

*An introduction to Translation, Poetry and Creative Practice*

**Claire Wilson**  
**University of Canberra**  
[clairerosslynwilson@gmail.com](mailto:clairerosslynwilson@gmail.com)

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Recent debates about the translation of Amanda Gorman's poems, after her moving reading/performance at USA President Biden's inauguration, have thrust this quiet artform into the spotlight. But while there is a movement against the invisibility of the translator, the argument that translations must almost be undetectable (in that if the translation is good you don't notice it's from another language) perhaps understates the productive cultural negotiations that take place when moving between languages. Translation academic Haidee Kotze explains that 'this demand that translations should completely assimilate themselves to the expectations of the receiving culture reflects the receiving culture's ethnocentrism; its unwillingness to engage with cultural difference' (Kotze 2021).

However, more than just translating meaning from one language to another (or from one culture to another), translators of poetry can find the act of translating opens up new spaces of experimentation and expression, stretching the rules of language in new ways as they endeavour to find the path between languages. The space between languages can be a creative space, rather than one that is solely concerned with questions of what constitutes a correct translation or what a readership might be expected to understand. Rather than being invisible, a translation has the potential to start conversations between cultures and people, raising questions through the play of language.

This edition takes a wide understanding of translation, exploring not only translation practices, but also the ways in which translation can be an impetus for thinking and creating for both poets and translators. The edition explores the practice of translation as an encounter with other cultures or as a collaborative act; it unravels the cross-disciplinary associations made when taking words into transit; it investigates the journey into the self as one's own languages interact and pull against each other.

For example, Dominique Hecq's performative paper 'explores what is at stake in the act of autotranslation', drawing from her own practice to identify the transference between languages and how one negotiates this space through 'a voice, a word, a letter threaded

through the fabric of language'. Jean Page also explores the way encounters with translation can contribute to a poet's work in her analysis of Australian twentieth-century poet James McAuley's reading and translation of the early twentieth-century Austrian poet Georg Trakl. This encounter found its way into McAuley's work and Page considers the potentials of translation as travel.

Inevitably, this edition also explores the translation between cultures and places, exploring ways of encountering the words of another culture. Cassandra Atherton, Paul Hetherington and Rina Kikuchi's paper is a good example of this, as it draws on the experiences in a series of translation workshops at Meiji University. The paper investigates the role of place and translating in situ, as well as the role of informal conversations in developing an understanding of a poet's perspective and poetic choices, arguing that 'while translation is often undertaken by the translators in their country of residence, the experience of genius loci and undertaking co-translation in situ may best accommodate such a cross-cultural synergy'. Nadia Niaz straddles multiple cultural contexts in her paper as she considers translation in multilingual poetry. The paper raises the question of how Australian and Canadian poets 'who write multilingually negotiate and deploy their cultural knowledges, who they write for, and how their audiences receive them'.

Subhash Jaireth and Bill Boyd's papers take a multidisciplinary approach to translation, opening up the discussion by applying ways of thinking about translation to different contexts. Boyd explores the 'borrowing, appropriation, reworking and decontextualisation of language, ideas and other writers' work' by Scottish writer Hugh MacDiarmid, and in turn applies his own appropriation of a MacDiarmid poem in a discussion of education. In his montage-essay, Jaireth takes us on a journey through Stephen Poliakoff's movie *Shooting the Past* as a way to unravel the notion of translation as movement between the photographic and the cinematographic, leading to a discussion of a wider understanding of the meaning of translation.

Woven throughout the edition are example of translations and self-translations into English from Spanish, Frisian, Romanian, Filipino, Bikol and Scots. The translations often reflect the challenges raised in papers, such as Merlinda Bobis' and Isabel Alonso-Breto's self-translations following on from Hecq's discussions in the paper on *The Uncanny Pleasures of Autotranslation*. The negotiation within this edition between critical and creative practice, also explored in several of the papers, proves to be a rich ground for thinking through the creative slippages and possibilities when translating poetry. Each of the translations is accompanied by a note from the translator, which briefly describes their approach. These translator notes are not intended as a comprehensive outline of where their methodology sits in the academic field of translation, but rather it is intended to provide insight into the creative process and choices made when undertaking a translation. These introductions to the translation could be read as starting points for thinking about the creative potential of the translation process.

Together, the papers and translations explore a number of themes, including intercultural exchange, connection to place, the slippages and difficulty in the translation process and translation as a way to open up thinking about the world.

## **Bibliography**

Kotze, Haidee 2021, 'Translation is the canary in the coalmine', *Medium*, 15 March, retrieved 14 April 2021, <<https://haidee-kotze.medium.com/translation-is-the-canary-in-the-coalmine-c11c75a97660>>

**Claire Rosslyn Wilson** is a poet, editor and researcher, with particular interests in cultural diversity and creative expression for social change. She co-wrote *Freelancing in the Creative Industries* (Oxford University Press, 2015), and was the poetry editor for the human rights journal *Right Now*. She is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra, Australia, where she is researching creative writing and cultural adaptation.