics, but also modern scientific research and the very idea of “Progress” itself, “requires that project elements be oblivious to the indeterminacies of encounter; that they allow smooth expansion. Thus, too, scalability banishes meaningful diversity, that is, diversity that might change things” (*The Mushroom* 38).

⁹⁰ Social Reproduction Theory seeks to account for the labor of care (often unpaid and almost always gendered) outside the “workplace” that enables life as we know it to exist and to read it into traditional Marxist notions of economic production. As Tithi Bhattacharya points out, “Capitalism, however, acknowledges productive labor for the market as the sole form of legitimate ‘work,’ while the tremendous amount of familial as well as communitarian work that goes on to sustain and reproduce the worker, or more specifically her labor power, is naturalized into nonexistence” (29).

⁹¹ Methodologically, Social Reproduction Theory fits well within the paradigm of translational care I attend to in later on in this chapter because it “displays an analytical irreverence to ‘visible facts’ and privileges ‘process’ instead. It is an approach that is not content to accept what seems like a visible, finished entity—in this case, our worker at the gates of her workplace—but interrogates the complex network of social processes and human relations that produces the conditions of existence for that entity” (Bhattacharya 28).

⁹² As Shiva notes, “The two simultaneously created ‘externalities’ of growth—environmental destruction and poverty creation—are then causally linked, not to the processes of growth, but to each other” (268).

Perhaps it is no surprise that the concept of translation figures directly into Tsing's discussions of scalability as a primary mechanism of capitalistic world-building projects. In discussing the formation of our global capitalist economy, she writes,

Capitalism is a translation machine for producing capital from all kinds of livelihoods, human and non-human. But not just any translation can be accepted into capitalism. The gathering it sponsors are not open-ended. An army of technicians and managers stand by to remove offending parts—and they have the power of courts and guns. (*The Mushroom* 63)

What Tsing draws attention to here is the way that capitalism “salvages” or incorporates particular knowledges and processes that lie outside of its remit to further the accumulation of capital.⁹³ Capitalism insists on a form of translation that moves directly from source to target without care for the living context, and there is violence in this reductiveness; it calls upon its participants to “remove offending parts” that threaten exchange value. Using the example of whaling as it was documented in Melville's *Pequod*, Tsing maps how “the conversion of indigenous knowledge”—that is, how the Indigenous crew harnessed long-established, communal practices to hunt whales—“into capitalist returns” (*The Mushroom* 64). Instead of acknowledging how these Indigenous knowledges worked as part of a larger system of complementarity based on reciprocal human engagement with non-human nature, they are excised and reworked in an effort to advance a capitalist world system that seeks, above all, to render Nature as “inert and manipulable” and thus suited for exploitation (Shiva 267).⁹⁴

⁹³ Tsing's concept of salvage accumulation reworks Marx's concept of “primitive accumulation” David Harvey's “accumulation by dispossession,” which seems particularly fitting within the framework of the Anthropocene as a site of absent refuge when positioned in contrast to the project of decolonization, which focuses on mass belonging.

⁹⁴ As Carolyn Merchant, quoted in Shiva's *Ecofeminism*, points out, this transformation of nature from a living, nurturing mother to inert and manipulable matter was eminently suited to the exploitation imperative of growing capitalism: “The removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature - the most far-reaching effect of the scientific revolution. Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert

Much “as with capitalism,” Tsing argues, “it is useful to consider science a translation machine” that contributes to this “excising” of diverse knowledge systems (*The Mushroom* 217).

Tsing continues,

It is machinic because a phalanx of teachers, technicians, and peer reviewers stands ready to chop off excess parts to hammer those that remain into their proper places. It is translation because its insights are drawn from diverse ways of life. Most scholars have studied the translational features of science only as they contribute to the machinic ones. [...] Translation helps them watch the elements of science come together into a unified system of knowledge and practice. (*The Mushroom* 217)

Tsing’s reflections invite us to think about the way that the quest for an overarching, shared language and framework via Science proposes an imagined universal that disposes of knowledges that don’t fit neatly into Western epistemologies. However, in making this important critique, Tsing fails to directly acknowledge that by using translation as a metaphor, she herself de-peoples an act this is itself a process of human-nonhuman entanglement. If translation is the work of a greater “machine,” those we typically call “translators” are incorporated into this system as the violent collaborators who allow these mechanisms to cleave place from thought. In some ways, this description feels apt: translators often work according to cultural and political norms, and those norms have, as in the case across historical periods, served imperial and nationalistic imaginaries. Yet, when translation remains a metaphorical concept, when it’s an act that just “happens” through the machine translation of capitalism and Science (and, as the example below reveals, Christian religious doctrine), the translator’s agency as well as the larger community of practitioners are also excised.

particles moved by external, rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. Moreover, as a conceptual framework, the mechanical order had associated with it a framework of values based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism” (267).

Working in solidarity must also mean working toward decolonization, the dismantling of borders, and land repatriation, for this framework, as Walia also argues, allows us to imagine what a cultivation of refugia—and a decolonial mode of translation—might entail.⁹⁵ After all, Tsing is quick to remind us of the violence of translation within a colonial (and post-colonial capitalist) framework, which squares with Eric Cheyfitz’s assertion that “translation was, and still is, the central act of European colonization and imperialism in America” that hinged on the logic of equivalence (104).⁹⁶ To make this connection clearer, I draw on Vanessa Watt’s articulation of “Indigenous Land-Thought” as a helpful entrance into the process—and continuing legacy—of excising inadmissible knowledges.⁹⁷ Here, too, Watts evokes the language of “translation”: “When an Indigenous cosmology is translated through a Euro-Western process, it necessitates a distinction between place and thought. The result of this distinction is a colonized interpretation of both place and thought, where land is simply dirt and thought is only

⁹⁵ Throughout this dissertation, I have asked myself: How do we move toward an eco-translational method that takes the decolonial call of “land back”—the decolonial call in its most literal form—as its primary goal? Of course, this is a question that could animate many dissertations. I, myself, am wary of giving a stable definition of decolonial translation, especially when directly related to texts, in part because, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang argue, “Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks” (3). Yet, it’s clear that as translators committed to tending to refuge, we must participate in Indigenous power movements to facilitate land repatriation, for the “land back” movement is also a movement for collective livability in its rejection of Western notions of property and exclusion.

⁹⁶ In his book *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan*, Cheyfitz draws out the violence of equivalence in the following passage: “The burden of this book is, of course, that translation was, and still is, the central act of European colonization and imperialism in the Americas. But let us epitomize here. As Stephan Greenblatt puts it, ‘the primal crime in the New World [the kidnapping of Native Americans to serve as interpreters] was committed in the interest of language’ (563), in the interest, precisely, of translation—that is, of *figuring* out the Indians in the way that we have read the master figuring out the slave in Douglass’s *Narrative*. There is no better paradigm for this process of translation, or figuring out, than the ritual reading of the Spanish *Requerimiento*, composed in 1513 and put into effect the following year, in which, without regard to problems in translation, the Indians were informed *in Spanish* of their place in the Catholic/Spanish imperium” (104).

⁹⁷ Shiva also draws this process of excision within the context of the American colonization: “He [scientist Robert Boyle] explicitly declared his intention of ridding the New England Indians of their absurd notions about the workings of nature. He attacked their perception of nature ‘as a kind of goddess,’ and argued that ‘the veneration, wherewith men are imbued for what they call nature, has been a discouraging impediment to the empire of man over the inferior creatures of God.’ ‘Man’s empire over the inferior creatures of God’ was thus substituted for the ‘earth family.’ This conceptual diminution was essential to the project of colonization and capitalism. The concept of an earth family excluded the possibilities of exploitation and domination, therefore a denial of the rights of nature and nature-based societies was essential in order to facilitate an uncontrolled right to exploitation and profits” (266).

possessed by humans” (32). Using the example of the “Sky Woman”—who falls from the sky onto the back of a turtle, until they began “to form the earth, the land becoming an extension of themselves”—Watts maps the ways that colonial modes of translation have flattened Indigenous cosmology to mere myth, thereby “removing non-human agency from what constitutes a society” (20). Conversely, Watts argues, the history of the Sky Woman is not “lore, myth, or legend,” and moving from that position, she diagrams how

human thought and action are therefore derived from a literal expression of particular places and historical events in Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe cosmologies. The agency that place possesses can be thought of in a similar way that Western thinkers locate agency in human beings. It follows that if, as Indigenous peoples, we are extensions of the very land we walk upon, then we have an obligation to maintain communication with it. (23)

Taking seriously this assemblage of non-human and human voices—of multiple agencies we might not always be able to make sense of within a Western epistemological framework—is fundamental to “assembling communal life,” which might be fashioned as its own kind of technology, as Nick Estes contends (“Water is Life”).

While Tsing doesn’t explicitly call upon decolonization as a strategy, she argues that that “science studies needs postcolonial theory” in order to counter a universalizing mode of translation situated within the confines of Western epistemology and modernization writ large. Such an orientation grapples with the fact that “translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism” (Niranjana 2).⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Post-colonial translation, as Christi Merrill writes, “Makes us aware of the implicit hierarchies operating between cultures, and asks how those involved in the production and reception of translation might challenge those disparities” (160). In this sense, post-colonial translation means a continued practice of visibilizing, contesting, and

Using a post-colonial, and an emergent decolonial, framework would allow those conceiving of an alternative process of meaning-making to draw out the messy processes of translation—“misfits as well as joins”—and “extend itself beyond the common sense of this self-imposed box” (Tsing *The Mushroom*, 217). Messy translation, then, is a highly generative process that “creates patches of incoherence and incompatibility”—like those generated by Indigenous Place-Thought—that are not meant to be overcome, and that interrupt dominant practices of translation that facilitate smooth expansion.⁹⁹ And messiness is, in itself, a refugia for translation.

Translational Refuge: Toward Mass-Belonging

As Tsing’s discussion of translation as a commensurability mechanism reveals, when translation is held captive in the realm of metaphor, it is excised from practice and thus its everyday grounding as embodied meaning-making. This metaphorical usage enables the act to be divested of life to facilitate the smooth transition of one thing to become another, seemingly without remainder (as the Plantationocene, as a mode, ensures). The logic of metaphor at work in the Plantationocene translation has been continuant with colonial violence, even as it extends beyond it through the links of global capitalism. Yet, translation can only be metaphorized when we insist on focusing on it as product instead of a living practice. And when we shift our attention to translation as an embodied process, we can begin to understand how it might work as

negotiating colonial difference through “disruptive” strategies, as well as understanding how coloniality, via the framework of modernity, operates in a global capitalist present.

⁹⁹ An increasing number of excellent studies have considered the uses of translation as a colonial technology of domination. Some of the first to do so include Tejaswini Niranjana’s *Siting Translation*, Vicente Rafael’s *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion under Early Spanish Rule*, Eric Cheyfitz’s *The Poetics of Imperialism*, Lydia Liu’s *Translingual Practice*, and Walter D. Mignolo’s *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*. In her article “Decolonial Translation in Daniel Caño’s *Stxaj no’ anima/Oración salvaje*,” Amy Olen draws on Walter D. Mignolo and Freya Schiwy’s research to further contextualize the Mesoamerican case: “‘Translation became the primary means for assimilating Mesoamerican indigenous peoples through conversion to Catholicism and the attempted erasure of Native spiritual belief systems.’ These scholars argue that translation, in this context, can be understood as ‘a social conflict between languages and cosmologies in hegemonic and subaltern positions, respectively’” (216).

a reparative gesture of care for the collective instead of harm committed for the few. When you de-metaphorize translation, when you situate it squarely in practice, it begins to work according to the logic of ecology—the relationships between relations—instead of equivalence, and our focus shifts to how organisms might co-exist amid and across difference. While Tsing warns that non-scalable projects—like her own of tracing the growth of Matsutake mushrooms that grow in the ruins of post-industrial forests and the ad-hoc, migrant laborers who collect them—can be “just as terrible in their effects as scalable ones,” it is in the non-scalable that she takes inspiration for “resurgence”—for understanding how to “negotiate life in human-damaged environments”—in a world of climate collapse (*The Mushroom* 131). Resurgence, in Tsing’s conceptualization, is the work of many organisms, communicating across difference—that is, an incommensurate practice of translation—to forge assemblages in the midst of disturbance and “precarity,” which she defines as “the condition of being vulnerable to others” (*The Mushroom* 20). And these assemblages, which are defined by their open-endedness instead of the self-containment of the species involved, “don’t just gather lifeways; they make them” (*The Mushroom* 23). Resurgence is predicated on difficult care in a crisis of separation, which has produced climate crisis as well as well as a crisis of disembodied translation that operates according to the logics of equivalence and substitution instead of care and entanglement. In this sense, “incommensurate” translation it is not merely socially reproductive, but socially recreative and resurgent.

While we are just now at the beginning of this reorientation toward an ecologically grounded translation practice, I am drawn to Tsing’s work because she insists on probing capitalist ruins for signs of resilience and for creative paths into the unknown. Resurgence requires translation to the extent that any movement toward collective, abundant life—life itself,

in the long run—cannot operate without negotiation across languages (human and non-human) and difference. And “if survival always involves others,” Tsing reminds us, “it is also necessarily subject to the indeterminacy of self-and-other transformations. We change through our collaborations within and across species” (*The Mushroom* 29). Ecologically grounded translation, through its very preoccupation with relatedness across difference—solidarity, in other words—must not seek to reconcile, but rather to provoke and entertain messiness. What’s more, translation, as a field, must endeavor to take shape within this emergent messiness, and work against the current notions of self-containment that inform disciplinary and professional norms. When we start teasing out translation as a necessary part of resurgence, we can begin dreaming of cultivating refugia. We can begin dreaming of ourselves, as translators, as not simply part of the problem—as part of the phalanx that ensures witting and resistant compliance—but as part of an answer.

These commitments to ecologizing literary texts and the contexts from which they emerge have already found expression in an unfalteringly intersectional ecopoetics whose practitioners seek to bear witness to environmental breakdown and its uneven burdens, while also speculatively performing renditions of the future.¹⁰⁰ We might take prison abolitionist and poet Zaina Alsous’s essay on “An Ecopoetics for Take Back the Land” as an imperative guide, with an unwavering recognition that the majority of literary translators in the US are settlers who can actively contribute to repairing the harmful legacies they’ve inherited—a difficult, critical project of solidarity that requires, as Tuck and Yang insist, continual unsettlement over

¹⁰⁰ Tracing the history of ecopoetics as a field, Jean-Thomas Tremblay asserts, “Although its trajectory periodically merges with that of ecological literary criticism or ecocriticism, ecopoetics, the critical practice, specifically resists a Romantic focus on pastoral and wildness in poetry criticism. This resistance intensifies in the last two decades of the 20th century, as ecopoetics evolves into an intersectional paradigm for evaluating the unevenly distributed effects of environmental degradation. Both creative and critical branches of ecopoetics depart from nature writing. Ecopoetics trades an Emersonian or Thoreauvian attention to sublime, untouched nature for sites of extraction, chemical spills, and other manifestations of ecosystemic violence” (“No More Nature: On Ecopoetics in the Anthropocene”).

reconciliation and recourse to metaphor. Alsous first calls upon Max Rameu's formulation of "Take Back the Land" to draw out the horizon: "The work of Take Back the Land is not fundamentally about the homeless, or even gentrification: it is fundamentally about the collective control over land" (*An Ecopoetics*). Then, drawing on Raquel Salas Rivera's poetic indictment of austerity politics and disaster capitalism in Puerto Rico and Layli Long Soldier's sonic incarnations of the "militant rumbling" of sacred land, Zaina Alsous sets down an incipient "poetic counter-mapping" through which to decolonize and re-occupy the lands in the midst of an "increasingly violent battle for homemaking under the tyranny of privatization" amidst climate disaster (*An Ecopoetics*). Taking up this work, she argues, requires recognizing that poetry and land are inseparable when addressing the crisis of settler-colonialism, for "to take back the land is to take back the language, to return to a not-yet-realized subjunctive territory of mass-belonging" (*An Ecopoetics for Take Back the Land*). Poetry, she believes, can be a powerful tool of calling in and calling together, allowing us to dismantle the borders that partition us and that stand in the way of collective action—a form of eco-poiesis.

I believe that this mass-belonging, while still speculative, can be cultivated through "eco-translation," which asks us to directly reorient our translatorial practices toward the goal of avoiding irreparable climate breakdown. In fact, cultivating refugia, and collectively bringing a livable world into being, will require "eco-translation," however emergent, at the outset. Madhu Kaza reminds us that despite "all of its predicaments, all the violence it may carry on its back, translation is an act of hospitality" (17). This renewed sense of hospitality, Kaza argues, must be

Conceived not as charity, not as condescension or even merely tolerance. A hospitality that recognizes both the dignity and the difference of the other. In this model, translation is not about assimilation—of the other language or the other body. The impossibility of

any particular translation is not a difficulty to be overcome, just as the difference of an immigrant, a refugee, or anyone deemed other is not a difference to be overcome, but rather greeted with *care*. Translation can be a practice of hospitality that acknowledges that the host will have to be changed by the encounter. We may unravel and have to remake ourselves with others. (17, my emphasis)

Critically, hospitality is not meaningful if it is only meant for the few, and if it is only acceptable after excision. After all, “Flight and refusal—to be fugitive—is to remain uncaptured and untamed or, put another way, unmappable by the settler imaginary. To fugitive in the poem is to tether language to militant refusal, a refusal to succumb to the ordered boundaries” (Alsous). To be fugitive is to resist easy assimilation, which enacts the same violence of excision associated with Plantationocene translation.

In order to extend Kaza’s concept of transformative hospitality into the realm of mass-belonging—a forging of assemblages across difference—we must return to Walia’s framework of border imperialism, which finds that the “immigration problem” we’re facing now is not a crisis of free movement, but rather of property and of militarized borders meant to protect those nations and peoples who have benefited and continue to benefit from resource pillaging abroad (17). While “mainstream discourses, and even some segments of the immigrant rights movement, extol Western generosity toward displaced migrants and remain silent about the root causes of migration,” a renewed form of hospitality recognizes that only fighting those root causes (namely, capitalism and imperialism) can ever bring about a truly welcoming practice by paying back debts owed in the form of mass-belonging (15). This is to say that any translational practice that wishes to practice difficult hospitality must be militant both on the page and in the

streets. Without a translational practice that actively counters the overarching systems of harm, all words risk ringing hollow.

Part and parcel to the “fugitive” flight of mass-belonging is the right to refuse translation—to refuse the “cutting” of translation practices still wedded to capitalism’s larger goal of consumption.¹⁰¹ In some respect, we might call the “patches” that Tsing evokes in her evocation of messy translation “untranslatables”: concepts that resist easy equivalence by their very situatedness. Noting the place of the untranslatable within the ecological principle of resilience, Michael Cronin, drawing on Emily Apter’s work, writes,

The untranslatable becomes a way of thinking about the specificity of languages and cultures, a call to attend to the singularity of written expression in particular places at particular times. One of the paradoxes of untranslatability, of course, is that you need more translation not less. You have to try harder to understand what the other is saying, devote more resources to the effort and value successful translation all the more when it is achieved, precisely because it is so difficult. (*Eco-Translation* 17)

Despite their opacity, untranslatables don’t preclude translation; instead, they invite further collaboration and negotiation between peoples and knowledge systems in a process that recognizes—instead of erasing—multiple, contingent agencies.¹⁰² And as the members of Antena Aire write in their “Manifesto for Ultratranslation,”

¹⁰¹ The tension between the local and the global—and of translation as a practice that accommodates difference or erases it—is clearly central to the coalition-work that building collectives, and a sense of camaraderie, demands. On the one hand, we understand that all politics is local. Yet, citing Naomi Klein’s work on indigenous struggles for climate justice, Cronin rightfully points out that “the local and global dimensions to struggles for language and translation rights are mutually reinforcing in the context of a political ecology of translation, adding a further meaning to the notion of ‘collaborative’ translation” (*Eco-Translation* 16-17). In this sense, envisioning the work of literary translation as located within collaborative relationships—of care work that respects the right of untranslatability as a right of the local—instead of the free production and circulation of texts means ensuring that translation will endure.

¹⁰² In regard to difference, Emily Apter, in conversation with Simona Bertacco, notes, “I wanted a cosmology that recognized the universe of comparison as more dark space than connective constellation; a cartography that added

Ultratranslation labors to translate the untranslatable, and also to preserve it: not to reduce the irreducible. Not to know but to acknowledge. Ultratranslation does not replace translation, nor does it seek to depose. They exist beside one another and concurrently, one feeding the other. Two bodies with the negative space of relation between them. Only in the geography of the margins, in the space between, only there. Ultratranslation is not translation unmoored from meaning, but translation that questions what and how meaning itself means. (2)

Translation, in this sense, becomes less a process of creating products for easy consumption and more a process of facilitating relationships.¹⁰³ An ecologically-focused practice of translation makes space for the “untranslatable”; after all, Tsing argues, “*Nature* emerge[s] in just this kind of mixed-up, unresolved translation” (*The Mushroom* 217).

If we are to begin to put care into our relations, and to see ourselves as a larger part of nature as a process of collective emergence and entanglement, we must participate in an ongoing imaging of a world that may lie beyond the Plantationocene and its colonial legacies. As I will explain, the outlines of this world have long existed in those fugitive spaces where mass-belonging has emerged as a necessary dream. Indeed, it is the very *oikos*—shared dwelling—in “eco,” that weds our conceptions of economy and ecology and that offers guidance to the process of entanglement. Our renewed attention to both will prove critical for reorienting translation as a

voids and subtracted from solids. This would entail pedagogical practices that did not just substitute ‘difference’ for cross-cultural equivalencies, but a way of thinking language opacity as philosophically, spatially, and temporally everywhere” (10).

¹⁰³ Cronin’s evocation of collaboration is critical and yet still limited in scope, as he tends to focus on digital environments, which, unlike in-person meetings, leave a more legible trace. In this respect, Cronin writes, “What the online collaborative debates reveal is that the more language resists translation, the more it invites translation. So we can advance the idea that the ability of language to survive and flourish over time and adapt to a multiplicity of pressures - the principle of resilience - lies in the endless unveiling of the incommensurable in language which calls for new translations, new accommodations, new ways of rendering what can only be rendered with difficulty” (*Eco-Translation* 19).

practice of cultivating refuge within a new socio-economic framework that undoes border imperialism and it evinces human and non-human care.

Beyond the Plantationocene: Translation Within a Care-Centered Economy

In her study *The Care-Centered Economy*, Ina Praetorius, tracing how the term *oikos*—as a mode of “human coexistence”—developed in Aristotle’s *Politics*, highlights how the “pervasive dichotomization” of Human/Nature that grew out of Hellenistic culture—with roots in even earlier formulations of agrarian society—has buttressed the idea of human independence and freedom that remains with us today (15).¹⁰⁴ Yet, as Praetorius notes,

In the history of Western explanations of the world, «the» human hardly ever meant all members of the species. Instead, what was meant were primarily or exclusively white adult propertied local men, who had themselves *cared for* by wives, male and female slaves, domestic servants, maids, menials, nannies, mothers, grandmothers, day care professionals, neighbors, care migrants, «domestic animals»: primarily in private households, which each conceptually are under the control of a «free» citizen and in which everyone’s needs are (should be) fulfilled so discreetly that the heads of the family more or less succeed in creating the appearance in the public sphere of being the independent beings virtually without needs which they fantasize themselves as being. (12, my emphasis)

¹⁰⁴ Praetorius’s study is extraordinarily robust for its length, though, due to the scope of my own argument, I must limit my own engagement with her exciting approach. On Aristotle, she goes on to write, “For Aristotle, who first systematically developed the term in his *Politics*, *oikos* is the basic institution of human coexistence, in which the «necessities of life» are produced and provided, without which people can «neither live nor live well.» That the pervasive dichotomization correlates with the interests of the (supposedly) independent citizen of the polis in conceiving of the *oikos* as a sphere in which dependents, controlled by masters, satisfy everyone’s need by working physically, ensure reproduction of the species, and thereby create their masters’ (supposed) freedom...” (15).

This division of the private sphere of feminized, racialized, and classed care labor that upholds the fantasy of an external public “economy” increasingly sedimented into an even more indomitable split between the work of meeting “human” need—increasingly fashioned as consumption—and a “higher virile sphere with the ostensibly self-regulating «free» market” for wealth accumulation that refused to recognize the “unpaid hands of women and colonized people working outside the ‘manufactures’” (16-20). Capitalism, as the ongoing realization of this fantasy of separateness, which requires the labor of many “unpaid hands,” integrates both social reproduction (uncompensated labor in the “household”) and production (undercompensated labor in the “workplace”) to extend, adapt, and transform this mode of “predatory exploitation of humanity and the natural world” (16).¹⁰⁵ The fiction of a free market economy rests on suppression of entanglement, that is, of the ecological relation between “free” and “unfree” or “productive” and “reproductive” spheres.

Approaching translation from an ecological standpoint—that is, seeing it as an embodied process of facilitating open-ended relationships across difference—requires careful reorientation toward a different kind of political economy, one that prioritizes forms of care work that have been historically devalued. We might start this process by acknowledging that the translator’s labor, often coded as feminized reproductive work, has also been invisibilized and devalued, which, again, falsely partitions economy from ecology. As Lori Chamberlain underscores, the anxiety and language of paternity have historically framed the work of translation both literally

¹⁰⁵ Further, Praetorius draws our attention to the ways that the forces of social reproduction were excised from economic models: “The failure of the Enlightenment to turn the mechanism of dichotomization itself on its head had particularly serious consequences in the form of the founding discourse of economic liberalism. Adam Smith (1723-1790) only rarely used the metaphor of the godlike «invisible hand» himself. But that in his theory of the «wealth of nations» he made the innumerable unpaid hands of women and colonized people working outside the «manufactures» (now commonly called «sectors of the economy»)—everything that today is being examined and conceptualized as care work, reproduction or «housewifization of women»—vanish into the fiction of a mechanism of supply and demand functioning automatically for the purpose of satisfying the needs of all, leads right up to the present day to the terrible distortions in economic theory construction which are the primary subject of this essay” (21).

and metaphorically: “The opposition between productive and reproductive work organizes the way a culture values work: this paradigm depicts originality or creativity in terms of paternity and authority, relegating the figure of the female to a variety of secondary roles” (455, 1988).¹⁰⁶ Critically, Chamberlain’s response to this dynamic isn’t simply to reverse the roles, which would require working within an unjust system, but subverting and dismantling the “conventional hierarchies” that uphold those very power asymmetries that are expressed through gender constructs (72, 1992). When we undermine the hierarchies that uphold separation, we can begin to understand the work of translation as that of shared power and of collaboration, and of accounting for the ecological dimensions of our work, which are normally relegated to the realm of externalities.¹⁰⁷

Like Chamberlain, Lawrence Venuti offers us insight into how literary translation, as a practice, has been figured as a secondary-status labor. First, Venuti draws out how a demand of fluency and legibility—“domesticating the text” to fit into dominant regimes of mean-making—erases the presence of the translator’s handiwork within the text itself. What’s more, the “translator’s invisibility is also partly determined by the individualistic conception of authorship that continues to prevail in Anglo-American culture,” whereby, “translation is defined as a second-order representation” that is meant to uphold the Author’s text as “original” and “authentic” (7). We see this hierarchical relationship further institutionalized “in the ambiguous

¹⁰⁶ Sherry Simon makes a parallel argument in her monograph *Gender in Translation*, which she calls a “heritage of double inferiority”: “Translators and women have historically been the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaidens to authors, women inferior to men” (1). “For feminist translation, fidelity is to be directed toward neither the author nor the reader, but toward the writing project—a project in which both writer and translator participate” (2).

¹⁰⁷ In their discussion guide “Breakdown: Questions for Evaluating Art that Concerns Itself with Ecology,” Brett Bloom and Nuno Sacramento ask six guiding questions to help artists determine an artwork’s ecological externalities: “1. Do you fly from one location to another to make your artwork? 2. Is your audience in multiple cities instead of where you live? What kinds of materials do you use in your art work? 4. Do you use technology, computers, search engines, power from the socket in the wall? 5. Have you taken the time to enumerate environmental costs of your artwork? How does all of this make you feel?” (5-7). Of note, of course, is that while a move to *digital* workshops will, overall, be less carbon-intensive than frequent travel, it is not, at this moment, sustainable either. We need a full move to decarbonize our electric grid.

and unfavorable legal status of translation, both in copyright law and in actual contractual arrangements” (8). By making these conditions known, Venuti evinces a “resistant” translation practice that seeks to “to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation” and promote

a strategic cultural intervention in the current state of world affairs, pitched against the hegemonic English-language nations and the unequal cultural exchanges in which they engage their global others. Foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations. (20)

But a strategy of “resistance,” while powerful in its initial critique, does not always offer a means for constructing—or prefiguring, as Walia would say—a better world. In fact, as Maria Tymoczko echoes, we are now bumping up against “the limitations of resistance as primarily a reactive rather than *proactive* form of activism” (vii, my emphasis).¹⁰⁸ As Tymoczko so eloquently directs us, “[A]ctivists cannot simply oppose or resist social and political constraints: they must also be able to initiate action, change direction, construct new goals, articulate new values, seek new paths,” which is largely what I am attempting to do in this dissertation. (viii).

This pivot from resistance to activism reflects a larger trend in the field of Translation Studies—that of figuring the translator from a passive to active agent.¹⁰⁹ Put otherwise, a translator that’s

¹⁰⁸ Tymoczko situates her reading of resistance within a post-colonial framework, which she divides in three “stages”: “Initially there is a tendency in postcolonial cultures to introject the colonizers’ values and standards. A second stage is marked by the tendency to reject those values and define the colonized culture’s identity in terms of polar oppositions to the culture of the colonizers. A third stage is marked by this sort of polarized thinking in favor of the attempt to define and autonomous cultural stance distinct from the colonizers, irrespective of the colonizing power’s approbation or condemnation. In a sense resistance as a form of ideological and programmatic translation can be compared to the second stage of postcolonial thinking. The polarized nature of resistance, where attention is focused on opposing the force of a defined and more powerful opponent, is an unnecessarily limited view of translation activism” (vii-viii).

¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Michaela Wolf, in her article “The Sociology of Translation and its ‘Activist Turn,’” builds on the work of Daniel Simeoni and argues for a reading of translation practice within the context of *habitus*. Of particular importance to the question of passivity is the “subservient” acceptance of norms, she argues: “Daniel Simeoni contends that over the centuries the translatorial *habitus* has contributed to the internalization of a submissive behavior, thus generating a low social status for translators. He argues that, as a result of continuous, historically-

activated in struggle and thus pressed to move from what Tymoczko cites as an “enterprise without predefined or well-defined targets” to a collectively decided-upon goal.¹¹⁰ And at a moment when the world is both metaphorically and literally on fire, when our communities are seeking new paths through climate breakdown, literary translators are well prepared to answer the call to act in loving, empathetic, and decisive ways—we are deft mediators, after all.

Yet, literary translators in the Global North would do well to understand that the same power systems that threaten livability by quantifying “worth” in terms of assets are also those that continue to undermine and undervalue the work of translation writ large by reducing it to machinic linguistic exchange or as a “cashed out” credential or skill on an academic CV.¹¹¹ Here plays out the “transcendental capitalist logic of equivalence, exchange, project, and credit” (Apter 1412). As translators in the US, our particular positionality—and our responsibility to others—in this process of cultural and political reorganization means that our learning will be a process of *unlearning*. This means that simply recognizing the historical devaluation of literary translation isn’t absolution: in fact, it stands that many of us in the US, by the very systems that we are socialized to embody and reproduce, have contributed to our very ecological undoing, and

conditioned acceptance of norms by translators, the translators’ willingness to accept these norms has had a decisive effect of the secondariness of translatorial activity as such (Simeoni 1998:6). This alleged subservience is also discussed by Moira Inghilleri” (135). Because translation is “necessarily bound up in within social contexts” and can never be neutral, “enhancing the concept [of *habitus*] with political and, consequently, ‘activist’ components is crucial so that it can better correspond to present needs in the translation field” (137).

¹¹⁰ On this point, Tymoczko remarks, “In the case of translation by contrast, there is no obvious opponent or ideological target to which resistance in general can be presumed to transfer. Case studies generated by Venuti and others at times discuss resistance as if the antagonist or opponent were obvious, but descriptive studies of translation using this terminology ascribe resistance in translation to diverse and highly variable opponents including colonialism, imperialism, neo-imperialism, capitalism, specific regimes such as that of the United States, various oppressive social conditions, the patriarch, bourgeois norms, Christianity and other religions, dominant discourses (in a variety of cultures), dominant literary conventions, dominant linguistic norms, and many others” (8, 2010).

¹¹¹ In *Eco-Translation*, Michael Cronin draws on the work of Ignacio García to underscore the changing economic terms according to which translators will work in the Machine Age: “The era of the professional translator as a language-transfer expert is nearing its end. Translation as a skill – which, as with all skills involved in writing, takes a long time to develop – is on the rise; translation as a profession is not. With language-transfer skills alone, the professional will collide with non-professionals taking their jobs (6)” (*Eco-Translation* 56).

so we must undo the layers of separation that allow us to obscure the harm we perpetuate. While many of us might already envision ourselves advancing refuge as an idea, our actions, our habits, and our confinement in systems of local and global competition often speak louder than our textual interventions. So while translating and advocating on behalf of those who most carry the uneven burdens of empire has and will continue to be critical, as an act in-and-of-itself, it will likely fall short if we refuse to confront the sources that have obscured the voices we seek to uphold in the first place (be it in the media, in publishing, etc.). Even the work of non-profit translation organizations, Mona Baker tells us, can be co-opted and commodified (463).¹¹² We must find, then, a way to adequately address what anthropologists Heather Davis and Zoe Todd describe as “the differentiations between world views, economies, and systems of power” that have, in so many ways, led to the very crisis we’re facing (768).

In his recent volume *Eco-Translation*, Michael Cronin offers broad direction in aligning Translation Studies as a discipline to this new political economy:

Translation Studies as one of the human and social sciences cannot remain immune to the ecological shift in many humanities and social science subjects. It needs to take seriously the idea that translation and translators do not exist in isolation but that they are 'an

¹¹² Baker teases out this dubious process of co-optation by focusing on the work of Translators Without Borders/Traducteurs Sans Frontières. She writes, “In between the amorphous groups of professional and non-professional translators who service a broad range of humanitarian and activist groups on the one hand and committed communities of professional translators on the other, there is a vast range of different types of groupings and associations, including some with less clearly defined agendas. One such group is Translators Without Borders/Traducteurs Sans Frontières, an offshoot of Eurotexte, a commercial translation agency based in Paris. Promoted as a not-for-profit association set up to provide free translations for humanitarian organizations, especially for Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, Translators Without Borders is nevertheless used by Eurotexte as a selling point for the agency, thus arguably commodifying the very idea of establishing political communities of action within the professional world of translation” (463). Thus, Eurotexte accumulates cultural capital from its mixed commercial and humanitarian practices. Important to this reading is that “at the same time the Eurotexte site proudly lists among its top clients numerous companies that are directly or indirectly implicated in the very atrocities that communities like Translators Without Borders are meant to be bringing to attention” (478). One cannot help think about sites like Words Without Borders, who accepts money from Amazon, something often informally spoken about as a “deal with the Devil” in translation communities, as well as Amazon’s very own literary translation publishing arm, Amazon Crossing, which sponsors numerous events at ALTA.

inextricable and integral part of a larger physical and living world' (Stibbe 2015: 7). Food security, climate justice, biodiversity loss, water depletion, energy security, linguicide, eco-migration, resource conflicts, global monocultures, are only some of the issues that will be at the heart of environmental debates in the twenty-first century and that will need to be addressed by scholars and practitioners of translation alike. (3)

Ecologies of language, attention, food, and landscape permit Cronin to problematize the familiar dichotomy of the local and global, and by visibilizing these ecologies, he underscores that translation is more than a pretty metaphor—it is firmly rooted in our everyday lives. Cronin pulls no punches when he concludes with his own call to action, from translation to eco-translational thinking, because eco-translation gets to the very question of the “viability of any future human presence on the planet” (*Eco-Translation* 492). In this sense, Cronin’s formulation of “eco-translation” gives a broad “target” for pulling together the many categories that Tymoczko says that “resistant translation” purports to confront. It also lays the initial framework for how we might refigure translation as resistance to translation as an act that permits us to imagine a better world as we bring it into being.

I would be hard-pressed to distill all of Cronin’s helpful analysis into a few paragraphs, considering how deftly he weaves together myriad voices to underscore the very sense of “relatedness” that is critical to any eco-translational project. It’s also worth noting that Cronin delves into many potential aspects of the eco-translator’s task that I simply do not have the space to address in this dissertation, but which will likely inform the work of others in the years to come.¹¹³ What I will draw attention to, then, is Cronin’s underlying method: In order to do draw

¹¹³ These topics include drawing out “the relationship between food and place” in an eco-sustainable way (chapter two); the “rehabilitation of the animal subject” (chapter three); the material consequences of virtual translation and localization (chapter four); and “the role of literature, particularly travel writing, in teasing out the relationship between ecology, travel, and translation” (chapter five).

these manifold concerns together, Cronin challenges the “tyranny of ends over means,” a rhetorical move that captures discourse around translation as primarily a product to be consumed, noting how it “relates to the more general concealment of the earth's resources that have made human action possible” (*Eco-translation* 3). It is this dedication to process—and relationships in transformation—that so roots him in the very human concerns of translation, even as he makes clear that eco-translation, as a practice, must not lose sight of its post-anthropocentric horizon.

Part and parcel to this historical insistence on product, Cronin argues, is that current practices of translation and localization are “indispensable in the development of foreign markets for goods and services is bound up with an ideology of infinite growth” (*Eco-Translation* 6). Cronin’s attention to this desire for growth, expressed more and more through the accumulation of data, recalls Tsing’s discussion of capitalism as a “translation machine” predicated on scalability without transformation. When the conditions of the market prize product over process, “a maximalist notion of translation productivity can favour the creation of monolingual monoculture that are deeply inimical to the viability of diverse knowledge spaces” (*The Mushroom* 6).

Literary translation, then, might often run counter to a capitalist model of growth and consumption, especially as it is far from a profitable venture and seeks to cultivate a value system that prioritizes human and non-human connection. Yet, in many ways, it is beholden to capitalist systems nonetheless. Much as Tsing describes Indigenous knowledges being fashioned as a link in the greater supply chain of capitalism, so too can the knowledges used to produce translations be “salvaged” for the greater project of capitalist expansion. What’s more, literary translation has historically paved the roads of circulation and has greased the wheels of empire. While many translators from the Global North currently labor to improve the world through our

multilingual, intercultural work, the carbon-intensive lifestyles we continue living—including the *frequent* travel we often undertake to do our work “responsibly”—may actually undercut our efforts and, ultimately, our authority to responsibly translate at all.

I do believe, however, that our ideas and experiences are necessary to effectuate the kind of transformation that a livable future demands. As translators, we are used to the exigencies of care: of tending to the text with concern and tenderness, and to the many relationships that translation incurs: authors, editors, publishers, readers, community members, and to other translators. Yet, in order to transform literary translation into the cultivation of refuge, we need to do away with the “tyranny of ends over means” that places the circulation of goods and money above people, and move to models of translation situated within a framework of care. Positioning translation, literary or otherwise, as care work, permits a preliminary movement toward a de-growth (or post-growth) approach to our labor in that it centers community-making as the goal of translation with the understanding that community-making strengthens our bond to one another, to the land, and to the vital resources we depend upon.¹¹⁴ In broad terms, this means that those participating in the translation process must constantly reflect on how we create with one another, how we uphold or dismantle hierarchies as we work, how we collectively decide upon the goals and strategies of our translations, what processes and resources we use to create and distribute our work, and how we hold one another accountable for the effects of translation in the communities we live in.

In her essay “Care work as Commons: Toward a Feminist Degrowth Agenda,” Bengi Akbulut underscores the ways that a reorientation to care-labor and care-centered communities also involves caring for the earth, not only by its scope, but also because it tends to be low-

¹¹⁴ For the purposes of my argument, I draw on Kallis’ definition of “de-growth”: a “critique of the ecological consequence of economic growth” that understands that 1) “the costs of growth exceeds its benefits” and 2) “growth has always been based on exploitation” (Kallis 1).

carbon labor: jobs that “don’t extract anything from the land, don’t create any new waste, and have a very limited impact on the environment” (Isser).¹¹⁵ Borrowing from Camille Barbagallo and Sylvia Federici, Akubulut explains,

The most straightforward (yet admittedly narrow) definition of care work is labor performed to fulfill the needs of those who cannot do so themselves, such as food provision, cleaning, health, etc. Broader understandings of care work stress that such work is often performed in tandem with and complementary to other types of (unpaid) reproductive labor and cannot be considered separate from the broader sphere of social reproduction. [...] Especially when it is performed as unpaid and flexible labor, care work serves to lower the monetary cost of labor’s reproduction for capital.

Literary translation, by its creative reproductive nature, and by its systematic under-valuing by larger institutions, appears to fit into this very category. To be sure, literary translation is not as urgent as tending to the immediate needs of others (nursing, healing, feeding, etc.). But there is potential in literature to re-awaken us to the concept of freedom and liberation, and there is even more potential in translating literature to bring together even more people to make good on that liberatory demand.

In this sense, we might constantly interweave these two forms of care work—one within the text, the other outside it—as a matter of embodied practice. Audre Lorde gives us a sense of this task in her essay “Poetry in Not a Luxury”:

¹¹⁵ Mindy Isser writes, “The lowest carbon jobs are the ones that don’t extract anything from the land, don’t create any new waste and have a very limited impact on the environment—an idea put forward by writers and activists Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor, along with striking West Virginia teacher Emily Comer. These jobs include teaching, nurturing and caring— invaluable jobs like cleaning homes and caring for children, seniors and those living with disabilities. Care work is generally ignored or looked down upon because it doesn’t create commodities that can be bought and sold, and because it is typically done by women. The shift towards low-carbon work should necessarily include a dramatic expansion of care work. But in order to make that possible, the standards and conditions of that work must be urgently raised” (“A Low-Carbon Economy Will Be Built By Nannies, Caregivers”).

The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mothers in each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand, the implementation of that freedom. However, experience has taught us that the action in the now is also always necessary. Our children cannot dream unless they live, they cannot live unless they are nourished, and who else will feed them the real food without which their dreams will be no different from ours?

What I take from Lorde's insistence on careful action is that our poetry and our revolutionary reflection, bound as they are to the prefiguration of a better world, will never bring that world into being on their own. We must move from reaction to action, as Tymoczko would say, and doing so requires lived struggle performed in solidarity with others. For many of us who have worked solitarily for most of our careers, the challenge becomes finding ways to begin this many-bodied work. These goals once again map onto those of Antena Aire's "Ultratranslation," which asserts, "Ultratranslation lures translators out of invisibility and onto the streets, into the margins, into the footnotes, into annotation, into activism, into failure and into irrationality, the intuitive, a channeling Ultratranslation is built from radicalism, ultraism, anti-racism, anti-superiority, antiassimilation" ("Manifesto"). Taking up this radical embodiment of the translator's task—of the translator's body and context as a source of critical action—is one step toward acknowledging the dense ecologies of translatorial practice.

Clive Scott's notion of translation provides further insight into how we might "ecologize" the text. Scott draws our attention to this process by asserting that a *translational* ecopoetics must center a way of "living in the environment of the text" that is in a state of "constant reciprocal change. Translation is the tracking of that dynamic" (63). For Scott, "The challenge

we face is how to become beings (embedded) *in the* environment, i.e. how to be constituted as being by our relationship with the environment, rather than inhabitants or occupants *of an* environment” (61). We take up this challenge, in literature, by first *undoing* a Christian inheritance of dominion, and the dualisms between humanity and environment, culture and nature, and the Cartesian divide between sensation and intellect that structure our interpretations (61). And from this position, translation, as a redoubled “ecologizing activity,” insists on cultivating an uncomfortable openness toward the self “in that it alerts us to the reorientation of our being on becoming, on a dynamic of being which never leaves us in the same place. Meaning and identity are prison houses” (77). Without continued translation—without multiple “foraging” versions—Scott argues, literature risks petrification. While such a shelter might provide concrete cover, it is far from emancipative.¹¹⁶

To bring this essay to a close, I’ll suggest that we might extend the ecological potential of literary translation by thinking not only in terms of multiple “foraging” versions, but also of multiple foraging bodies working to care for the texts and for one another—working toward Alsous’s concept of mass-belonging. Tending to refuge, then, requires reworking assumptions that we have about others, ourselves, and the land and living things around us. And the stakes become increasingly higher when we prepare for a present and future of mass climate migration. Much as we might draw from Lorde’s articulation of poeisis as the weaving of imagination and practice, we can approach (e)co-translation as a process of cultivation and care, of a making and remaking of the possible.

What we need now are places where we might pursue this nascent remaking together,

¹¹⁶ Translation is one mechanism for incorporating and building outward a community. Emmanuel Alloa, in his article “The Inorganic Community,” cites Jean Luc Nancy on this point: “If the word *fascism* stands, as Nancy has it, for the ‘irresistible temptation toward the completion of community,’ what remains open query is whether to think of community as essentially incomplete, as incapable of merging into unity” (76).

where we can practice “(e)co-translation” as the art of translating in community, that is, a working of theory of cooperative translation as well as an instance of it. Because care work is critical to the reproduction of life and livability writ large, it can also be leveraged for collective liberation by “reorganizing the terrain of the commons” (De Angelis and Harvie, cited in “Care work as Commons”). While “existing practices of communing care can be found in radical childcare cooperatives, neighborhood care collectives, and community-based care provisions,” it is clear that we’ll need a dramatic expansion of care work in order to transition to a sustainable way of life (Akbulut). Much as care collectives and neighborhood assemblies have become spaces for the incubation of radical care methods, we might think of collectives as spaces to practice hospitality as a living-with and a living-across-difference. Translator collectives, then, are not just formations that lead to more rigorous collaborative practice, but also spaces where we might cultivate stronger relationships amongst ourselves while practicing emergent—and resurgent—solidarities with the many.

Chapter VII:

Coda: May We Care, May We Repair, May We Liberate Ourselves

I write from a future where care, as a living, guiding practice, is taking hold.

It's 2033, and the Earth is still heating. We're witnessing ecological collapse even as we build a better world in place of the old (the two are not separate, though the line between them grows). On any given day, we mourn the loss of our human and nonhuman kin, those who pass now amid the sixth mass extinction and those who've passed before. We draw our strength from remembering them, and those commitments lend tenderness to our evening poetry: *may we care, may we repair, and may we liberate ourselves*. The warm candlelight I call forth with matches at night helps me make good on each word—may we care, I whisper—and urges me into the struggle. It is still the time of monsters, and so our responsibility to one another grows fiercely each day.

Here in the US, the fight to decarbonize and decolonize our ways of life still rages. Protests are an everyday occurrence. When our government passed the Green New Deal legislative framework, I felt a stinging hope—we might just act in time. In some ways, however, we were still much too late; the difficult process of forecasting breakdown led us to believe that we could save more of our world than was actually possible. But we may have just avoided the worst of it.

In 2018 the United Nations told us that no less than a *complete transformation* of the way we lived by 2030 would stave off broad ecosystem collapse starting in the 2030s-2050s.¹¹⁷ Scientists predicted that the abrupt collapse of global biodiversity was set to begin before the end of the 2020s (“The Projected Timing of Abrupt Ecological Disruption from Climate Change”).¹¹⁸ Others, like Professor Sandra Díaz, who contributed to the landmark 2019 report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, affirmed that “biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people are our common heritage and humanity’s most important life-supporting ‘safety net.’ But our safety net is stretched almost to breaking point” (“UN Report: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’”). At that moment, we were clearly facing “biological annihilation.”¹¹⁹ What’s more, with the desertification of arable, fertile land and the increasing failure of crops due to climate instability, global famine looked to be a near future certainty (“Climate Change is Here—and It Looks Like Starvation”). And this wasn’t to speak of the potential war and social unrest that might arise from such dire conditions around the world. In 2020, when many of the world’s wealthiest humans were just waking up or being

¹¹⁷ The IPCC, in their strict and stolid prose, calls for revolution: “Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems (high confidence). These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options (medium confidence)” (“Global Warming of 1.5°C”).

¹¹⁸ In their article in *Nature*, Christopher H. Trisos, Cory Merow, and Alex L. Pigot write, “As anthropogenic climate change continues the risks to biodiversity will increase over time, with future projections indicating that a potentially catastrophic loss of global biodiversity is on the horizon. [...] Under a high-emissions scenario (representative concentration pathway (RCP) 8.5), such abrupt exposure events begin before 2030 in tropical oceans and spread to tropical forests and higher latitudes by 2050” (“The Projected Timing of Abrupt Ecological Disruption from Climate Change”).

¹¹⁹ Gerardo Ceballos, Paul R. Ehrlich, and Rodolfo Dirzo write, “The strong focus on species extinctions, a critical aspect of the contemporary pulse of biological extinction, leads to a common misimpression that Earth’s biota is not immediately threatened, just slowly entering an episode of major biodiversity loss. This view overlooks the current trends of population declines and extinctions. Using a sample of 27,600 terrestrial vertebrate species, and a more detailed analysis of 177 mammal species, we show the extremely high degree of population decay in vertebrates, even in common “species of low concern.” Dwindling population sizes and range shrinkages amount to a massive anthropogenic erosion of biodiversity and of the ecosystem services essential to civilization. This “biological annihilation” underlines the seriousness for humanity of Earth’s ongoing sixth mass extinction event” (“Biological Annihilation”).

pulled into the cycle of nostalgia for a lost world and despair for the future, those in the global south were already dying.

It was painful getting here. It took endless protest in the heat. It took leaning into our collective power, which, for many, came through unionization. It took us reflecting on our lives and refusing the self-deception. Many of those in power didn't have the stomach for it, and so we pushed them out to make room for those who *could* lead.

Engaging in dissent has been, for me, like building a muscle; tearing gives way to a new sense of strength. I remember how my stomach hurt as those same leaders who had ignored the growing crisis for years told us that the goals set out by the UN were impossible. At the time, my University's President dismissed all efforts to divest from fossil fuels, and arrested students who were protesting his inaction. The worst of it: Many on campus, those we thought stood by us, didn't give it a second thought. But there were bright spots, as always. I remember those early efforts, in 2020, of what would grow into the largest sustained campaign for liberation that the US had ever seen, when in the midst of a pandemic the fight against systemic racism erupted into the streets. For what felt like the first time, many of us tarried with the legacies of violence that we had inherited, that we had reproduced both consciously and not, and began moving into the realm of praxis. When we realized that, as the saying goes, the only way out of our mess was through, and the only way through was *together*.¹²⁰ For my own part, I had realized earlier that my fantasies of being a celebrated literary translator were hollow; no matter how much I worked, no matter how much I published, I only felt more disconnected from that which mattered: the relationships that animated my life. I gave myself permission to pursue togetherness, to be part

¹²⁰ A sentiment that emerged in John Green's re-working of Robert Frost's famed line in his poem "Servant of Servants."

of a fighting crowd, even though it meant stepping out of roles that felt most comfortable at the time. I began to really listen, and my own sense of self was transformed in the process.

While we're certainly not on the other side, we have leave to dream more fully now. Some leaders have already grown too comfortable and others are downright genocidal, while many of us argue that the Green New Deal legislation is not radical enough—that nothing can be radical enough if we don't reach the target to hit net zero carbon by 2036.¹²¹ Change erupts from below. In some sense, we're still dealing with the discourses of climate delay that plagued political circles in the first two decades of this century: redirecting responsibility, pushing for non-transformative solutions, emphasizing the downsides of transformative change, and surrender (Lamb et al. 2).¹²² Sometimes I'm still caught in cycles of surrender, when all I'd really like to do is end my life with the “Quietus” suicide kit that appeared in P.D. James' novel *Children of Men*. I keep fighting, however, because delays in transition here in the global north quite literally mean certain, painful death for those in more precarious places: whole islands are being swallowed up by the sea while our government officials argue over amendments instead of fully electrifying our grid and offering safe passage to climate migrants. When I turn up to a

¹²¹ I situate my own vision within the speculative context laid out by Kate Aronoff, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Adana Cohen, and Thea Riofrancos in their work *A Planet to Win: Why We need A Green New Deal*. They begin their argument for a Green New Deal by describing the aftermath of a storm in New Orleans in 2027, when Green New Deal legislation (like the creation of a Coastal Protection Plan and a Jobs Guarantee that employs relief workers) has “softened the blow” of the storm (1-3). Their larger point is opening with such a hopeful scenario is that “we rarely see climate narratives that combine scientific realism with positive political and technological change” (3). I see my own work as a contribution to this positive vision.

¹²² As William Lamb and his nine co-authors write in their article “Discourses of Climate Delay,” “As the public conversation on climate change evolves, so too does the sophistication and range of arguments used to downplay or discount the need for action (McKie, 2019; Norgaard, 2011). A mainstay of this counter-movement has been outright denial of the reality or human causation of climate change (Farrell et al., 2019), supplemented by climate-impact scepticism (Harvey et al., 2018) and ad hominem attacks on scientists and the scientific consensus (Oreskes & Conway, 2011). A fourth strategy has received relatively little attention to date: policy-focused discourses that exploit contemporary discussions on what action should be taken, how fast, who bears responsibility and where costs and benefits should be allocated (Bohr, 2016; Jacques & Knox, 2016; McKie, 2019). We call these ‘climate delay’ discourses, since they often lead to deadlock or a sense that there are intractable obstacles to taking action. Climate delay discourses comprise many separate strategies, some of which have already been identified, such as individualism (Maniates, 2001), technological optimism (Peeters et al., 2016), fossil fuel greenwashing (Sheehan, 2018) and appeals to social justice and economic costs (Bohr, 2016; Jacques & Knox, 2016)” (1).

protest, when I scream in streets with my co-strugglers, I am reminded of Arundathi Roy's contention that "radical change cannot and will not be negotiated by governments; it can only be enforced by people. By the *public*. A public who can link hands *across* national borders" (26). My own hands are sweaty from holding on so tight.

Facilitating this "linking" is my charge as a translator. These days, I find most of my efforts channeled into the fight for open borders: that no climate refugee should be turned away, and that the very existence of militarized borders has greatly contributed to climate collapse in the first place. After all, as Harsha Walia pointed out almost twenty years ago now, "Border controls are most severely deployed by those Western regimes that create mass displacement" (17). That's why I participate in other, interconnected movements, too: for Black Lives Matter, "land back" and Indigenous power, prison abolition, disability justice, animal liberation, as well as workplace democracy. The only way to ensure that we create a culture of care is to do away with those structures of dominance that perpetuate harm in the first place. I wonder if those who still strive to conserve older institutions really understand what they're conserving at all, or if they're just out to keep hold of their power. They have luxury bunkers, after all, while we're under the hot sun with our critter-kin; we can't escape the heat.

In some ways, things are better now than they were ten years ago, even as we face the fallout of ignoring global warming for the past fifty years. Those of us living in Michigan are generally safe from the more terrifying storms that land on the coasts, but we face our own problems: flooding, crop failure, an increase in dangerously hot days (from which many human and nonhuman creatures cannot escape), worsened air pollution, infrastructure failure, and threats to protestors' lives. Species are dying out, as they cannot adapt quickly enough.¹²³ How

¹²³ Taken from *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment*. Its authors write: "In general, climate change will tend to amplify existing climate-related risks from climate to people,

do you mourn a whole species of fish? Of bird? Our safety here now belies the genocide of Indigenous peoples in the centuries beforehand, which in turn informs our responsibility to others, though many would like to ignore it.¹²⁴ As always, it is the vulnerable who shoulder the heaviest burdens, and we are not rehoming those from more precarious places quickly enough. We are not paying back all the debt we owe.

But the only way out is through, together. Each day I wake up, I attempt to do so with a renewed sense of gentleness. (“What I like about gentleness,” writes Lucia Lorenzi, “is that it’s not resilience, or repair, or restoration. Those are all good things but they are not always possible. Gentleness holds space for what feels irreparable, for what cannot be undone, like grief.”) Unlike earlier in my life, when I was more concerned with my own professional trajectory, I now feel a sense of commitment to that which we are growing together. But it’s not an act that connects me to some higher power. I do not wish to empty myself of sins, real or imagined, or to castigate myself for socialized faults; I simply wish to cultivate care, though our methods are ever changing. Punishment isn’t repair—holding ourselves accountable to one another is.

My days are now filled with this kind of closeness. I begin by sitting with neighbors in our shared garden. Our cities of the future look nothing like popular science fiction titles would

ecosystems, and infrastructure in the Midwest (Ch. 10: Energy, Water, and Land). Direct effects of increased heat stress, flooding, drought, and late spring freezes on natural and managed ecosystems may be multiplied by changes in pests and disease prevalence, increased competition from non-native or opportunistic native species, ecosystem disturbances, land-use change, landscape fragmentation, atmospheric pollutants, and economic shocks such as crop failures or reduced yields due to extreme weather events. These added stresses, when taken collectively, are projected to alter the ecosystem and socioeconomic patterns and processes in ways that most people in the region would consider detrimental. Much of the region’s fisheries, recreation, tourism, and commerce depend on the Great Lakes and expansive northern forests, which already face pollution and invasive species pressure that will be exacerbated by climate change” (419).

¹²⁴ In tracing the history of the US National Park System, which required the slaughter and displacement of Indigenous peoples, Nick Estes illuminates Theodor Roosevelt’s “dominant racist philosophy” of acquiring “temperate lands” like those in the US. He quotes Roosevelt, who writes, “The whole civilization of the future owes a debt of gratitude greater than can be expressed in words to that democratic policy which has kept the temperate zones of the new and the newest worlds a heritage for white people” (“Our History is the Future with Nick Estes”).

have had us believe. We've torn up more concrete and steel than we've placed anew. So many of the streets and parking lots once meant for cars are gone, and, in their place, community spaces now populate the avenues. Much of the housing is now public, or is owned through a community land trust. Newer units were designed with passive cooling systems in mind, and are absolutely breathtaking. A governmental program also provides ample subsidies for older houses to be retrofitted, as they must all be connected to the solar electric grid. I honestly never imagined we could transform our spaces so quickly.

I live in a small condo that belongs to a community land trust, which boasts a community garden, greenhouse, meeting spaces, a theater, and a few shops for the essentials run by those who live here. We garden in the mornings because it's coolest then. A few hours from us all and the squash, the greens, the carrots come up nicely. There are still those who are more committed to the garden's health than I am—they better speak its language—and I'm thankful for that. I'm thankful for the many older folks who taught us novices what it meant to care for plant life in the first place, and who love sharing stories with us as we bend over in the garden. I find that I hate watering and I can't stand to kill the insects that have laid eggs on the undersides of leaves; I would rather spend my mornings pulling up the most intransigent of weeds. It's almost like translating—bringing to life a line of words, deciding amongst all the possible combinations.

When I'm done with the gardening, I shower and eat with a few others on the ivy-covered patio next to the garden. Some of my neighbors are snacking on raw vegetables; others bring bowls of pasta and sandwiches out from their kitchens. I stick to granola and yogurt, and I smile and wave at my husband who's just waking now and looks at me through our window. (Sometimes I think about the children I wished we could have had, but our decision to not conceive was what made most sense at the time—how was it fair to have children when we

didn't know if they'd be claimed by a world on fire?) He stumbles out to say good morning and asks what I'll be doing that day.

Workshops, I answer. Three days a week I bike down to the local museum—a misnomer now, perhaps, as it's more of a community gathering space with exhibitions, performances, and a cooling sanctuary for the hottest day than a bunker for looted treasures—to meet with a group of recently arrived neighbors from Central America. Our practice is conversation, for the most part, since this is a beginner's "course." Our goal is not to erase their heritage language(s) from their lives, but to offer them a chance to get to know their new community and to get the basics of English down, as English is still the dominant language in many areas. What's more, many worksites operate in multiple languages as they always have, though now this linguistic diversity is formally recognized.

There's a whole network of workshops that revolve around translation, now. Some are more pointedly creative, while others have more targeted aims: to prepare people to enter into the Green New Deal Federal Works Program, whether they'll be working in agroecology, education, infrastructure, disaster relief, healthcare, elder care, to name just a few. Some participants may even join the Federal Translators' Project, to which I belong. While the paths are many, all people who join a Green Workers Administration are invited to everyday conversation classes and workshops whenever they like, and are encouraged to join their respective union, which offers classes on worker democracy, mediation, and provides whatever form of care they might need. Many unions also hold creative space for their members through workshops of their own creation, continuing the legacy of programs like the Worker Writers School in New York, which advances what its founder, Mark Nowak, calls "social poetics."¹²⁵ Of course, as Nowak notes,

¹²⁵ Reflecting on the Worker Writers School, Mark Nowak describes the workshop as a form of social poetics, which "immerses the practice of poetry and poetics in a continuum of organizations including global working-class trade

the WWS took its inspiration from revolutionary workshops from across the world.¹²⁶ Nothing is new—we’ve just adjusted our approach to center care.

The second afternoon workshop I facilitate brings together speakers of both English and Spanish from all trades. We’re a group of poets, all of us, in our own ways. I introduce workshop members to the project as a “Do-It-Together” process, where each of us contributes to every stage of the project: the words, the illustrations, and the layout—a practice that grew out of my earlier experiences with the Emergent Translators Collective. My translator friends and I learned to bind books by watching YouTube tutorials. We inexpertly practiced printing out pamphlets on an old Kelsey tabletop letterpress. I remember cutting my hand while carving out a particularly intricate image for a block-printed cover. Experiments in togetherness.

For many, joining this workshop is part of the work they take on to receive a governmental stipend, as facilitating it is likewise for me. Since the Federal Government is now the largest employer in the US, almost everyone has union representation and a living wage. While we we’re still fighting for universal healthcare, most people are now covered through their federal employment.

unions and worker centers, immigrant- and women-led social movements, protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street and #BlackLivesMatter, and more. In an era when communities of poetry continue to embed themselves deeper and deeper into elite institutions (private colleges and elite universities, costly academic conference and writers retreats, black-tie book award ceremonies, and the like), social poetics remains a radically public poetics, a poetics for and b the working class people who read it, analyze it, and produce it within their struggles to transform twenty-first-century capitalism into a more equitable, equal, and socialist system of relations” (2).

¹²⁶ Nowak writes, “Social poetics takes as its influences the adventures of [Langston] Hughes, Baraka, the socialist chroniclers of *Facing Reality*, and others. It also advances from some of the practices of writers’ and artists’ gatherings of the John Reed Clubs of the CPUSA in the first half of the twentieth century; Gewndolyn Brooks’s poetry workshops with the Blackstone Rangers in the late 1960s; Raul Salinas’s work with various prison writing groups at Soledad Leavenworth, and other prisons from the 1950s through the 1970s; Toni Cade Bambara’s 1970s Pamoja workshops and Pamoja Writers’ Collective at her house on Simpson Street in Atlanta, where, as Nikky Finney tells us, the workshops were filled with ‘students and nurses and bus drivers, anyone who wanted to know more about writing and storytelling’; the long-running and well-archived Fed Project in the United Kingdom that also began in the 1970s; Fay Chiang and the Basement Workshop; the prison, school, and community workshops run by Piri Thomas and others affiliated with the Harlem Writers Guild and the similar workshops and community spaces opened by Miguel Algarín and others at the Nuyorican Poets Café; and many, many others too numerous to detail here” (7).

In the past, our workshop has worked alongside the staff of a local small press to publish and distribute our work, but this time, because we've decided on a novella, we've decided to design, print, and publish the work ourselves. The Spanish-language novella, titled *manantial*, was written and published in 2027 by a eco-feminist writers' collective based in Mexico called Patas de gallo and co-facilitated by one of my dearest comrades, M. Cristina Hall. It tells the story of a group of young women from Honduras who travel to the Yucatan in search of a cenote said to grant entrance to a parallel universe. The workshop participants were especially taken with the way it layered the difficult journey northward with an eerie, unsettling version of the "promised land." While *manantial* might be situated within the longer tradition of magical realism, it also recalls works like Sara Uribe's *Antígona Gonzales* for the way it interweaves testimony (from members of the Patas de gallo collective) and myth.

Usually, we spend our first few sessions just getting comfortable with one another, sharing stories, creating community guidelines, the usual. Some participants even know one another from earlier workshops. Today is our first working session, in which we'll discuss potential titles and the story's opening scene. Since the word "spring" doesn't quite capture the tenor of the story—its connotations with renewal are perhaps too strong—we brainstorm other choices for "manantial." I ask participants what the word evokes for them. Some describe, in Spanish, the feeling of an "origin" or "source." The word "source," after all, conjures up images of sorcery associated with the sacred cenotes said to lead to the underworld. Others suggest that it's the movement of water that's most captivating—"fluir" or "a flowing." Would "flow" work? Or perhaps something more devastating like "flood"? No, not "flood," which feels too Biblical for the force of a cenote, untethered from Western spirituality. "Source" might work, someone proposes again, especially if paired with the "manantial" on the cover; indeed, a bilingual

presentation might be the right kind of evocative for the work we're doing together. What about something more experimental, someone suggests. Nothing comes immediately to mind. Well, if not experimental, someone says, maybe adding in a slash to visualize the divide between the idea of the spring and the hard journey portrayed in the novella: "spring // source"? There's no end to our imagining, and we lean into the transformative process of translation, and decide to sit with our unknowing until we translate more of the story.

At the end of the workshop, we get into smaller groups to discuss how the design and publication process. One group has been tasked with choosing a few scenes from the novella to illustrate, another will decide how we'll assemble the book (sewn? stapled?), and the last one will mock up a few sample designs for the layout. As I bring the session to a close, I ask all of the participants to contemplate the ethics of translating "fictionalized" testimony for our next session. In short, I'm wondering how each of them understands the task of translating a novella that was written collectively, taken from the lives of migrants, and what the work demands of them. To what extent are they guided by their own experiences in the process, as many of them had faced a similar journey? What are the limits of their knowledge, and why does recognizing those limits matter? How does collective translation help us negotiate those bounds? Translation often provokes more questions than it offers answers.

We won't be meeting for our next session; rather, we won't be meeting here. Instead, we'll be gathering at city hall to demand the immediate closure of the remaining gas pipeline in our area. For many of the migrants, the protest is both terrifying and essential—they are willing to risk their place here in the States to ensure a livable world for the families and communities they left behind. And for their own futures, too. Finally, I ask them to stand in a circle and hold hands so we practice our chants in the last minutes of the workshop. We gather in the middle of

the room. To the time-worn chants—“El pueblo, unido, jamás será vencido” and “Ni lluvia, ni viento, detendrá este movimiento”—we now add our own: “¡Cuidemos, reparemos, liberemos!”

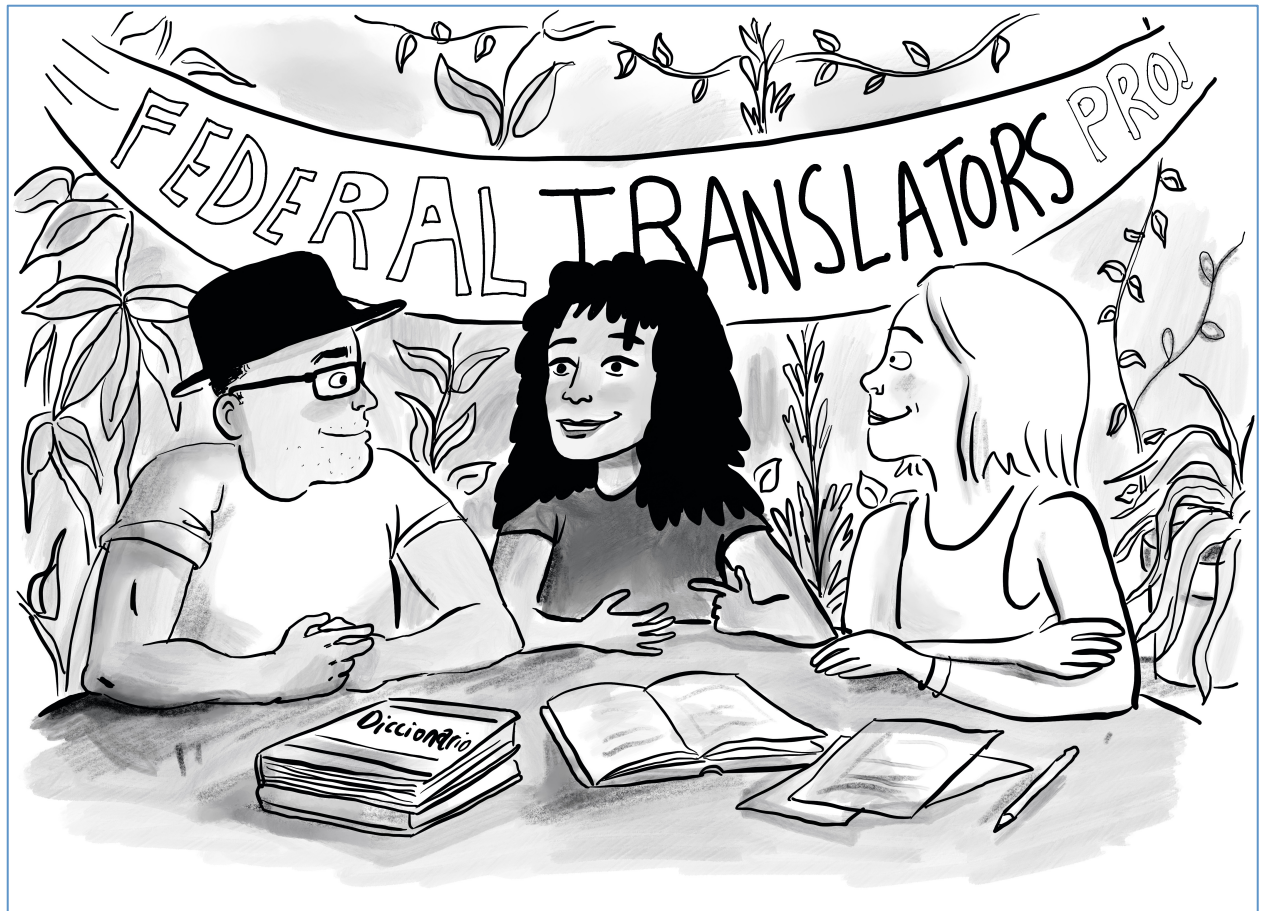


Figure 7.1. Federal Translators Project, illustration: Jason Katzenstein

Appendix A

Everything You Fight for and Gain





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EVERYTHING
YOU
FIGHT FOR
AND
GAIN

Stories from the workshop
Carrying Ourselves Across:
The Art of Self-Translation

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CONTENTS

Exauce Tshiyoka, English & French • 7
Noor Ghali, English & Arabic • 10
Khaleb Rubanguka, English & Kinyarwanda • 14
Nayeli Mendoza, English & Spanish • 16
Wendy Canjura, English & Spanish • 18
Daniel Gustavo Aguilar, English & Spanish • 21
Abdikani Hussein, English & Somali • 23
Abiar Ali Alshikh, English & Arabic • 24
Gabriela Cerda Sifuentes, English & Spanish • 26
Sima Refiei, English & Farsi • 28
Shemu Rubanguka, English & Kinyarwanda • 30
Aya Fadlelzebair, English & Arabic • 32
Author Bios • 34



EXAUCE TSHIYOKA

I translated because I want people to read in French. I use my language knowledge to translate and use google for help. I also listened to the French speaker who worked with me. Translating some words was kind of difficult. I was most proud of the quickness I had when typing and making my translation.

FORMIDABLE ADAPTATION

Discovering a new sport, learning the language of this sport and its rules, is not easy in the beginning. I have played soccer for fourteen years. I still play, but one day all of that stopped.

When I came to the U.S. from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2016, I continued to follow my dreams to become a soccer pro. I played for the Ypsi Grizzlies for two seasons. I was playing midfield for two seasons. My coach told me I had talent. It was only on me to show it. My first season I scored three goals and nine assisted goals. My second season I scored two goals and zero assisted goals. I gave up my job for my team. I was giving everything for my teammates. Some teams already started to scout me for a scholarship. My coach was helping me to have connections with college soccer teams and recruiters, but he got fired. When he got fired, it made me angry because it seemed like everything was going to fall apart. I decided to switch sports.

In summer 2018, I decided to join my high school football team. I thought it would be the same as soccer. However, it was my most formidable moment of learning. I had to know the plays in three days for my first game. I slept with the play-book to be sure to be able to understand the language on the field. I continued to learn and review with just twenty minutes before the game. Everything went well right up to the end of the game. I continued to learn and practice. I learned field goal tactics, the timing of snaps before punts, and the signs for catching before punting. All of that practice helped me to become one of the best kicker-punters. This opened the door for me to college football and most of the teams I could ever imagine.

I thank God for giving me athletic talent. Now, I have a goal to play Division One college football and after to play in the

NFL or AAF. This summer I have to go to national kicking camp and compete for exposure for good college football teams. Moving to the United States has made me write one of the best chapters of my life.

REDOUTABLE ADAPTATION

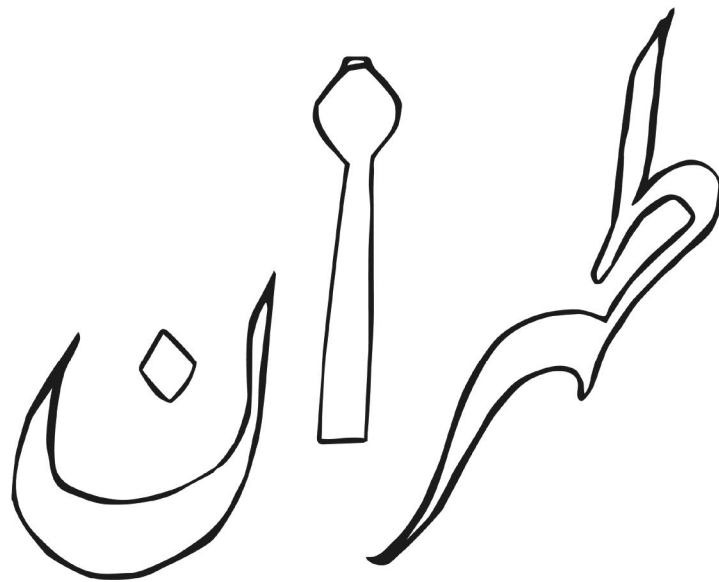
Découvrir un nouveau sport, apprendre la langue de ce sport n'est pas facile. Au début je jouais 12 ans au soccer depuis ma naissance. J'ai toujours joué à ça. Mais un jour tout ça s'arrêta.

Lorsque je suis venu au U.S. je continuais à travailler dur pour réaliser mon rêve—celui de devenir joueur pro. Je portais le maillot de mon lycée. Pendant deux ans j'ai évolué sur le poste de milieu du terrain. Sur les 2 saisons passaient le coach me répétait que j'ai du talent. C'était à moi de la montrer à tout le monde. Ma première saison j'avais marqué 3 buts et neuf passes décisives. La deuxième saison j'avais marqué Deux buts et Zéro passe décisive.

J'avais abandonné un job pour l'équipe et tout donné pour mes coéquipiers. Certaines équipes commencent déjà à s'intéressent à moi pour une bourse sportive. Il a fallu que je puisse m'énerver pour que tout soit coulé dans l'eau. Il est arrivé que mon coach se fait révoqué à cause de son assistant. Je me suis embrouillé avec lui.

Summer 2018 à peine j'ai décidé de rejoindre l'équipe de football américain de mon lycée. Je pensais que les choses allaient être simple. C'est le moment la plus redoutable de mon apprentissage. Je devais savoir la tactique en moins de 3 jours pour mon premier match. Je dormais avec le cahier de tactique pour me rassurer d'être capable de comprendre la langue sur le terrain. Je continuais à apprendre jusque à moins de 20 minutes avant le match. Tout s'est bien passé au final. Je continue à bien apprendre. Cet apprentissage m'a ouvert la porte des universités, en plus de choses que je ne pouvais pas imaginer tel que la tactique of field goals, timing of long snap, signals, and catch.

Je remercie Dieu pour la grande capacité athlétique qu'il m'a donnée. J'ai été appelé pour une essai avec l'équipe de football de mon lycée. Vite je me suis adapté et j'ai un seul objectif—de jouer la NFL. Cet été je dois aller au national kicking camp. Je suis aussi invité pour un camp au MSU.



Drawing by Sima Refiei

NOOR GHALI

I write in Arabic and in English and I translate my own writings into these two languages. My poem is a brief description of the reality about what is going on in Syria. This writing helps the reader to know and to visualize the bright and positive image that shows how beautiful my country was before the war and to realize how this image turned into a dark and negative picture while going through my lines. I do that by adding more descriptive words in my writing, plus that this poem is like a mirror that reflects the reality about what has been going on then and now. I draw inspiration and ideas from my memories and the experiences that I have been through.

JASMINE TEARS

I am from the land of jasmine
that decorates every wall and each block of the neighborhood
where goldfinch birds sing and dance on the fragrant old
lemon tree,
where the aroma of Arabic bread and coffee beans wafts
through the breeze

I am from Syria

Where the Euphrates, the Asi, and the Barada rivers flow

I am from the country of Ugarit
Where the first alphabet was born.
I am from the Umayyad Mosque and the Mariamite Church.
I am from the country of love, peace, and blessings
Where the golden sun rises every morning
sending its rays of love to every family.
Where the children in the alleys play and laugh, from school to
school they go.
Where the families go to the AL_Hamidiya Souq, from shop to
shop, joyfully shopping for Eid clothes.
How beautiful was Bilad al-Sham.
Everything was perfect and beautiful until suddenly, everything
turned into an upside down disaster,
To start the tragedy, and to bring out the precious blood of
our homeland spilled, that each family will get its share of that
brutality.

10

I am from Syria

Eight years and more . . . of a crazy, selfish, and illogical war
Eight years in which souls, hearts, and minds have been
destroyed

A war that snuck through the doors stealthily without knocking,
to settle down in the homes and humiliate their owners

A war that brought the nation's mothers to tears

A war that never knew its beginning . . .

I am from Syria

Where a child died of hunger,
Where a baby lost her mother,
Where the children in the alleys run,
from the bombs and destructions, they fearfully flee.

Where the fighters turned into killers.

Where the bombs became the birds of the sky,
and blood into rivers.

Where the buildings turned to rubble,
and schools into stones and its books to ashes.

Where citizens migrated from country to country despairingly
looking for shelter or a safe place.

A war dreaming of its end.

Yet, there is still enough love and hope to support us in the
face of that heartbreak.

We still remember the beauty of Bilad_al Sham and we will
never forget the magical peace and calmness that we felt in its
old alleys and houses.

And the question will stay in our minds, my homeland, am I
ever going to see you again . . . ?

Am I ever going to see you safe, prosperous, triumphant and
dignified?

Am I ever going to see you safe, Blessed, Victorious, and
Honored?

And the answer will always be: yes we will . . .

We will see you safe, prosperous, triumphant and dignified,

And the sun will shine and rise again after its sunset.

دموع الياسمين

أنا من أرض الياسمين
حيث الحسون يغني ويرقص على شجرة الليمون القديمة العطرة ،
حيث رائحة الخبز وحبوب البن تفوح عبر النسيم..

أنا من سوريا

حيث الفرات و الفيحة ، العاصي و بردى
أنا من بلد أوغاريت
حيث ولدت الأبيدية الأولى.
أنا من الجامع الأموي والكنيسة المرمية...
أنا من بلد الحب والبركات
حيث تشرق الشمس الذهبية كل صباح مرسله أشعة حبها لكل بيت.

حيث أطفالها في الأزقة يلعبون ويضحكون ، من مدرسة الأخرى يذهبون.
و العائلات لسوق الحميدية من محل لمحل يتسوقون. ملابس العيد يجهزون..
كم كانت جميلة بلاد الشام!

كان كل شيء مثاليا و جميلا حتى فجأة تحول كل شيء إلى كارثة رأسا على عقب
لتبدأ المأساة و تسيل دماء وطننا الثمينة و ليحصل كل عائلة منا حصتها من تلك الوحشية ...

أنا من سوريا

سوريا... ثمانيه سنوات و أكثر، من حرب مجنونيه، أنانيه أد لا منطقية
ثمانيه سنوات دمرت فيه النفوس والقلوب والعقول
حرب اخترقت الأبواب خلسته فاستوطنت بيوت و أدلت أهلها
حرب أبكت جميع أمهات الوطن، و أنهكت رجاله
حرب لم تعرف البداية
حرب تحلم بالنهاية

أنا من سوريا

حيث مات طفل من الجوع ،

حيث فقدت طفلة والدتها ،
حيث الأطفال في الأزقة يركضون، من القصف والدمار يهربون.

حيث تحول المقاتلون إلى قتلة...
حيث أصبحت القنابل طيور السماء...
والدماء سالت أنهار...
أنا من سوريا...

حيث تحولت المباني إلى الأنقاض،
والمدارس في الحجارة وكتبها إلى رماد.
والمواطنون ينزحون ، من بلدٍ لبلدٍ يلجئون عن مأوى آمن يبحثون .
لكن رغم ذلك ، ما زال هناك كمشة من الحب و الأمل بقلوبنا يكفيان لدعمنا في مواجهة تلك حسرة.
ما زلنا نذكر جمال بلاد الشام ولن ننسى أبداً السلام و الهدوء السحريين الذي شعرنا به في أزقتها و
منازلها القديمة.
و السؤال سيبقى في ذهننا: موطني... هل اراك مجدداً...؟ هل أراك سالماً منعماً و غانماً مكرماً؟
هل اراك في علاك تبلغ السماء؟
و الجواب سيكون دائماً نعم... نعم ستراك .. ستراك سالماً منعماً و غانماً مكرماً...
ستراك في علاك تبلغ السماء...
و لا بد للشمس أن تشرق بعد غروبها.

KHALEB RUBANGUKA

I am translating from Kinyarwanda to English. I wanted to help my reader understand how I felt when I tried new things. Some words were difficult to find in translation. In Kinyarwanda one word is combined with other words, that means there is no right definition of some words. I am proud of all of my story because it is mine.

LEARNING TO EAT RAW BROCCOLI

It began when my brother and I were on the airplane from Doha (Qatar). We arrived in New York and stayed there for one night. Next morning we took a flight from New York to Detroit. It was like a dream to be in America. People were friendly, smiling, and helping each other. They were eating raw vegetables and drinking many fluids in big cups like they were thirsty bulls. This was new to me. They were eating raw broccoli (!!!) and to them it seemed normal, and I said to my brother “I can’t eat raw broccoli, if I try it, I will die.” I started thinking, “Am I going to eat raw broccoli?, drink liquids all the time?” No way I’m gonna do it.

I stayed home for about two months doing nothing except taking vaccinations and playing video games. It was boring, soooo boring. I heard news that the next week we would go to register for school. I felt happy that I was going to find friends. Wow, I was gonna escape boredom! It was my first time in an American school.

My first time eating raw broccoli was at school. I saw a student going to eat raw broccoli and I said to myself, “Let me copy him and try to taste it.” I went ahead and picked branches of broccoli and took my seat. I bit one piece of raw broccoli and it was awful! I said, “This is a bad idea!” At that time, I saw the same student adding something to it. I said, “Let me try it too.” I went beside him to see what he was doing and saw what he was adding to it. It was a ranch dip. I dipped a piece in it. I was surprised by its taste. It was better than before. And I said, “I was wrong all this time!!!”

After lunch, I went to class. The bell rang and it was time to go home. I packed my things and jumped in a school bus. When I was in the bus I was thinking about what I did earlier. I finally did what I thought was impossible for me—eat broccoli.

KURYA AMASHU M'ABISI

Byatangiyeye mukuru na njye wanjye turi ndege ivuye Doha (Qatar). Twageze i New York tuharara ijoro rimwe. Bu cyeye dufata indi ndege iva New York ijya Detroit. Byari nk'inzozo kuba ndi muri America. Abantu baha barantagaje, ubushuti bwabo, b'abana baseka bafashanya byari bitangaje. Ariko ba ryaga amashu ma bisi ba nkwa mu b'ikombe binini ubudahagarika nkaho ari ibimasa bifite inyota. Byari bishya kuri njye. Ba ryaga amashu mabisi kandi kuri bo ukabona nta kibazo babifiteho, n'abwiye mukuru wanjye "Sinarya amashu mabisi, nabigerageje napfa". Natangiye gutekereza nabangiye kurya amashu mabisi najye se?, kugira inyota inyota buri gihe?" Uzabaze nabyo nakurira.

Nagumye murugo amezi abiri ntacyo nkora usibye gukina ama game no gufata inkingo. Nari nuzuye irungu ahantu hose hari irungu nyuma yumwanya naje kunza amakuru yuko icyumweru gitaha tuzajya kwiyandikisha ku ishuri. Nuraserebuye ko ngiye kubona inshuti nshya, naringiye kuruhuka irungu. Bwari ubwa mbere mu ishuri ry'abanyamerika.

Ubwambere rya amashu mabisi byari ku ishuri. Nabonye umunyeshuri ajyije kurya amashu mabisi ndiyumvira "uwamwigana nku mva ukuntu aba ameze. Nuko njya imbere nda yafata nsubira mumwanya wange.

Nabaye nyiryahe mera nkukubiswe n'inkuba y'arabishye. Wamunyeshuri yanchiyeho aragenda afata ibisosi ashya kuri ya mashu, ndo ngera ndamwigana nanjye mbishyiraho ubundi ndarya. Natunguwe n'ukuntu yari ameze, yari aryohe cyane. Ubundi ndavuga "nari nibeshye kuva kare kose".

Nyuma yi funguro, nagiyeye mu ishuri. Inzogera yarasonnye yari amasaha yo gutaha. Napakiye ibintu byange njya muri busi, ndi muri busi nagiyeye ntekereza kubyo ntakoze kare. Nyuma na nyuma nkoze ibyo nabonaga nkinzozo kuri nge-kutya amashu mabisi. Byamfashije kwiyakira no kugerageza. Bisi yansize hafi yo murugo. Kuva icyo gihe nakomeje kurya amashu mabisi. Ubu iyo rya amashu mabisi mba numva ari nkibisanzwe kuri njyenkaho n'avukiye hano!!

NAYELI MENDOZA

I translate from Spanish to English. I wanted to share my experience and how it was a special moment in my life. It was difficult because some of the meanings of the words weren't the same.

MY FIRST TIME DRIVING

I remember the first time I learned how to drive. I was very nervous because I was afraid of crashing into another car. They had already explained to me that I needed to relax and stop being tense and then it was fun because it felt cool to be driving for the first time and I wanted to learn very fast to be ready and not to be afraid and I liked it because it was fun. When I was trying to turn I stopped the car instead of going but I still had a lot of fun and had some adrenaline. I wanted to try it even more. At first I felt that it was very hard to do and I needed to learn how to park and I was scared to grab the wheel because I confused the brake and accelerator. I was very scared and I had to learn how to go the exact speed. Now I like it more because it is an accomplishment and you feel very proud of yourself, to go out by yourself in your car even though I won't deny that it scares me that one day a policeman might stop me but somehow it's very important because it helps you and how you do things. If you want to go somewhere you have to be very careful when you are driving so you don't hurt someone who's walking. It's important to be cautious and always be careful for your own safety and for the safety of other people. It's very cool to learn new things and control your nerves for the first time, then it feels exciting . . .

MI PRIMERA VEZ MANEJANDO

Recuerdo la primera vez que me enseñaron a manejar, estaba muy nerviosa porque tenía mucho miedo de ir a chocar con otro carro. Ya una vez que me explicaron como debía hacerlo fue mucho mejor y entonces deje de estar tensa. Fue un poco divertido porque se sentía emocionante poder manejar por primera vez y quería aprender rápido para poder estar lista y ya

16

no tener miedo. Me gustó mucho porque pude entender que ya no estaba nerviosa y fue chistoso porque siempre que iba a dar una vuelta me paraba en vez de seguir. Tuve mucha diversión y un poco de adrenalina y más que lo quería intentar más y más. Primero sí sentí que fuera un poco difícil pero como era la primera vez se entiende. Da mucho miedo cuando agarras el timón del carro porque a mi me pasó que me equivoque en el freno y el acelerador. Me dio mucho miedo aunque me falta que aprender en como parquearme y como mantenerme en la misma velocidad. Luego me gustó mucho porque es como un logro que logras y te sientes orgullosa de lograr el objetivo para ya poder salir a las carreteras libres, aunque no voy a negar que sí me da miedo que algún día un policía me detuviera. De allí en algún cierto modo es muy importante aprender a manejar porque te facilita las cosas por si quieres salir a algún lugar. Tienes un poco de adrenalina y también tienes que tener mucho cuidado cuando manejas de no ir a chocar o de lastimar a alguna persona que ande caminando por las calles. Hay que ser muy precavido y siempre tener cuidado por tu misma seguridad y por la seguridad de los demás. También es importante de tener cuidado para poder disfrutar de lo que se aprende. Es muy genial aprender nuevas cosas, solo hay que controlar los nervios de la primera vez, ya luego se siente emocionante . . .

WENDY CANJURA

I am translating from Spanish to English. I wanted to show that here, in the U.S., there are more opportunities for us. Some of the difficulties were not knowing the words in English and where to put commas and periods. I am most proud of my English and writing.

MY FIRST TRIP

When I was six months old, my parents took me for the first time to El Salvador. I don't remember anything about my first trip to El Salvador. But my parents showed me pictures so that at least I would have an idea of what it was like. When I saw the pictures, I asked my parents, "Who is that girl in the picture?" and they told me that the girl in the picture was me, only in another country.

I grew up in El Salvador believing I had been born there but when I was seven years old my parents started to tell me that I had been born in the United States. They started to show me my birth certificate that was different from my siblings' birth certificates because the birth certificate was in a different language that I couldn't read or understand. The years went by like that until I was thirteen years old, when my parents told me, on Valentine's Day 2016, that I had to travel to the U.S. for the first time to Los Angeles, California where my aunt lived. I only visited a short time but I realized that here in the U.S. there are more opportunities than in El Salvador because here the government helps people more and there is more education for us. I stayed with my aunt and in a year and a half I traveled to Michigan where I was born. I could get to know the place where I was born and where my parents lived in the past. It was so weird and at the same time it was beautiful to know where my parents lived and where I was born.

In 2018, I traveled back home to my parents in El Salvador to celebrate my quinceañera (my fifteenth birthday). It felt very good to see my parents again.

MI PRIMER VIAJE

Cuando tenía seis meses mis papás me llevaron por primera vez a El Salvador. Yo no me acuerdo de nada de mi primer viaje a El Salvador. Pero mis papás me mostraron fotos para que yo tuviera la idea de cómo fue. Cuando yo veía las fotos les preguntaba a mis papás, quien era esa niña de la foto? y ellos me decían que esa niña de la foto era yo solo que en otro país.

Yo crecí en El Salvador creyendo que había nacido ahí pero cuando tenía siete años mis papás me comenzaron a decir que yo había nacido en United States. Ellos me comenzaron a enseñar la acta de nacimiento que era diferente a las de mis hermanos y también porque era en diferente idioma que no pude ni leer ni entender. Y así fueron pasando los años hasta que tuve trece años. Mis papás me dijeron un día de San Valentín del 2016 que tenía que viajar por primera vez a U.S., a Los Ángeles, California donde vivía una tía. Solo venía de paseo pero me di cuenta que aquí en los U.S hay más oportunidades que en El Salvador. Porque aquí el gobierno de U.S. ayuda más a las personas y también porque hay más educación para nosotros. Me quedé a vivir con mi tía y al año y medio viajé hacia Michigan donde yo nací. Pude conocer el lugar donde nací y donde vivieron mis papás antes. Fue muy raro y a la vez bonito saber el lugar donde vivieron mis papás y donde yo nací.

En el 2018 viajé de regreso a casa de mis papás en El Salvador para celebrar mis quince años me sentí muy bien al ver de regreso a mis papás.



Drawing by Wendy Canjura

DANIEL GUSTAVO AGUILAR

I write in Spanish and translate into English. I want readers to understand the message of my poem, which is to never give up on your dreams. Translating the poem was difficult, especially finding the right words for readers to understand. I'm most proud of the fact that readers can understand it.

BELLA STAR

Crazy in love
when I see her I get
lost in her eyes
that unique look she
has is like the light of the
universe, because it's
like a star that never
stops shining.

Everyone thought she
was out of reach,
many attempted and many
were let down but the lover
would not surrender and
would try again.

Standing in front of her,
they all told him, my friend,
you waste your time with
that ungrateful beauty.

No no no . . . yelled the lover
she just wants to find the
right one
and Star, as everyone called her,
came near.

Bella Star looked him in the eyes
and kissed him and the
crazy lover knew
he never had to surrender.

BELLA STAR

Enamorado como loco
al verla me pierdo en sus ojos
esa mirada única que ella tiene
es como la luz del universo.

Pero ella es inalcanzable
pensaban todos, todos lo
intentaron y todos fallaron
pero el enamorado no se rendiría
y nuevamente él lo intentaría.

Parado frente a ella, todos
le decían amigo mío pierdes
tu tiempo con esa Bella malagradecida.

No no no . . . grita el enamorado
ella solo quiere encontrar
al indicado, y Star, como le llamaban
al enamorado se hacerlo.

“Bella Star” a los ojos lo miro
y un beso ella le dio y él
loco enamorado cuenta se dio
que rendirse jamás tiene que ser
una opción.

ABDIKANI HUSSEIN

I write in Somali and then translate to English. I wanted to help my readers understand what it is like to be a refugee. One difficulty I encountered was putting in punctuation. I am proud of finishing my translation.

SOCCER LIFE

I and my five friends created our own soccer team. We started collecting money to buy some stuff like a soccer ball, training shirts, jerseys, and soccer shoes. We started training hard to reach our goal of becoming one of the best junior teams in Uganda. We made a name for the team, Horseed F.C., and a logo. The color of the team was green. As we trained we got some players who joined the team. We started electing leaders of the team, and I was elected as the captain of the team. After one month of hard work training, we joined a league of eight teams. It was a knockout. We made it to the semi-finals and we lost. Losing 2-1 was not bad, after all we made it to semi finals. . . . After losing the semi-finals we got eight more players joining our team and we were proud because at first we were just six and after the semi-finals we were fourteen players, which looked like a lot of effort, hard work, and determination to the rest of the soccer teams.

KUBADDA CAGTA

Aniga iyo shantena sxb ayaa waxaa gu'aan sany inaa koox aan sameysano. Waxaa bilawny inaan lacak aan aroorino sida aan usoo gadano banooni iyo wax yaalaha lagu aalmiideeyo iyo finaano iyo kabo banooni. Waxaan bilaawny inaan si fcn aan uu aalmiideyno sida aan uu gaarno guul oo aan uu naqano kooxda ugu fcn. Waxaan bilaawny inaan uu bixino kooxda magac iyo calaamado. Marka aan aalmiideyn jirny waxaa nagu soo biiry dadka qaar uu jacleedy kooxda. Markaas kadib waxaan bilawny inaan madaxyo aan doorano. Aniga waxaan lii doorty madaxa kooxda. Hal bil kabacdi oo aalmiido kadib waxaa galny tartan. Tartankaasoo ku jireen 8 kooxood. Tartankaas wuxuu aa haayey garaacis. Waxaan imaany semi finalka, waxaana nalugo garacy 2-1. Mana xumeenin inaan nalaga badiyo maxaa yeely waxaan soo garacny koox. Kadib semi fiinalka waxaan helny 8 qofood oo teamka rawaan iny soo galaan waana ku faraxsaneny maxaa yeely markii kooxda aan sameyneeny waxaan aheen 6 qofood taasi waxy na tusisy inaan sii fcn aan aad uu dadalny.

23

ABIAR ALI ALSHIKH

I wrote my story in Arabic and translated it into English. I wanted to let readers hear the beauty of my language.

FIRST DAYS

Hi, my name is Abiar. I'm sixteen years old and I came from Saudi Arabia when I was 10 years old. I lived in Kansas, Missouri for one year and a half. I came to the USA to learn English. In the beginning my dad wasn't supporting me that much because he was busy with his school but he had time for us at night. My dad didn't give me a phone to use because I was too young to have a phone.

When I was ten years old my mom got pregnant and at the same time she was working and she didn't know that she was pregnant and while she was working she felt something in her belly. My dad took her to the hospital the doctor said that she had a miscarriage. She cried for a while, but my dad got her to calm down. While my parents were in the hospital I was home with my two siblings Eman and Hussain. I'm the oldest child and I got to take care of them.

After one week everything got better, my dad left home to go to the neighbor's house, his friends who study with him in the university. While he was at their apartment I was bored at home, I didn't have a phone to be on beside the TV. I turned on the TV and played some Arabic songs. While I was singing, I stood up and started singing and dancing and I turned the volume up, my mom came to the living room and start dancing with me and singing. Two hours later my dad opened the door and he said, "What's happened?" It was because I turned the volume up of the music at home.

In 2015 I moved to Detroit, Michigan because we heard a lot of arabs were down here. I lived in Detroit for six months. I moved from Detroit to Ypsilanti because we heard it's a good place for study and for schools and for universities. I took my 8th grade second semester in Ypsi middle school. My first day was so good because I met my ex-best friend in my first hour

(Science) and then I started talking to her and I asked what her name was (KATHERINE) and then we became friends. Then we were out of middle school. Finally I'm in high school. My freshman year was so good, there were small problems going on but I solved them. My sophomore year was so hard and horrible, all the problems came to me and there is a long story behind it and the story started with a person. From that person my whole life was stopped.

مرحبا انا اسمي ابيار عمري ١٦ سنة أتيت من المملكة العربية السعودية كنت في عمر العاشرة عشت في ولاية كانساس سيتي ميزوري لمدة سنة ونصف فقط لقد أتيت إلى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لأجل التعلم اللغة الإنجليزية . في بداية أبي كان لا يهتم لنا ولكن كان لديه البعض من الوقت لنا لأنه كان مشغول جدا في دراسته. أبي لم يعطيني هاتف لأجل التسكع فيه وكان وقتها عمري ١٠ سنوات وكنت جدا صغيرة على الهاتف. أمي حملت وكان بداخلها طفل وفي نفس الوقت كانت أمي ان تعمل لكنها ما كانت تعلم أنها حامل بعد عودتها من العمل لقد حسست ان هناك شيء يؤلمها في بطنها ، اخذها ابي الى الطوارئ دخلت على الطبيب ومن بعض من الوقت خرج الطبيب وقال إلى أبي ان أمي أتاها إجهاض بسبب حمل أشياء ثقيلة بكت أمي ومن ثم أبي هداها أمي وأبي كانا في المستشفى وانا كنت في البيت أراعي اخواني الصغار ايمان ، حسين انا الكبيره وعلى أن ارعاهم ، بعد اسبوع خرج أبي من المنزل ليذهب إلى منزل جيراننا وهم أصحابه في الجامعة بعد خروج أبي جلست في المجلس وكان البيت جدا ضجر وما كان هناك أي شيء فعله أو هائف لكن كان هناك تلفاز. فتحت التلفاز وشغلت على الاغاني ثم تحمست وقمت اغني وأرقص. أتت أمي ثم صارت ترقص معي وتغني. بعد ساعتين فتح الباب أبي ثم قال ماذا يحصل. لأن انا رفعت على صوت التلفاز. في عام ٢٠١٥ انتقلت من ولايتي إلى ولاية ميشيغان ديترويت عشت في ديترويت لمدة ٦ أشهر لأن سمعنا عنها جدا سيئه. خرجت من ديترويت الى مدينة إيسلانتي لأن سمعنا عنها أفضل مكان للدراسة والمدارس و الجامعات. درست الصف الثامن السمستر الثاني في مدرسة إيسلانتي المتوسطة لقد التقيت مع أفضل صديقة السابقة الي في صف العلوم ثم سألت عن اسمها واسمها هو (كاثرين) بعد عدة أيام أصبحنا أصحاب. ها نحن قد خرجنا من المتوسط واخيرا ها انا في الثانوية. أول سنة في الثانوية كانت جدا ممتازة وكانت هناك مشاكل جدا صغيرة ولكن حليتها وفي السنة الثانية كانت جدا صعبة علي والمشاكل كل يوم تزيد علي بسبب شخص ما وهذا الشخص وقف حياتي كلها.

GABRIELA CERDA SIFUENTES

I translated from Spanish to English. I wanted to share my experience. One of the difficulties was not knowing the exact words in English. I am most proud of my writing because I improved my English.

MY BEGINNING IN THE UNITED STATES

Reading, writing, and speaking in two languages is hard. When I came to the United States, it was very difficult because my parents put me in school. Everything was different for me because I did not know anyone. At first it was hard because I did not understand any English yet and I needed to communicate with the teachers and with my classmates. When we were in class, I did not know how to read and how to do my work. But I started to take an ESL class and my teacher helped me with the work and taught me new English words and how to read. Sometimes I felt frustrated because I understood what they were saying but I didn't know how to answer. At the same time I felt pressured because I wanted to help my dad when he had appointments or needed anything. After two years I improved little by little and I began to understand when people talked to me.

If you want to improve or get better you have to study hard.

MI COMIENZO EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

Leer, escribir, y hablar en dos lenguajes es difícil cuando yo llegué a los Estados Unidos se me hizo difícil porque mis papas me metieron a la escuela. Todo fue diferente para mí, porque no conocía a nadie. Al principio se me hizo muy difícil porque no entendía nada de inglés y me necesitaba comunicar con los maestros o compañeros, cuando estábamos en clase no sabía como leer o hacer mi trabajo. Pero empecé a tomar una clase de ESL y una maestra me ayudaba con mi trabajo y me enseñaba palabras en inglés y a leer, a veces me sentía frustrada porque entendía que me estaban hablando y no sabía qué contestar. Al mismo tiempo me sentía preocupada porque quería ayudar a mi papá cuando iba a citas o

26

necesitaba algo. Después de dos años fui mejorando poco a poco y ya entiendo un poco más cuando me hablan.

Si quieres mejorar o ser alguien en la vida tienes que estudiar duro.

SIMA REFIEI

I translate from Persian or Farsi. I wanted to help my readers understand what it was like not to know a language in a new place. Sometimes I couldn't find the right words to describe things. I am most proud of being able to write in a different language.

WHEN "NO" IS NOT THE BEST ANSWER!

I hated my first day in school because a lot of things happened. Especially because I didn't know what I should say to the students trying to talk to me. So I only used yes or no. You might have this question—why?

It might seem stupid, but I didn't have any other way of communicating because I couldn't speak any English at that time. The story begins when I was standing in line to get my lunch. Suddenly one of my friends started asking questions to people standing behind me. Unfortunately, I was on my phone and I didn't hear any of the answers or the questions. It was my turn, everyone was looking at me. She asked her question! There was a word in the question that I didn't even know the meaning of.

This is all I understood from that question:

"Are you . . . ?"

I took a few seconds, realizing I didn't even understand what I'd been asked, so the only thing I could say is yes or no. And I said no to the question.

After a few weeks I understood the meaning of the word that she asked. When I figured it out I was laughing about that misunderstanding. She asked "Are you a virgin?" And my response was no during that time, even though I didn't understand her question.

In that moment I thought saying no would be the best answer, but it DEFINITELY WAS NOT.

وقتی که "نه" بهترین جواب نیست!

اولین روزم در مدرسه رو اصلا دوست نداشتم. اتفاق های زیادی در این روز افتاد، به خصوص وقت هایی که نمیدونستم باید چه جوابی به بقیه بدهم؛ در همچنین مواقعی فقط از کلمه
28

بله یا خیر استفاده می‌کردم.

شاید براتون سوال پیش بیاد که چرا؟ بله، به نظر من هم احمقانه است ولی چاره‌ی دیگری نداشتم چون اصلاً به زبان انگلیسی مسلط نبودم.

یکی از شرم‌آورترین و شاید هم این براتون مسخره به نظر بیاد، ولی گاهی ناخواسته پیش میاد. یکی از همون روزها هنگامی که در صف غذا ایستاده بودم یکی از دوستانم شروع کرد به پرسیدن یک سوال از همه، متاسفانه من سرم توی گوشیم بود و اصلاً جواب‌هایی که دوستانم دادن ویا سوال رو نشنیدم.

نوبت من رسیده بود، چون همه داشتن به من نگاه می‌کردند. در همین حال بود که دوستم سوالش را پرسید. باید بگم که کلمه‌ای در این سوال بود که من اصلاً نمی‌دانستم. این همه چیزی است که از سوالش فهمیدم: آیا تم هستی...؟

چندین ثانیه توی فکر فرو رفتم و با خودم فکر کردم، من که نفهمیدم دوستم چه گفت و در این مواقع تاکتیک من بله یا خیر گفتن هست. و از آنجایی که اصلاً نفهمیدم سوال رو پس بهتره خیر بگم.

من بعد از چندین هفته فهمیدم که آن موقع دوستم چه سوالی از من پرسیده بوده! و سوالش این بود "آیا تو باکره هستی؟" اره من هم نمی‌دونم اخه چرا باید از این سوال‌ها از کسی پرسن ولی من خیر جواب دادم و این هیچ وقت از یادم نمیره چون تنها وقتی بود که نه گفتن به جورایی به ضررم تموم شد.

SHEMU RUBANGUKA

I am writing in kinyarwanda and translating to English. I wanted to help people understand what happened in Rwanda's history. Some difficulties were vocabulary and punctuation rules.

A COUNTRY CALLED RWANDA

Rwanda is a country located in eastern Africa. It's a small country, about 26,000,00 kilometers squared, and it has a lot of people living in it. Rwanda has good security (it keeps people safe).

According to the seasons, Rwanda has four; the first is called impeshyi (it is like summer), second is itumba (like spring), the third season is iki . . .

Rwanda has different types of tourism, especially tourism in parks. Rwanda has two types of parks: the first is Nyungwe Forest National Park and the second is Akagera National Park.

According to its geographical shape, Rwanda has many rivers across it, and lakes (ex. Lake Kivu), forests (ex. Nyungwe), swamps, and volcanoes (ex. Muhabura, Kalisimbi).

Rwanda is a country that once had kings, like King Yuji IV and V, and Gihanga. In that period, Rwanda had a different culture.

According to history, Rwanda had a genocide in 1994, when many people killed each other. How? And why? The following will tell us about this bad history that happened in Rwanda:

History says the genocide happened in Rwanda because of the colonization of different countries that came out on different sides of Africa in that time.

The colonizers came to Rwanda and, according to history, they came because of some raw materials (resources) that were needed, like mineral resources, and for some time they enslaved people. And in that period the colonizers started to divide people according to their body features (eg. nose), they divided people according to the nose (some people have a big nose called abahutu, and the second one was a small nose but tall, called abatutsi).

History said the genocide yakorewe abatutsi in Rwanda

started in 1994 and went for a long time, about 100 days, and more than one million people died. The people killed each other in that period.

History said the genocide yakorewe abatutsi was stopped by the FPR (Rwandan Patriotic Front, a group of people and soldiers who came together to stop the war and help the surviving people) on April 6th, 1994.

After all of that bad history happened in Rwanda, what happened next? The following tells us how Rwanda is new, and how it developed:

Now Rwanda's government developed because of a good leader. After that bad history, the president of Rwanda, called Paul Kagame, started programs to help surviving people by building houses for the living, taking care of their children, their education and medicine, and gave them food for eating.

And now every April 6th all people in Rwanda take a week for commemorating (or remembering the people who died in the genocide yakorewe abatutsi 1994).

Now Rwanda has good service and security of its people and safety, and also has beautiful gorillas living in volcanoes. I wish all will visit Rwanda and see how the new Rwanda is the best country in Africa.

I can say you are welcome.

AYA FADLELZEBAIR

I translate from Arabic to English.

EVERYTHING YOU FIGHT FOR AND GAIN

Hello my name is Aya, I used to live with my mother and sister in Morocco. I grew up there and when I was fifteen years old, my father decided that my sister and I would go to live with him in America. I didn't know about the decision to move to America at first. I knew I would go there when I would turn eighteen years old. When my mother first told me I did not believe it. They made the decision in the middle of the school year and I was in 10th grade. I had to leave my friends and family and everything to go to a place completely different from where I was born and lived before. I had visited before, in 2013, when I went to New York, Chicago and Michigan. The cities were cool and there were nice city views but it was different when I returned. In March of 2017 I arrived to America, everything was different for me and my sister, especially since I had not studied English before. My father enrolled me in a high school to complete my studies and I learned English there. It was not easy at first. I could not communicate with anybody because I did not speak English. I have been exposed to a few embarrassing situations, including being misunderstood. It made me feel sad and lost and I didn't know what to do. After a year, my English language improved. I started to be confident to communicate with others and make friends. This changed my whole life. And last but not least my advice to anyone who reads these lines is to know that everything you fight for and gain comes after fatigue and effort and strong will.

مرحباً اسمي آي ، كنت أعيش مع أمي وأختي في المغرب. لقد نشأت هناك وعندما كان عمري 15 سنة وقرر والدي أن أختي وأنا أذهب للعيش معه في أمريكا. لم أكن أعرف عن قرار الانتقال إلى أمريكا في البداية. كنت أعرف أنني سأذهب إلى هناك عندما أكون في الثامنة عشرة من عمري. عندما أخبرتني أمي لأول مرة أنني لم أؤمن ، لقد اتخذوا القرار في منتصف العام الدراسي وكنت في الصف العاشر. اضطررت إلى ترك أصدقائي وعائلتي وكل شيء للذهاب إلى مكان مختلف تمامًا عن المكان الذي ولدت فيه وعاشت فيه من قبل. على الرغم من أنني زرت من قبل في عام

2013 عندما زرت نيويورك وشيكاغو وميتشيغان. في مارس عام 2017 ، وصلت إلى أمريكا ، كل شيء كان مختلفًا بالنسبة لي ولشقيقتي ، خاصةً وأنني لم أتعلم الإنجليزية من قبل. التحق بي والدي في مدرسة ثانوية لإكمال دراستي وتعلمت الإنجليزية هناك. لم يكن الأمر سهلاً في البداية. لم أتمكن من التواصل مع أي شخص لأنني لم أتحدث الإنجليزية. لقد تعرضت لأوضاع محرّجة قليلة ، بما في ذلك سوء فهمها. بعد عام ، تحسنت لغتي الإنجليزية. بدأت أثق في التواصل مع الآخرين وتكوين الصداقات. هذا غير كل حياتي. وأخيراً وليس آخراً نصيحتي لكل من يقرأ هذه السطور هو أن نعرف أن كل ما تحارب من أجله ويكسب يأتي بعد التعب والجهد والإرادة القوية.



Daniel Gustavo Aguilar is in 12th grade and lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. He was born in a very small country called "El Salvador" in 1999.



Abiar Ali Alshikh is in the 11th grade and lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. She was born in Saudi Arabia. She moved to the U.S.A. to learn English. She kept moving from state to state and to different communities and schools.



Wendy Canjura was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan but her parents are from El Salvador, so she considers herself a Salvadoran. Her mom and dad are who inspire her because they have given her a lot of advice and have shown her that despite the circumstances, you must always move forward.



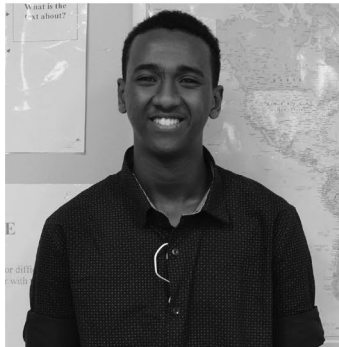
Gabriela Cerda Sifuentes is in 10th grade. She was born in Mexico. She likes to write about the things that happen in her life. A person that inspires her is her older sister.



Aya Fadlzebair is 17 years old and a senior at Ypsilanti Community High School. She is from Morocco but lives in Ypsilanti, MI. She likes to write about other people. She enjoys choir. She gets her ideas from reading books and watching movies and videos. She likes writing because it helps her express her ideas to other people.



Noor Ghali is an eighteen-year-old student, currently studying at Ypsilanti Community High School. She is from Syria. She came to the U.S.A. in November 2016. This is her first time writing a poem, called "Jasmine Tears." Writing this poem helped her to express her thoughts and feelings about her homeland. She is an optimistic and nice girl. Also, she is creative and she likes to learn languages.



Abdikani Hussein is in 11th grade and lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. He was born in Mogadishu, Somalia. He likes playing soccer. His favorite soccer club is Real Madrid C.F. The people that inspire him are his parents because he loves what they did for him. He likes to write about his life.



Nayeli Mendoza is in the 9th grade and lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. A person who inspires her is her grandma. What inspires her writing is how she feels. She likes to come up with some of her own fiction.



Sima Refiei lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan and was born in Iran. She's 18 years old and likes drawing characters. She is energetic and funny. She lives with her family: her mom, dad, brother, and sister.



Khaleb Rubanguka is from Rwanda. He is in 11th grade and is seventeen years old. He lives in Ypsilanti, MI. He likes to write about people. Martin Luther King Jr. inspires him. He likes to write because it helps him to express his ideas.



Shemu Rubanguka is 19 years old and lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. His favorite books are on aviation. He gets his ideas from movies.



Exauce Tshiyoka lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. His favorite sport is soccer and his favorite pastime is music.

Appendix B

Personal Interview with Jeremy Tiang

Meg: Okay. Can you say something?

Jeremy: Yeah, yeah, “eco-translation.”

Meg: Eco-translation! What does that mean? I don't know, I'm writing a dissertation on it. So thank you so much again for talking with me. I mean, I just kind of want to get people's perspectives. I kind of already you know, we talk to one another in general. Translators talk. But I never get to ask my own questions, like very pointed questions, for a dissertation. So I'm excited. So, I guess, do you just want to start by talking about Cedilla & Co. a little bit?

Jeremy: Yeah, this was something that I was immediately attracted to. You know the background, right?—of Sean and Julia Sanches, who conceived of the idea and then approached some of us . . .

Meg: Sure do!

Jeremy: . . . and it immediately resonated with me. Because not long before that I moved from London to New York, and it was a complete change because in London, as an actor, and I've got no formal training [in translation] other than my undergraduate degree in English. Then I went to acting school. So my post-grad degree is actually in acting. And I spent about a decade in London as an actor and then changed countries and professions at the same time, which was quite a thing.

But in London, I was part of an actor's co-operative and that was a group of, about 20 actors who had decided that agents didn't adequately represent them. And, you know, kind of were mostly interested in being as commercial as possible rather than creating the kind of work we wanted to create. And in the co-operative, it was possible to, for instance, say, I don't want to go up for any advertisements.

I only wanted to be there to like, no, no agent would stand for that. Whereas we were happy to do that. It was necessary as an organization because without some form of representation, you couldn't get work. You just wouldn't be seen for just certain individual actors couldn't represent themselves. But the collective could call themselves an agency and submit people for auditions. And then we would get seen. So that was the impulse behind starting this. And I think that's been around for about 15 to 20 years when I joined my co-operative because it's still a relatively new concept. But what I found was that they created a platform for solidarity that was otherwise absent in the profession. I mean, much, much more than translation, acting is ridiculously competitive.

Meg: I don't know that firsthand, but I can definitely imagine. My gosh.

Jeremy: Yeah. I mean, you know, I guess just at a basic level, there is a certain barrier to entry for translation. You do have to know another language, whereas acting is one of those things that people can just jump into. So there wasn't a lot of solidarity in the [acting] profession, but within the group there was, partly because the co-operative were chosen to be different 'types,' so we'd

seldom find ourselves competing for the same part, but also because the sorts of people who join a co-operative are going to be, by nature, collaborative rather than competitive.

I found that it was also a platform to do all kinds of other things. So some of us make representations to equity, the actors union, about ways in which we weren't being adequately represented. Someone set up a theater company with positions that none of the actors would be paid and all the tickets free and the whole thing would just be run as a kind of, I guess, utopian collective of theater and a lot of us had ended up acting at those performances. So, it became this larger organization. But then the various co-operatives in London and beyond started speaking to each other and exchanging information.

And then that became another form of solidarity. So I left all that and came to New York. But when Sean brought up the idea, I'd already been feeling quite isolated, as you might experience with a move to a new country in your 30s, and starting a new profession on top of that. You don't know anyone.

And so naturally, I thought, yes, I really wanted to continue with the sorts of things that the cooperative I was part of in London has been doing, kind of creating, I guess, a space where people could explore things with each other and sort of talk things through because there's not a lot of guidance in the profession as a whole.

Meg: I agree.

Jeremy: And it's a good sign that we all trust each other, and that we know each other so well. So to be able to say, "Listen, can I just talk us through with you? Can I just go through these ideas, and that all of that can happen in a safe space where there's no judgment and where everyone is smart but also brings different perspectives to the conversation. And everyone's always willing to give you attention and really engage with you. A lot of good things have started that way. So it really was the perfect thing for where I was at the time. And I think we all felt that in some way. We'd all started making in-roads in translation. Everyone had some kind of presence. Everyone had some kind of track record by that point. But we also felt very isolated. None of us had any institutional affiliation, which is still true. Lissie, well, she is the Executive Director of ALTA. But that's closer, I think, to being her day job.

So none of us have been in academia. A couple of us were in publishing, but long ago. Julia is a former agent. So we were all, at least kind of, working as translators full time, and, in a way, living the dream. But then we were also finding that it's tremendously isolating and, you're just, you don't feel like—how can I put this? We were part of the translation community, especially living in New York. Our community such as it is. It's very easy to go to reading, you know, people that, you know all that. But go deeper to have people that you could say show a contract to and say, "Look, does this look legit to you?" Or, "I'm not sure about this thing. . . ." You really need a smaller, tighter group. And that's what this [Cedilla & Co.] provided. A lot of us have built these ad hoc communities, right? You know, you hear about people having informal he does at formal workshops or like small WhatsApp groups where they do these things. We just we just formalize it.

Meg: I think that's a really good point. You could say that we're [translators] all kind of collaborative by nature, at least, well, I don't want to say *all* translators because I do think there are plenty of translators who, especially when they get to a certain point, where they are just kind of offered contracts, you know, that they can work on their own. But that isn't the case for so many of us. Right? When I consider the five main translators in my language pair, it's true that maybe they could be work on their own and not have to worry. But not for those of us who are just starting out.

Jeremy: No, that's true. And, you know, it's kind of a self-selecting sample of translators. You tend to meet and hang out with other translators who, I think, want to be part of the community collaborative. They want to come to ALTA.

Meg: Exactly. Yes.

Jeremy: Yeah. But also, I think that the landscape, as a whole, is changing in that the field of translation has expanded.

More and more translators identify as practitioners rather than academics who have an artistic practice. And, so, at least in my language, the really established translators who, as you say, could just go from contract contract and never talk to another translator, primarily did this by being very visible very early on. So that they would go-to people. But these days, I don't think anyone is really in a position to get themselves so entrenched and become that prominent.

Meg: No, I mean, there are so many, there are so many great translators. Right? Whereas I'm just thinking about Catalan, for example, like the people who were working in academia, you know, or who could really establish themselves in the past. They could do that because no one else was really translating that language. But now, I mean, I know maybe 15 or 16 emerging and early-career Catalan translators off the top of my head. And there are so many programs. There are so many ways to get involved in it that there's no way that I think you could ascend to that kind of established position now, just like you were saying.

Jeremy: Yes. And, also with Chinese, what I'm noticing is, that I guess this is the focus of a lot of my work, that it's become less colonial . . .

Meg: Yes.

Jeremy: . . . in that, many translators who work from not just Chinese, but from other Asian languages, are increasingly from the diaspora of that culture. And there's a sense of reclaiming it in that act. I also think that the people who work in this [contra-colonial] mode, largely—and I do want to speak to everyone—in my experience, tend to see it as a project of solidarity. You're not going to reclaim the act of translating Chinese from, you know, a fairly imperialist clique of mostly white translators and then not create solidarity with your fellow heritage-speaking, diaspora translators. I feel like the two things go together. And by and large, that's been my experience, that people want to create a community and kind of work through these things, because a lot of the way translation is geared doesn't really speak to us. A lot of the language

around translation is about building a bridge, rather than the idea that maybe you might contain both languages, that both cultures already within yourself.

Meg: That is so, well, it's so key. I think about that all the time, especially because I'm asking myself constantly whether or not I should even be translating from Spanish when there are so many heritage speakers. I mean, this is just something I wrestle with and I've wrestled with in public with other white US-ians, "Americans," and so I'm asking, why the hell are we the ones doing this?

Jeremy: I would never say that someone shouldn't translate. And I think the fact that you are asking the question means you are doing it with awareness, and that's really all you can do. It's just that, speaking of Chinese, a lot of people don't have that web. Yeah, and that's been quite frustrating. But the landscape is shifting. So, again, we're moving to something that really is feeling more like a community. And more like they're all engaged in this giant project together.

Meg: Mmhmm. So what is this greater project? What is the end game of translation and literary translation in particular for you? Big question! I'm sorry . . .

Jeremy: I mean, I guess I can only answer for myself. For me, translation is, it's part of my artistic practice and it felt like a piece that had been missing when I started doing it. I've creating work largely in English and occasionally in Chinese, but it felt like I wasn't fully at home in either or, I was but my relationship to both languages was complicated. Whereas with translation, it felt like I was able to really use all the disparate bits of myself. So, for me, I guess, the endgame is a kind of unification of the self.

As for the bigger picture . . . No, I think everyone has a different endgame in mind. And maybe that's the thing; maybe acknowledging translation as a creative practice also means not asking that question, because I think there can be a utilitarian aspect to the way translation is viewed, which is often a cultural body saying, oh, the end game is to have translated this or that number of works from our language or to establish our culture on the global stage or whatever. But you wouldn't ask what's the end game of painting or what's the end game of music?

Meg: Oh, that makes a ton of sense.

Jeremy: So I prefer to think of it as, I guess, a mode, and it's something that brings different things to different people. And for this moment in time, it feels like it is creating a kind of fluidity that speaks to those of us who don't belong entirely to one place or culture or language. And without translation, you could still embrace that kind of hybridity in an artistic practice. But I think nothing but it would be more static work translation really moves between things that exist in-between space that I really appreciate. And it's become the bulk of what I do.

Meg: I love that. Yeah, I asked you a really difficult question, and I'm not sure how I would answer it either. That's actually what my dissertation is trying to do. It's, I guess, if I had to answer it, it would be simply creating that community or those many communities. Right. It's never a focus on how many translations are being printed every year. That becomes like almost a colonial project in itself. Right? Creating this huge archive, but rather building . . . translation

invites us to build new networks and to build solidarity with one another. That's my hope, at least. I think that's what we're moving toward.

And solidarity building is even more important in the context of the climate crisis. Just thinking about climate migration, where we're going to have so many new people arriving to climate refugia like the U.S. because there are plenty of places in the U.S. that will be able to withstand climate collapse. That's what I'm thinking about right now. How do we use translation as a way to invite new community members in?

Jeremy: Right.

Meg: So, did that bring anything to mind? If not, I have a question!

Jeremy: I mean, that's something I've been wrestling with because, and I don't have an answer to this. And this present moment has brought the sharply into focus. But because of translation and because of the way I see my work, you know, really engaging with different places and people and cultures, I've traveled a huge amount more than it otherwise would have if I weren't a translator and I think this is true of many, if not most, translators. And that's something that I've never been able to reconcile, that I didn't feel I could do my work properly unless I was making at least one trip per year to Asia, usually it ends up being two or three, just because, you know, China is changing very fast and because I wanted to observe what was happening in the places I translate from, and that's China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, which all have their own trajectory. And the way they relate to each other is changing. And, you know, there are definitely nuances of recent publications that I wouldn't have got if I hadn't been there meeting people and observing these societies for myself. But that's obviously really unsustainable. And so the act of crossing these boundaries, crossing these borders, and existing in these different places so I could synthesize them in my work was also unsustainable from an ecological perspective. So I'm hoping that what happens next is that we find a way to come closer together without physical presence. I don't actually know if this is possible.

So I was due next month to fly out to Beijing for a translation workshop. Some translators were going to translate British plays into Chinese and I was going to facilitate this and then get to know local Chinese writers and translate their work. And now that's all going to take place over Zoom, which, because I work in theater, I think it's been the hardest medium for me to adapt to right now, because it's so much about being together in the same room. But if we can find a way to make that work, then, that I think would maybe mitigate this, and I guess I know no translation related travel is a tiny, tiny drop in the bucket compared to everything else that it's polluting. But it's something that hasn't really been addressed or the fact that to build solidarity and community, we come together at ALTA once a year. And it's the most amazing experience for but that also means that there are a few hundred of us getting on planes.

Meg: Yes, that always gets me. I struggle with that. I struggle so much because I've also given up flying. I gave up flying two years ago. It's funny because I remember talking to Julia [Sanches] and she mentioned she was going to Catalonia for a residency and encouraged me to apply. And I was like, I made this promise to myself not to fly but it's so difficult to get residencies that

don't require travel. But what you just you did point out that is that the travel that we're doing is a drop in the bucket.

Jeremy: Right.

Meg: The hope, my hope, is that we'll be able to come together and take on these huge industries. That there's only collective action, whereas us counting how many trips we take, that's really thinking about individual carbon footprints and, the idea of an individual carbon footprint was popularized by BP to shield them from responsibility—to put that onus and that guilt on individuals to distract us.

Jeremy: So, I mean, I think that government action is the only thing that's going to make a difference at this point. I think that, at least intellectually, I know that my individual actions are rather insignificant. And it's more about wanting my actions and my practice to be consistent with my ideals. And that's the thing that's hard because, you know, it's impossible to live ethically within such a morally compromised framework and everyone has to decide for themselves how far they're prepared to push it. And, you know, do I not travel, which arguably leaves some of the work I would otherwise take on to those who do spend time in China and make the necessary connections and understand it at a level that I feel like I need to and want to? And also, for personal reasons, if I'm away from Asia for too long, I start to feel like I'm losing touch with an essential part of myself.

Meg: Ah, it's so complicated! Yeah. I don't have an answer, except that I totally I feel you on that kind of prefigurative way of living, like, we should try to live now how we want to live in the future. We should. That's exactly what I'm doing. But I try not to, you know, when people tell me they're traveling, I try not to get angry at them or throw it back in their face. I know, I understand this profession. You can get money for going to do a workshop in another country, but you can't get money to do it in the US. There are just so many contradictions, honestly.

Jeremy: So, just the basic level, I guess, just at the practical level of how we live day-to-day, you're already kind of at odds engaging with the climate crisis.

Meg: Yeah. It makes things difficult. But there are people addressing this. Michael Cronin, actually, just gave a talk on travel, or, rather, translating in a world where travel is no longer feasible or sustainable. His larger take away, though, wasn't that we should stop traveling altogether. It was that the kind of travel that we should be doing is the kind translators already practice, which is not like, "Oh, let's go on a holiday for three days," but rather a sort of immersive traveling. I think part of it is just talking about it together. If we don't have the conversations, then we're never going to figure it out.

Meg: So, a question. You started talking about this in the context of the co-operative in London, but how do you create a space, let's say, where you can, or rather, how does the collective here [Cedilla & Co.] help you tackle interpersonal dynamics? Those questions of competition, negotiating the economics of things, etc. How does the collective allow you to kind of think through those problems together? And if so, how?

Jeremy: Different members of the collective are engaged in different forms of advocacy work, which they share with us. And I think that expands the conversation. Julia and Alex are both members of the Authors Guild Translation Committee. Alison is part of a Japanese translators collective called Strong Women Soft Power, which we featured [in the ALTA blog series on collectives]. And Lissie, of course, runs ALTA. Sean and I have been on the ALTA organizing committee. I've been doing quite a lot mentoring for, most recently, the National Center for Writing in the U.K., providing a mentorship specifically for translators of color.

We're all engaged in these things and we bring them to the group. We meet. Well, usually once a month. But right now, we have a Zoom meeting every week.

Meg: Oh, wow. Really? Good job!

Jeremy: I think the fact that we were all up for this, that we said, yes, let's meet for one hour every week, showed the centrality of the collective to our lives and our practice. And it has never felt like a chore, but rather an essential aspect, really a lifeline at this time, particularly now that we are seeing more of each other, there is a space to bring these things into the conversation, to expand them, and to learn from each other, and it's not always translation related. Alex has got to number of us involved in his decarceration campaign.

Meg: Yes, exactly!

Jeremy: And it's, even if it's not directly translation related, I do think that, like all artistic practice, the way you think and the totality of how you live your life is going to find its way into the art you make. And that includes translation.

Meg: That's lovely. I'm probably going to use that quote. I know.

Jeremy: Yeah, well, in practical terms, I actually don't think this would have mattered. But in practical terms, and we were first starting the collective, we made the decision that they would be no overlapping languages. Both Julia and Heather translate Spanish, but that hasn't been an issue at all. And I actually think we could not be could have dispensed with that . . . regulation, with that precaution, and it would have been fine. Actually, I don't think we would have ever seen ourselves as competing with each other.

Jeremy: I'm also part of the Paper Republic, a Chinese-language translators group.

Meg: Ah my friend Emily [Goedde] works quite a bit with them. She's one of my best friends.

Jeremy: Oh, yes, she's great. So, Paper Republic has also been a huge source of solidarity. And I love so many things about what they're doing. They recently had a collaborative translation that they called "Have a Go." Basically, if you've always wanted to translate but have never done it, you could *have a go* at translating this essay. One hundred and twenty-four people participated and, across four zoom sessions, they got every single one of them into these giant collaborative workshops. The resulting translation, which is a joint translation of all one hundred and twenty-four people, was just put up on the web today.

Meg: I can't wait to read it. How did how do they render the authorship? Is it everyone's name or do they say "Paper Republic Collective"?

Jeremy: Let me see.

Meg: Oh, I am on the page now. "Translated by "Give It a Go" online translation workshop. Love it. OK!

Jeremy: So it's you know, I have a friend who took part and she'd never translated before, but like me, she's from Singapore, so she grew up speaking both languages. And she said she felt listened to and that everyone's experience was taken into account and everyone, or, at least those that I've heard from, have been happy with the result.

Meg: Gosh, that's so cool.

Jeremy: Yeah. And I think this is maybe the only real answer I see to your question about forms of collective authorship.

Meg: Yes. Well, what had me ask that question is because I've been facilitating a translation workshop with high school students, English-language learners, and before they would start translating, they would get into their language groups and then they would look at translations produced by the Poetry Center Workshop. And that's the authorship marker they use: "Poetry Center Workshop." So, basically, they have one person do a literal translation and then they all come together and anyone in this little workshop can contribute to the final version. I think they're in England. Yes. All right. And, more recently, at least in artist circles, you do see authorship being rendered as "so and so" collective. But I don't see that all that much in the writing world. And I was wondering if collectives might be a place to start thinking about how to do that.

I guess there are two things at odds here. When something is genuinely collaborative, it is very exciting and it's often more than the sum of its parts. But I think that bumps up against the other project in which a lot of people in the community are involved, which is increasing the visibility of the translators and, therefore, translation. The translator's name of the cover, which I think, overall, has been great and necessary because by putting a face to the practice, you render the practice more visible and start more conversations about it, but it does elevate the translator as individual.

Meg: Yeah. My question would be, does that just further reify the author function? Right? This idea of property. All that kind of stuff. That's I mean, I am not, obviously, the only one who has ever talked about authorship in terms of translation, but I do wonder if, in trying to occupy the position of the author, we aren't just committing the same, I don't know, misstep? If we really think that translation is about building community, at least. That's one of my larger questions, I don't have an answer.

Jeremy: I mean, I guess, what I would like to see space for is for the idea of individual authorship to exist in a way that doesn't claim sole authorship. You know, going back to acting. Say we're talking about Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*. Everyone can acknowledge that his performance is a masterpiece whilst also acknowledging that he couldn't have done it without the actors around him and the director and Shakespeare and all the other people who played Hamlet, and he's just one of many Hamlets. Right. His performance isn't definitive. No performance is definitive. It's just his contribution to a body of performances.

So I guess I would like to see an acknowledgment of the labor that goes into a piece of translation if it was authored by a single author without then ceding to them all of the . . . I'm not sure if I even have the word it, or if there are words for it . . . it's not even glory or anything like that.

Meg: Just ceding all of the labor! Right? It's as simple as that. And I think that many translators know that we aren't doing all the labor, we're often asking other people for help, we work with editors, all that kind of stuff. But how do we make that other kind of work visible alongside the singular translators work?

Jeremy: I mean I was reading Danny Hahn's latest translation, *I Don't Expect Anyone to Believe Me*, which has just come out quite recently. And he's got a, yes, it's an eleven-page translator's afterword. He talks through his process, but he also acknowledges a lot of people who have helped him, people who contributed certain ideas, people who help with certain puns, people who read first bits. So you really get the sense reading this, that it was a collaborative act. It is Danny's name on the cover, below the name of the Spanish-language author, but you couldn't read a translation note and think he was laying sole claim to that entire translation. It was clearly something that he sought out opportunities for collaboration and he shows through this acknowledgment that by doing so, he enriched the final work.

Meg: Yeah, I definitely think the acknowledgment pages is where a lot of that work happens in academic books. Specifically, you know, what I'd like for the Emergent Translators Collective is to always have the translators name and then say, you know, the translator's name *with* the Emerging Translators Collective. And then, on the back, list everyone who's in the workshop and in the collective to kind of say, you know, we're this group. You can't fit everyone's name on the cover, right? But that's where the collective name can be a signpost to then invite people in and ask about the collaboration process.

Jeremy: I mean, maybe we should have credits in books like we do in movies. Yeah. And actually Chinese-language books published in China do tend to have much fuller credits than the English-language books do. So if you're trying to find out who the editor of an English-language book was, it's often like trying to guess which name in the acknowledgments section was the editor. And in a Chinese-language book, it would just be on the right page. And the cover designer and the marketing person. I think what we were talking about, the centrality of authorship and the claim to sole authorship, has tended to maybe obscure the function in the English-language world. And a lot of the work—this has been mildly troubling me from time to time—a lot of the work of raising the visibility of the translator, for example, the #NameTheTranslator hashtag and so forth, hasn't really been about the solidarity of saying

everyone who put their labor into this book deserves to be acknowledged, and that they be fully credit at the back. It's more about saying, look, our work is creative and therefore deserves to be acknowledged, which I think sometimes has had the effect of suggesting that other types of labor are less worthy of acknowledgment.

Meg: Yes. I would agree. One of my professors always said, you know, the problem is that translators, we're trying to come up with a new form of "authorship." But we still have to lay claim, you know, to our labor in this whole thing. We really are just, again, bumping up against those contradictions. It's almost as if you can do nothing right. But Deborah Smith, you know, a little while ago, someone was lauding her and this group of other white women translators. And Deborah was like, let's not do this. Let's not have just four white women, you know, being the faces of translation when it's just not, it's just not the reality. Like, the world's translators aren't just for white women or for white men, you know? I mean, I think it points to this, this dynamic for those of us who aren't heritage speakers of the languages we translate, and I guess I should speak for myself here, but if I'm aware of the way that colonialism and imperialism works, I'm really apprehensive of my own position as a translator, you know?

Jeremy: Oh, yes, of course. And I think these things do get conflated in a sometimes unhelpful way. Often I have to remind people that you can be white and a heritage speaker. And I think it's unhelpful and a lot of things get conflated, right? It's like, diaspora, heritage-speaker, person of color, all of these terms are used interchangeably, whereas there are specific terms for specific meanings. So it's just this thing of diversity being a kind of seasoning, really, rather than any kind of rigorous framework for justice—bringing voices to the front. People should be given a platform.

Meg: Well, that's, I mean, that's my main thing about why I would prefer we always co-translate. That's something that I'm trying to push. I think that we're already moving to co-translation in a lot of ways. But for me, you know, reading Spivak, you know, she herself says that you don't want to be an essentialist when it comes to race, when it comes to ethnicity, etc. Right? You don't want to say, OK, these people have the right to translate by their "essential" features. And so if we're constantly working together, then we can negotiate these terms and make sense of them and try to understand what justice looks like instead of just saying, OK, we have a quota. A diversity quota.

Jeremy: Oh God, yeah. You know, I can always tell when I'm on a panel because someone at some point said, "Oh, we need diversity." I know. You always know when that's what's happening?

Meg: Lord.

Jeremy: Yeah. I'd like to go back to an earlier point about authorship and solidarity with people who are not the translator, but have contributed to the translation. I think that links back to an earlier point about how isolating the act of translation is. Not of necessity, but because of the way our publishing industry is set up. And I guess maybe because it's a relatively recent phenomenon to be a translator-practitioner with no institutional affiliation. But because it's so isolating, it has become quite easy to build solidarity with other translators if they're in the same

boat as you and also want community and can also collaborate, but it is harder to build solidarity with other people in the publishing process, particularly because the relationship between translators and publishers is often—again, this is not of necessity, but, because of the way the system is setup—often framed as adversarial. And so we don't have the opportunity and, in fact, you're treated as kind of weird if you want to have anything to do with anything else in the process, which also means you never get to meet these people and you have this kind of black box, you turn in your manuscript and then you don't get to talk to anyone. And then the book arrives in the mail a few months later.

Meg: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You might get something like, oh, you know, you have to change this or this or not. Depending on the publisher.

Jeremy: Oh, yes. And increasingly, I think that the bigger the publisher, the more, well, I used to think it was because they wanted to keep things simple. And it's just less hassle for them. But increasingly, I'm thinking it's because they are afraid of disruption and so why invite trouble by, for instance, inviting the translator to take part in, to have any input in the design of the final cover? Which, you would think that because they've spent so much time with the book that they might have useful things to say, but it's almost never happened. Which also means that it's a black box, like cover designers do amazing work, but I've never met one.

Meg: Yeah, no, you're totally correct. Like, why? Why isn't it? I thought it was the simplicity thing, that people are just always so busy. I mean, granted, I was at Open Letter for a month a couple of years ago and that kind of showed me how things move quickly. But also, like, weirdly, if there were more people on staff, you know, you could rectify this. I don't know. I try not to, like, I used to be very confrontational with publishers and now I'm just—I can't. It's not even worth getting in, not into arguments about payment or whatever. It does feel like there's this kind of adversarial relationship. And it just shouldn't be. But that I think that stems from the fact that they don't want to have to pay translators because they have to pay the authors. They just think, oh, well, I have to pay the big money, if you can call it that, to the authors. It's often not that much anyway.

Jeremy: And that's unfortunate. Well, I don't think there is that much of a sense of competition between translators, but whatever competition there is, it comes from the behavior of publishers. By creating an environment and by talking about translation in terms of scarcity. And, you know, by making us compete against each other in often quite dehumanizing ways. Yes.

They then set it up so that, you have to be very, I guess, secure in yourself to not absorb that framing of the profession. And to actually go, no, I'm not in competition with all these other people—they're my colleagues and they're building something together. And the fact that a publisher is making three of us send in an excerpt . . . that whole thing.

Meg: And you typically know who the other two people are.

Jeremy: Oh, yes.

Meg: They get so nit picky because all three samples are probably great.

Jeremy: Yes, and it's actually unhelpful, I'd rather not know because it's going to be subjective anyway. Yeah, I mean, it's actually, in my experience, it has helped knowing who the other people are and then it can feel more good-natured that way.

I do know that at moments like that I realized how little influence we have.

Meg: Yes.

Jeremy: You try to change the profession. And very early on in Cedilla's existence, for maybe about ten minutes, we discussed the question of whether we wanted to publish our own books? I guess in a model similar to what ETC is doing. And we just decided that because we all translate prose, I think if we'd been doing poetry, that would have been possible.

Meg: Yeah, novels are hard.

Jeremy: Yes. Novels would just it would have consumed us. We might have been able to make something happen. But I don't think it would have been satisfying or particularly effective. And we would just have spent all our time and energy doing that rather than translating.

Meg: That's one hundred percent true. It is. It is the most time consuming. It's honestly, I weirdly enough, my passion is making things. So sometimes, I mean, what I enjoy most about translation is, you know, the carving out of a text and working with other people to make something out of the text physically. And I find making publications to be, like, so rewarding. Yeah, one of things I'm constantly thinking about is like whether I really like literature or I just like making things. That's my own, my own preference. Because some translators, they read all day long. Literally you cannot take them away from books. And I'm like, actually, I'm good. I like a few books and I only translate what I really like because if I don't like it then I . . . that's why I can't make it. You know, as a full time translator, you have to kind of, you know, roll, with the contracts, I think.

Jeremy: I mean, I can say I've been quite lucky in that. I got to a point where I can steer things towards books that I'm actually interested in. But it is difficult, it is also that novels take longer. So you only have to find two or three a year, and finding them is doable.

Meg: That's true. So you translate three books a year?

Jeremy: Three, sometimes four. But I'm, because I live in an extremely expensive city, I translate more than I would like to, just in terms of having time for any kind of other life—to make ends meet. I would love to be in a position where I'm doing two to three, but three to four is more typical. I don't think I've had a full day off for really quite a while, which is extremely unhealthy and unsustainable and I seem to be perpetually late with something. And I couldn't take a day off with the amount of guilt and pressure that I put to myself.

Meg: I think that's so true for so many people, though. I mean, the kind of pressure we put on ourselves as translators . . . it's too much, honestly.

Jeremy: I've learned a lot from observing how other people in Cedilla are better at setting boundaries. And one of the things we do for each other is just to, I guess you would say, we give each other permission to take the time off that we need.

Meg: Yeah, it's important to hear that.

Jeremy: Yeah, it is, I think. As yourself, you're always afraid that you're not working hard enough or you're slacking off or whatever. Because as you said, we all this put this pressure on ourselves. But when we're observing each other, we can say "you're working far too hard." Or, "Even for you, this is beyond, you should stop that now." And because, you might know, but we just celebrated the fourth anniversary of Cedilla, and at this point, we know each other well enough to do this for each other. And to set these boundaries because for each other, because we're so bad at setting them for ourselves.

Meg: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, I, I feel that. I didn't realize it's been four years. Wow! Time goes by so quickly.

Jeremy: We only realized this because we take minutes at all of our meetings and someone pointed out that the first minutes were from May 2016. It does not feel like four years, but I guess that's right. And what's changed in all that time? I mean, I think the whole landscape has shifted. But also with us individually, looking around the group, all nine of us have grown and become much more grounded and kind of flourished because of the collective in a way that would have been much harder to bring about if we'd just been striving as individuals.

Meg: So we've already been talking for an hour, it's been awesome, talking about time going by really quickly. I guess I would be interested in just kind of hearing how you feel about being pulled into the decarceration project that Alex has pulled you guys into. And I mean, has he been asking you to make phone calls? I mean, that's all we really do at this point [because of Coronavirus restrictions].

Jeremy: I mean, yes, especially at this point. I mean, I tried phone banking, but it feels like, actually, now that I say this, it's making me think about the individual versus collaborative thing. Phone banking just felt kind of inefficient to me.

Meg: Yeah, it can.

Jeremy: I was like, just give me the list and I will make the phone calls and it will be faster and so I did just that. Now he's just been sending us the list and we make the phone calls and most of the time just speak to answering machines and hope that someone listens, occasionally you get to speak to a human being, there's a database, you get to input their responses and hopefully build some kind of picture of what's happening. Oh, for me personally, it's given me a way to feel like I belong here a little more. You know, I'm not a citizen. I don't get a vote. I have really been feeling like I live here, but I don't really have a say in what's happening. This is one way of trying to make a small difference that needs making. And it's, I guess, really the only thing I can do. I think that it's an important thing to do in and of itself, but it's also important to us because it's important to Alex.

Meg: Yeah. I love that. That's what being a comrade is. Standing in solidarity! Even if it isn't, you know, something that you are so personally invested in. You're invested in your comrade.

Jeremy: Yes. And I think that's exactly what we do for each other. And we all feel empowered to bring these things to the group. And also, things that we're less certain about we can bring to the group and say, do you think we should support this? Or it's just the right framing, or whatever. And it's just, I think, the right size that we have at the moment. Nine people. It's just the right size so that you have a sufficient breadth of perspectives. But it's also tight enough so that we don't lose sight of each other. It feels, when we discuss these things, that we all know where each other are at. See, you have a context for the discussion.

Meg: Oh, I love it. It gives me hope, for the future.

Jeremy: So, yes. I mean the weekly meetings, I think, really have made all of us feel a lot more optimistic that there is the way through this. Because despite the stress and uncertainty of the moment—if anything grows closer together rather than moving apart. It shows solidarity and building community is the way forward. And it is important, it's not something that we discarded when things got tough. It's something that we hold on to tighter.

Meg: Absolutely. Well, I think that's it. Thank you so much for talking to me!

Jeremy: Yes, thank you for this. I really enjoyed this. And it has given me an opportunity to think through ideas that have been swirling around my head.

Appendix C

Personal Interview with Alex Zucker

Alex: So, I will confess with a guilty feeling that I didn't read what you sent me.

Meg: How dare you?! No, I'm just kidding. It has already changed quite a bit.

Alex: So if there's anything you want to tell me, I'm happy to hear about it. If you don't want to or need to, that's ok, too.

Meg: Well, you're asking me to tell you what I'm arguing in my dissertation and I don't even know half the time. [Laughs.] I guess the whole dissertation really just takes the position that the ideal end goal of translation, especially literary translation, shouldn't be the product, but rather the process of creating community. And, you know, I talk a lot about how if we are serious about thinking about literary translation and translation writ large as a community-building project, then we need to be serious about dreaming up a new society in which we can take that on. So really, I'm just, you know, I have this whole intro on solidarity among the practitioners of translation. Then I talk about the translation workshop I designed for English-language learners at a local high school in Ypsilanti, MI. Then I theorize a bit about what "ecological translation" might mean.

This chapter I'm working on now is really just thinking about how we can build alternative structures for translation, like, how collectives can be one step in moving toward a different kind of society, which I'm arguing should be a care-centered society. I'm arguing that translation is care work, which I think we would probably all agree on in some sense, even if it's just caring for the text. A big thing for me is reclaiming care work as the creative foundation for our society. Right? Because a lot of theories, a lot of scholars, a lot of regular people say that if we're going to move in to a low-carbon, sustainable world, it'll have to be through care work. Right? Because care work is the most low-carbon work there is. It is just taking care of people and the world. So that's what I'm doing.

Alex: I like that. I mean, I can say that I wouldn't be able to sign onto a letter because I'm not—I know you're not asking me to think about it in terms of signing a letter, but I'm thinking about letters these days—but I feel like maybe what you're saying is implicitly true for what I've been sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously moving towards, but I wouldn't have put it that way. That's all right. But I think that it applies. You know what I mean?

Meg: Yeah, because the last thing that I'm going to do is have this little coda where I dream up what a future world for literary translators, as care workers, might look like. Consider a day in a different future, in a speculative society, where you, as a literary translator, spent a couple hours working on, I don't know, translating a text and then workshopping it with your collective.

Then say you went out and you helped in the community garden. And then you went out and helped with community translation. You know, assisting climate migrants. And then, perhaps, you do whatever you want to do, maybe community justice work or just relaxing. Right? That's what I would like for my future, really. I'm just trying to dream of a future that would mean that whatever we did would also contribute to repairing harm in the world and repairing the harm that we've done to the Earth. And there's one person who's already written an entire book on the environment and translation: Michael Cronin.

Alex: Who?

Meg: Michael Cronin. Have you ever read his work at all? He's written a ton of books. I don't know how he writes so quickly, but he wrote a book on eco-translation and it's really brilliant in a lot of ways. But what he doesn't focus on is the practice of translation. I mean, his idea is that we should be collaborating a lot more than we are now, but he never goes into *how* we would collaborate. And that's just what my entire dissertation is about—how we can collaborate. So what I'm saying is that co-translation is part of eco-translation. Right now it's all a dream. I'm just trying to dream up a better world. Because, you know, adrienne maree brown says that “all organizing is science fiction.”

Alex: Yeah, I did read that in her book, *Emergent Strategy*. I remember that.

Meg: So right now all I'm saying is mostly science fiction. It is speculation.

Alex: Yeah.

Meg: We're trying to, you know, be open and be able to work with what we have. And that's really hard to do it turns out.

With this chapter or essay or whatever it's going to end up being, I was most excited about being able to talk with you all. I really enjoyed talking to Jeremy [Tiang] yesterday. One of the things he mentioned was how you are pulling some Cedilla & Co. folks into making calls for SURJ [Showing Up for Racial Justice].

Alex: Yeah, I have done a little calling in.

Meg: I love that!

Alex: I mean, I guess I can say that I've been a member of SURJ now for over three years and the thing that I've had the hardest time with is the calling-in part. And I feel—now, I don't want to take us down a totally different tangent, and I want to be able to answer your questions—that I have, for most of my life, felt like I suffer from a lack of focus because I've never really had just one area of interest that fully satisfies me. There have always been multiple areas of interest and those areas of interest have never really seemed to fit together that well. I'm not going to say that I've stopped suffering over it, but I did take an aptitude test in 2017 that revealed that—and this doesn't make me like a better person or a smarter person or anything—but that revealed that I have unusually wide range of aptitudes. Most people's aptitudes are more clustered together than mine are. So there's actually a neurological reason why I am pulled in so many directions. It isn't just that I “lack focus.” That was a little bit of a relief. It doesn't solve any of my problems or challenges, but it does make me feel like less of a bad person that I'm not as focused as other people I know.

Meg: Oh, yeah, I totally get that.

Alex: And so, yes, one of those things is that, yes, I'm a translator, but I also have been doing—I mean, I'm still not totally comfortable with the term social justice, but I can use it—I've been doing social justice work on and off, let's say, since I was in college. That's actually before I was translating. So. But I've never felt like they go together all that well. And, you know, if people ask me whether my translation and, well, I don't feel like my translation work has to do with that [social justice work] very much, and I'm not necessarily trying to make it. The reason I translate is because it satisfies a different part of my brain. I'm using different aptitudes when I'm doing that, which is also not the same as the organizing or advocacy I've done for translators—that's a separate thing from translating itself, of course. One of the principles of SURJ is, you know, the whole point of SURJ is to call more white people into the movement for racial and economic justice and to dismantle white supremacy. And the calling-in part has been really hard for me, not that it's easy for anyone. And calling in translators to do social justice or antiracist work is not directly connected to translation, I've just had a very, I have a lot of reluctance to do it. I guess that's the way I would put it.

Meg: But where do you think that stems from? Is it because our lives and, well, professional norms dictate that we should keep those areas of interest separate?

Alex: I'm just thinking, because I'm not exactly sure, but I don't think it's that. Well, I guess I should say that it's not really because of people being translators, it's actually hard for me with everybody. I guess I feel like I need to know a person first. I've done workshops on how to call people in but, at this point, if I don't have enough of a relationship with a person, I just feel like it's not even worth it.

Meg: Yeah. That's where I am on that.

Alex: And I think that there's solid documentation or reasons to argue for that when it comes to calling people in. But the other thing is that I think it also has to be the right opportunity. So I put together and started co-hosting a virtual phone bank under the aegis of this campaign called “Free Them All for Public Health,” which is calling officials to free people from city jails, state prisons, and ICE detention because of the spread of COVID inside [the facilities], and which won't stay inside anyway because people walk in and out, whether they're incarcerated or they're staff. Since I had organized that, it wasn't just something that I was involved in that somebody else did, I felt less reluctant to invite friends to do it. So I invited, it wasn't just people from Cedilla, it was my wider group of friends, which included people in Cedilla. So I wasn't singling out Cedillans. And, yes, a few people showed up, which is great. And now, I mean, I have an email that I send out once a week, which has got like forty people on it. And most people, they're not showing up for the phone banking but that doesn't really matter. I don't know if they're making the calls on their own or not. I've been careful to say to people, Let me know if you want to be removed from the list, I won't be offended. People get so many e-mails. So I did do that. But I haven't been pressing people about it.

And actually, it's funny that you're bringing it up now, because one of the things I'm involved with—the main thing I'm doing—these past couple of weeks in SURJ is getting members to call their city council reps to vote to cut the NYPD budget. So that would be another thing that

potentially I would want to ask people to do. So I have to decide if I want to add another ask, but then the thing is, well, I fucking hate getting e-mails, too.

Meg: You know, everybody does!

Alex: But the other thing that I keep getting reminded of by organizers who, you know, are way more knowledgeable and experienced than me is that it's slow work.

Meg: Yes.

Alex: And that's not really my temperament, even though I know that from translating novels. I mean, that's slower, too, right?

Meg: Right. Because who said it all moves at the speed of trust? I'm totally forgetting. And it really does, it's just like you were saying—you have to have a certain level of familiarity and trust with people to make “the ask.”

Alex: Yeah, yeah.

Meg: Ok, so does the collective help you create those kind of internal dynamics of intimacy and solidarity that would then allow you to have the confidence to ask one another to do things outside of the remit of translation? And it sounds like, yes.

Alex: Yeah.

Meg: Now, I mean, I'm sure you were building those ties before you came into the collective, right? It's not like you all just met the first time when you came into the collective.

Alex: No, part of the reason I joined was that I already knew everybody. I wouldn't say that I exactly had a relationship with everybody, but I knew everybody. And, you know, as I told them when I joined—I mean, Sean [Bye] and Julia [Sanches] asked me to join when they first formed it but at that time, I was still co-chairing the Translation Committee for PEN America and I just felt like I had too much on my plate. I didn't want to sign on to something that I wasn't going to be able to follow through with. So I said, I really appreciate it [the invitation] and I would love to, but I just can't. So they said, Ok, and they went ahead and they started it up. And then afterward, after two years I think, I was still talking to them all. I can't tell you exactly how it resurfaced but it did, the question of my joining. I got a second invitation and this time I said yes. And, of course, by that point, I wasn't co-chairing the Translation Committee anymore and, all throughout this time, I'd been working with the Authors Guild and of course going to the ALTA conference, but I didn't feel, like I mean, the Translation Committee isn't quite a community either, I mean, it's not even really a committee. I mean, it's called a committee, but we're not elected. It's just whoever shows up for the meetings. I tried, you know, a little bit while I was co-chairing to build it into more of a community. I started saying, Let's go out to eat afterward.

Meg: Yes, sure.

Alex: When I first started going to the committee, you know, you would show up for the committee meeting and sit down and have a meeting and then everybody would say goodbye and go home. And it would just leave me feeling really empty, actually. So when I became co-chair, I said to Margaret Carson, what about having dinner afterward? You know, so people can get to know each other a little bit more. And like, at least stick around and talk. So, you know, we started doing that and I felt like it definitely helped.

Joining Cedilla gave me—because, you know, there was really only a translation community during the times of the [ALTA] conference. So I felt like it would be good for me personally to belong to a group of translators that was an active community. Like, if a community is, among other things, let's say, around what the definition is, but shared norms and some kind of mutual support and regular contact. Let's say those are the three basic things that Cedilla offers and also even some kind of accountability and a sense of “I'm going to do this for you, you're going to do this for me.” And we're committed to that at a really basic level in Cedilla. I know you know this from talking to Jeremy that we sometimes read each other's contracts. And anybody who wants to can ask people to read pitches, samples, really anything. But nobody is obligated to, it's just that you send an email to the group and say, I have this sample, would anybody be willing to read it and give me feedback? And there's always some number of people who say yes.

Those were all things about it that I liked. The other thing that I realized right around the time that I joined was, having had that experience co-chairing the Translation Committee and then right around the time that ended I got active in SURJ, and thinking about the communities that I do well in, I realized that I tend to do better in improvised communities than institutional ones. Meg: So, what are your favorite parts about Cedilla? What gives you most the most hope about where literary translation is going? What makes you feel most in community? How do you create that community with other Cedilla members?

Alex: Well, we did a retreat.

Meg: You did?!

Alex: We went to, well, Esther Allen, she and her husband have a house north of New York City, in the countryside. I think she told Heather Cleary. Heather knows her pretty well. And she told Heather, you know, normally, they rent it, but in the off-season there aren't a lot of takers. And she said, you know, if Cedilla ever wanted to use the house as a retreat for a week that they'd be welcome.

Meg: That's awesome.

Alex: So we did that in February. So there are nine of us and one person was not able to make it, which was really unfortunate. Lissie Jaquette, who lives in Arizona, couldn't come. That was a bummer. And not everybody was there the whole week. I mean, the first of those of us who went in the beginning, we went on Monday and stayed through Sunday or the next Monday. But some people didn't come till Thursday, which was also fine. So some of us were there the whole week. We had some kind of loose topics for discussion, but we also did a lot of personal sharing about our lives. And it was very intimate and moving. Then during the day, I mean, those discussions

happened at night after dinner, sometimes started during dinner, and then during the day, you know, people would work or do whatever they wanted. The only meal that we were kind of required to take together was dinner. And, you know, we bought groceries together. And it was awesome.

Meg: That sounds, I mean, wow.

Alex: Yeah, that was really powerful for me at least.

Meg: And that's exactly what I think. I mean, that's what we need to do to become a community.

Alex: Well, this is you know, I mean, there's an organizer I follow on Twitter named Kelly Hayes.

Meg: Yeah. Kelly Hayes! Yeah, I follow her, too.

Alex: It was in Chicago. I've never met her personally. I started following her during Standing Rock because she was out there both, I think, writing about it and organizing out there. And like, she was the one who, or she started at some point to tweet stuff by Mariame Kaba. That's how I found her. But anyway, Kelly Hayes, she started this podcast about, well, I don't know if it was just before the pandemic or what. I mean, I think it was a coincidence that she started it around the time of the pandemic. I don't think it was a response to the pandemic. But it's called Movement Memos. She actually talks to a lot of organizers, and one of the things that she specifically talked about this past week, which was with Mariame Kaba, was that, as Kaba said, that relationships are built through doing things with people. You don't establish a relationship with somebody in order to do something with them, right? That relationships are built by the fact that you're doing something with others. And that's always been true for me, I know. And it's just, you know, one of those things like I feel like if people paid more attention to organizers, we wouldn't be in the mess that we're in because I feel like organizers just understand way more about how relationships and society work than most of the people that we are used to paying attention to on that stuff.

Meg: Yeah.

Alex: And they're almost like secular religious leaders or something.

Meg: I feel that.

Alex: So, Cedilla, you know, so we do stuff together, right? So we did that retreat. We've done readings together. And then, you know, we have these once-a-month meetings. And we're still looking at each other's stuff. It's basically just a commitment to stay in closer contact with people and both asks for help and offer it in return. So I guess there is a mutual aid aspect to it. I mean, I wouldn't call it a mutual-aid group but it has some mutual aid aspects to it.

Meg: I'm forgetting, did Cedilla extend its services out to the community? I know it was like at the beginning, maybe they thought they could do consulting for others, but that turned out to be really difficult, right?

Alex: I think that for Sean and Julia that was part of their original conception. They've done a few interviews. I did a longish interview with them for *In Other Words*. But they've talked to other people about this. It's probably on the ALTA blog, too. They probably talked about it. I think, yeah, in the beginning they were thinking that Cedilla could serve as, or that publishers might come to us for reports or scouting, but that's not the way it works now. And actually a lot of us don't want to do that. I don't really like doing reports. I mean, I've done two, I think, in my whole life. And one of them was like two years ago.

Meg: I'm just thinking, you know, it might be better to not do that because it takes you into the realm of a nonprofit. Whereas it kind of seems like your collective right now really is just about creating this kind of relationship and community.

Alex: Yeah, and even our newsletter at various points, we've had internal discussions about whether it should be more service-oriented in the sense of, you know, providing content. And I think one or two of our members at various times have kind of floated that idea. And it's generally been shot down. I think mainly because we all feel like, you know, there's so much unpaid labor already involved in what we do that it's the last thing we need, even if it's on an occasional basis. Like, why would you voluntarily plan to add more unpaid labor to your plate? You know what I mean? Like, it happens and we all deal with it. Like, no, let's not plan to do, you know, a newsletter where we're, you know, reporting and doing little reviews of books. If people want to put in what they've been reading lately, fine. But you don't have to. You know, this is a book that somebody sold. Here's some reviews that this person's translation. You know what I mean?

Meg: Yeah. Well, I think that's about all it's been really exciting hearing both like two voices talking about the collective. I just I feel immensely hopeful. When I hear about how it's going and I feel like, hell yea, we can do this. I think, like you were saying, if we were to just listen to organizers—we really need to go all in on building relationships at this point.

Alex: And it's crazy for me to even hear myself say that, because, you know, like again, I mean, like the type of person I am, the last thing I want to do is ever have any relationships with anybody. [Laughter.] It's just that it's just that I know that I have to in order to function.

Meg: Exactly!

Alex: Or to have values and if I want to live according to my values, I have to have relationships. I can't live by my values in isolation. That's basically the problem.

Meg: Yeah. I also think that once you start, it's like building muscle. Building community and being in community with people takes work but you start to really love it. I mean, sometimes you're like, I don't want to leave the house . . . You know, I never wanted to do group projects. And now I'm completely different. And it was like such a transition for me to go from being an

individual to someone who always seeks out collaboration and being in relationships. But it can be done! I just think that, you know, we can all unlearn our desire for individualism.

Alex: Yeah, the hard part is trying to figure out how to help people realize that.

Meg: That's where I feel like I'm not a great organizer. [Laughs.]

Alex: Yeah, I mean, I'm totally not. You know, it's like the other part of this interview [with Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba] that I really liked. I mean, I tweeted about it. They were talking about how there's a difference between telling and storytelling, you know, and too many of us still think that if you tell somebody something enough times, it will move them to action. But it doesn't really work that way.

Meg: Right.

Alex: But it takes a lot longer to figure out a story to tell than just telling somebody about something that happened. And the same story doesn't work on everybody.

Meg: Yeah. I actually think that's where translation helps with organizing, at least a little bit. Translators are well positioned to hold those many stories, and the many ways you can tell a story.

Alex: Tell me again what you said at the beginning about . . . oh, shit. I should've written it down.

Meg: Maybe the end game of translation is building community.

Alex: Something like that.

Meg: Yeah, something like that.

Alex: I mean, yeah, I guess that's what it was, because I guess when I was listening to you talk about it I was thinking that, yes, that's definitely true. And it's kind of like, that's ideally what life is.

Meg: Yes, exactly.

Alex: I mean, what's the fucking purpose? [Laughter.]

Meg: That's exactly it. Thank you so much talking to me.

Alex: It's good to talk. Appreciate your sharing what you're doing with me.

Meg: Well, to be continued!

Appendix D

Personal Interview with Anton Hur

Meg: Well, thank you again for talking with me. You know, I don't think we've ever met at ALTA, weirdly enough.

Anton: Ah, yes. I joined this year, I think.

Meg: Oh, ok, because Sophie [Bowman] and I were on a panel about collectives.

Anton: Right.

Meg: I was just like, *yes, everything you're saying is right*, and the Smoking Tigers are amazing.

Anton: Right. I think Sung Ryu was at that ALTA as well. So you may have seen her or maybe bumped into her, but that's about it. Yeah, we are, because we started off and really we started off in the U.K. We started off in BCLT, so that's kind of our spiritual epicenter, aside from Seoul. So we haven't had much interaction with ALTA. I was supposed to go this year and then all of this [the Covid-19 pandemic] happened. I think I'm still I'm still doing a panel there. Janet Hong invited me to do a panel there about the [Emerging Translator] Valley of Death. So I think that's still going on. But we were supposed to do a separate “Korean Diaspora in Translation” panel with Morgan Giles and Takami Nieda. So we were supposed to do that, but we decided maybe it's a little too much right now. I'm sure you know what I mean, we're all a little numb right now and in shock.

Meg: Totally. I mean, why add more stress to the moment?

Anton: But I would love to attend [ALTA] some day. I met Rachel Daum last year over the summer and she was just wonderful. And, you know, Jeremy Tiang, whom I idolize.

Meg: I just spoke to Jeremy! He was the first translator I talked to for these interviews. I knew I wanted him to talk because at the ALTA 2017 collectives panel, I was talking about Marx and he came up to me afterward and said we need more Marxist analysis in the field of literary translation.

Anton: Oh yeah. I really love the idea behind ETC, by the way. I think it's really, really needed. Actually, my second translation came out of a self-publishing project.

Meg: Wow! Tell me more.

Anton: So I self-published something and a publisher saw it—a very new publisher saw it. I self-published a short story on Amazon Kindle. I think maybe like five people bought it, you know, single digits. But I posted it because I had it and because the author was long dead. It was out of copyright. And I know how to do the whole Kindle thing. I mean, it's not that hard, really. Then, out of the blue, some brand new publisher [Honford Star] contacted me saying that they read my translation and that they were planning on publishing a book by the same author, Kang Kyeong-ae. They asked if I wanted to be the translator. I was like, well ok, I've never heard of you, I'm Googling you. It was to be their one of their first books. And they said they'd submit the work for a PEN Translates grant. There are two guys who run Honford Star and one of them happened

to be living in Korea at the time, so we met. No one knew who they were, but then it received the PEN grant. That was the moment when I was like, oh, *this is happening*.

Beforehand, I kept telling my husband, *I refuse to believe that this is happening, it makes no sense*. I think they print in Korea but they distribute in the UK. They have an interesting kind of like thing going on. But, anyways, definitely—translators owning the means of production. I'm all for that.

Meg: Please. Please! We can do it! We can probably do it better than they can do it! We know what we're doing.

So how long have you lived in Korea?

Anton: 30 years.

Meg: Oh, all the years! So, I've just made a new friend, Olan Munson. Does her name ring a bell?

Anton: Oh, yeah, I've met her.

Meg: Yeah, yeah. I feel like she mentioned them [Honford Star] recently.

Anton: Maybe. Is she translating? She won an award and disappeared!

Meg: Oh, yeah. She's part of our literary translation workshop at the University of Michigan.

Anton: A lot of LTI [Literary Translation Institute of Korea] people might win an award and then publish one thing and then they completely disappear and do something else.

Meg: Yeah. I think it was more just the precarity of not knowing, of being a freelance literary translator. That's why I went to grad school. I'm at the end of my sixth year now, and I can tell you there's nothing after, it's just a void.

Anton: I'm sure you have many exciting projects.

Meg: I never wanted to go into academia anyway. It can be terrible, dealing with the hierarchies, the power dynamics. All of the older men telling you what to do all the time and telling you you're wrong. It's very hard. But now there are no jobs at all.

But, anyway! Congratulations on doing the self-publishing thing. It's kind of crazy that it worked, but I understand why it worked. Because people can search for it and then be like, damn.

Anton: The thing we have to remember, as translators, is that nothing happens without us. And I think, really, we're much more important than what people in power make us out to be. I mean,

everyone's work is crucial. But, you know, without the translation, it's not going to happen—there's nothing to sell. Nothing.

Meg: Nothing.

Anton: Yeah. Authors are, of course, critical. But at the same time, you need at least a sample to sell their work outside of the source market. And, you know, I don't know what it's like in your language combination, but the Korean market is only so big. So for a lot of authors, it's quite a lifeline to be translated. Not that any of my authors owe me anything but, for example, a critic made a good point when talking about my translation of *Cursed Bunny* by Bora Chung, which is coming out next year. I basically picked this book out of a pile and I just loved the writing so much. And then I immediately met the author and I told her I really loved the book. I didn't care how many copies had sold in Korea. I didn't care about that at all. And what happened was once that won the PEN/Heim [translation grant], people in Korea became more curious about it and it began to sell again. One critic—Seohyun Ahn, who writes for *Jaem & Moeum*, which was doing a spotlight on the Smoking Tigers in Winter 2019—commented that it was a case in which a translator discovers a work for the source audience.

Meg: Oh, yes.

Anton: And this had happened before on a much larger scale. When Deborah Smith's translation of *The Vegetarian* won the Booker Prize, the book's author, Han Kang, was not a best-selling author at all in Korea. She had, you know, a cult following, and those readers would buy everything [she wrote]. But she was not considered a major writer until she won the Booker Prize overseas. And, you know, people are talking about her for the Nobel Prize, which would be amazing. So it was really a case of the translation doing well, which prompted a renaissance for that writer within their source culture. And I think that's the power of the translator. I feel if we can figure out how the text really works and we express that in our translation then, you know, it has this potential of *adding* to the work, not simply taking from the work.

Meg: I mean, beautifully put.

Anton: It took over a decade for *The Vegetarian* to be translated. Something like that. I remember asking Han Kang in 2009 or 2010, *which of your books would you like to be translated?* And she said, *The Vegetarian*.

And I still remember that she came to LTI Korea, and she gave a lecture and that was my question. She had been, you know, pushing for it in her own way. I think that until it met the translator it met, until Deborah had translated it, it was not tracking in publishing, in acquisitions. So I really feel like it was Deborah who did a really significant feat of translation, not just, of course, in terms of it being a translation, but also the commercial aspect of it. Portobello Books brought it out and they were very aggressive in marketing the book.

Meg: Yeah. I mean, it makes all the difference. Yeah. I think this leads into one of my questions, thinking about the kind of ecosystem of translators and publishers and agents in your language combination. I mean, especially in the Smoking Tigers. You all have the same languages in

common. Do you want to talk a little bit about how the Smoking Tigers came to be? How you bring in new people? Were you friends beforehand?

Anton: Yes. So we formally started in the U.K., but we actually, I guess we really started in Korea. At least the core membership, which is Sophie Bowman, Sung Ryu, Slin Jung, Agnel Joseph, we knew each other, we had been workshopping for years with each other at Sora Kim-Russell's workshop, which is run through LTI's academy. And so we knew each other through the workshop. We knew each other's style, and we knew each other very well. We went to each other's weddings. So we're friends and translators. We had that. And then LTI Korea had this program where they sent people to BCLT summer school so that we can have, you know, a range of training methods.

And so we went! I can't remember if it was the first year we were there or the second, either in 2016 or 2017, but they had a panel on a collective, which was Starling Bureau. Starling Bureau came in and they had just launched that year, so they were very new. And they're always kind of surprised when we bring up this stuff, when we're like, *you guys inspired us*. We talked to some of them. I remember talking to Paul Russell Garrett. And we talked to some of them about what it had been like for them, how they ran it. And Sophie had the idea that we should just make one for us, that we'd be a kind of support group.

Like it's something that we already do. And we knew that some of us were also moving on, moving out of Korea. So wouldn't it be nice to have an excuse to, you know, keep in contact with each other? And we were already doing the things that other collectives were doing. Well, what we wanted our collective to do—asking each other for advice about how to market our manuscripts and doing swaps and, you know, other kinds of insider information like, oh, don't work with that or that publisher or editor.

So we had this whole system going on. So we asked ourselves, why don't we just formalize that? I knew how to make a website, and a lot of collectives are basically just a website and a group of friends. We thought, we can do that.

And then we were trying think of the right name. We had this whole conversation over Facebook. We were thinking Twisted Pine, but a surprising number of Korean iconography is already taken. So we ended up with that old saying, *Once upon a time, back when tigers used to smoke* and we were like, let's go with Smoking Tigers. And we checked and the domain was available and that's how it happened. There is a band called Smoking Tigers in Australia and we've been accidentally tagged for each other's work a few times but, by now, they know us and we're totally friends and we've posted their music on our Facebook as well. We were on Facebook Groups, but then we moved to Slack.

We did workshops but that's kind of suspended right now because everyone is weirdly busy, everyone has work to do. We get a lot of work that comes in through our email address. I'm always like, hey, someone take this job and everyone's like, I'm doing this book or I'm doing whatever. So things are a little busy right now. And also there's this coronavirus pandemic . . . So that's where we are. But yes, we were definitely friends before. We trust each other.

We just accepted a new member. We actually invited three new members, but only one has accepted so far. We have a formal process. We post our nominations on Slack and anyone who gets a second will be given an invitation. But every single Smoking Tiger member has a veto. And we only tell the candidates that they are up for consideration when we issue them the invite.

Meg: That is crazy interesting. Is there like a blood ceremony to get in once they accept?
[Laughter.]

Anton: No, they're given a link to the Slack. [Laughter.]

And I tell them I can make them any kind of Web page they want. They're invited to attend all of our workshops. There are three Smoking Tigers in Toronto for some reason, so they've had a couple of workshops. And, you know, they're free to invite whomever they want from outside the collective because we trust each other. Tigers trust each other and we trust whomever our fellow members trust. Those are basically the benefits—and you get all the information in the Slack. It [the industry] can kind of be a minefield.

Meg: Yeah, I get that.

Anton: Yes, certain institutions. And hidden rules for grants. I tweeted about this recently, about the LTI sample grant and things that they don't tell you until afterward. There is so much of that. And basically Korean literature in translation basically runs on grants. I mean, it doesn't have to but if it didn't, the barriers for entry would be just completely insurmountable, in my opinion. Not so much, because Korean literature itself cannot win in a meritocracy, but precisely because publishing is not a meritocracy.

Meg: Yes!

Anton: The structures are so misogynistic. And, you know, most Korean authors with big hits are women. Publishing is so misogynistic, so racist. People, almost instinctively, think less of a translation because it's from an Asian country.

Meg: I don't know what to say, you know, except that I know exactly what you're talking about. So many of us know this.

Anton: There's so much to disincentivize translators from entering the space of literary translation that I feel we can't survive without grants. But at the same time, the way that some of these grants are run . . . they have all these terrible rules that just make our lives so much harder and put such a large burden on the translator. And there's so much that's still being done on spec, like we have to work on spec to get funded for samples. For samples?!

Meg: So I've never been paid for a sample. I feel right now only certain people really know how to work that system. And I'm speaking about translating from Catalan specifically. A handful of people always land the contracts. That's why I quote the Valley of Death in my dissertation. Even if you've tried and you've done all these samples—it's very frustrating.

Anton: Yeah, every day, literally every day, I say to myself, why am I doing this? Yeah, literally every day. And I'm pretty well positioned. So if I feel like this, I can't imagine what other people think. And I've been talking to a few other Smoking Tigers recently about this and they feel very discouraged and demoralized. And it's the deliberate demoralizing that's most impactful. There's a certain Korean right's holder to translators of Korean literature. They're outright hostile. At this point, I refuse to work with them. They're terrible, terrible people who will insult you to your face, who will imply that you are charging too much for a sample, despite it being below market price, actually. And many Korean literary critics tend to be—well, recently, they've become a bit better—but they tend to be very hostile towards Korean literature in translation as well.

Meg: I saw that.

Anton: Yeah. They get very defensive, almost immediately. So there's a lot of that in Korea, which comes from the fact that English is such a class marker in Korea. So I understand it to an extent. If you can speak English in Korea, you're automatically considered to be from a certain background. So if you look at that, this is interesting, and I'm not sure if any Korean will tell you this, but if you look at how Samsung, LG, the major Korean corporations pick their people, they always include an English score.

Meg: What?!

Anton: Yeah. So it's not like all of these people go on to do jobs that involve English. They are basically picking people according to a class marker. They're basically saying we don't want working-class people working in our corporations. We want people who can afford a college education and can afford to go overseas to learn the colonizer's language. We want people who are plugged in to that class working for us. That is the signal that they are sending. And because we live in that kind of culture, of course, people are going to look at people like me and say, you are using your class privilege, which I am, of course. But at the same time, if I really wanted to use my class privilege, would I be doing literary translation?

Meg: I mean, how do you fight for the worth of literary translation in that kind of context?

Anton: Right. Very, very good question. So I think one of the things that people say about me is that I'm very forward. You know, I take every opportunity I get to talk about the work. I'm modeling that after translators like, for example, Daniel Hahn, who works very hard to elevate the position of literary translator in public. To make us more visible and to create a discourse that expands the productivity of the translator, so to speak, so that it doesn't seem like we're just passively changing one language from the other.

We're trying to be very political with our choices as well. I mean, obviously the most important thing is that we like the work. But a lot of the works that we translate—especially if you ask, for example, Sophie Bowman, who is extremely deliberate in what she chooses—we choose because they feel so urgent. So there's this kind of activism on behalf of certain sectors of Korean literature and also activism on behalf of translators. I don't know if we can describe it as being activism, per se, or being an activist, but it's creating a kind of awareness and archive.

Meg: Well, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me!

Anton: Thank you so much. This was fun. Very, very informative for me as well.

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