ASYMPTOTE
FOR EDUCATORS

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

APRIL 2016 | HISTORY WILL BREAK YOUR HEART

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **April 2016 *Asymptote* Guide for Educators**. With each new issue, we release this guide to provide materials designed to support educators who want to integrate *Asymptote* content into their classrooms.

We hope that *Asymptote*'s educational materials find their way into a wide range of classrooms and contexts, across regions and disciplines, and so we have tried to design a flexible resource that can supplement various learning environments. This guide is arranged into **eight sections**, each representing a different classroom concept which we believe can be reinforced through the study of world literature in translation, and includes lesson plans for each concept.

The April 2016 issue of *Asymptote*, themed **"History Will Break Your Heart"** (after one of our visual pieces) contains works from around the world that portray moments of revolution, war, displacement, oppression, and resistance. We hope the following materials will help educators to engage with the classroom concepts at their intersection with this highly relevant theme.

We realize that the appropriate age ranges for each lesson this will vary widely, so we encourage educators to adjust these lessons to meet their needs, and to record these modifications. Please leave **feedback, suggestions, and classroom anecdotes** here.

Finally, if you like what we do and want to get involved, we would love to hear more from you! We are currently seeking:

- *New team members* with a passion for pedagogy and world literature who are willing to commit their time and expertise on an ongoing basis.
- *Contributors* willing to share their thoughts and experiences about teaching world literature via written pieces for the Asymptote for Educators forthcoming website.

If you're interested in any of the above roles, or if you'd like to give us additional feedback, please contact us at **education@asymptotejournal.com**.

LITERATURE IN WORLD CONTEXT:
HISTORY WILL BREAK YOUR HEART

> *Literature is necessary to politics above all when it gives a voice to the one who doesn't have a voice, when it gives a name to the one who doesn't have a name, and especially to all that political language excludes or tends to exclude…Literature is like a ear that can hear more than Politics; Literature is like an eye that can perceive beyond the chromatic scale to which Politics is sensitive.*
>
> – Italo Calvino, *The Uses of Literature*

The theme of this April issue of *Asymptote* is "History Will Break Your Heart," after this feature about the South African visual artist Kemang Wa Lehulere. You can find further elaboration in the Editor's note on the intro page of the April 2016 issue. When asked how history has broken his heart, Lehulere replies, "I wouldn't say that history has broken my heart personally, more that the title of the show speaks to a broader and more general kind of history of South Africa, and history of the world…I think the title speaks to marginalised histories, personal narratives—and those things will break your heart."

Lehulere's quote speaks to one of the many strengths of literature as a response to and rendering of a historical reality: the fruitful juxtaposition of the "general" and "personal" narratives. Sometimes, to learn about the tragedies and transgressions of the world, we need more than facts. As American author Tim O'Brien explains in his novel *The Things They Carried*, "That's what fiction is for. It's for getting at the truth when the truth isn't sufficient for the truth."

In this section, we provide two lessons. The first looks in depth at one feature, our excerpt from Youssef Rakha's *Paulo*. The second works comparatively across multiple features, and identifies potential points of intersection between *Asymptote* features and current events.

Further Resources- Literature and Politics:
http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/literature-and-politics/
http://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2015/3/6/a-conversation-with-youssef-rakha

<u>Lesson 1</u>

From This Issue:
Youssef Rakha's *Paulo*, translated by Robin Moger

Discuss:
How does this novel respond to the idea of Heroism? Thinking beyond this novel, what is the role of heroism today, particularly in relation to current conflicts? Do you consider the designation of "hero" a useful category?

What is the role of social media and technology (including narcotics) in the journal entries here? Does this surprise you? How does this fit with your understandings of modern warfare?

What is the effect of the novel's form? What do these section breaks remind you of, and how do they influence your experience of the text?

How does this piece of Rakha's novel depict the situation in Egypt? Compare it to a news article or a film. Discuss literature as a cultural document- the role it plays in memorializing a moment in history. If memory serves both to fix an image of a given moment and to construct an interpretation of that moment through an individual's subjective perception, how does literature similarly fill both functions? Compare and contrast the depiction of this moment in Egypt's history that you find in *Paulo* with those that you find in the contextual resources listed below.

Engage:
<u>Creative Writing Assignment</u>: According to Italo Calvino, "Literature is necessary to politics above all when it gives a voice to the one who doesn't have a voice, when it gives a name to the one who doesn't have a name, and especially to all that political language excludes or tends to exclude." Choose a figure from your own life who you believe to be voiceless or nameless, or a circumstance that you believe deserves recognition that it does not receive. Write a few pages (fiction or creative nonfiction) that relate this story you believe deserves to be heard.

<u>Compare and Contrast</u>: Calvino's quote with Rakha's in the translator's note: "In 2012, as the events narrated here were taking place, Rakha wrote: "I want to argue that conceiving of the self as inclusive, pluralistic space is far more rewarding and ultimately also more honest than presenting it as a narrative of the triumph of good over evil (or the defeat of good by evil), no matter what kind of good the subject stands for, or how complex, which is what literature is likely to reduce to once it surrenders itself wholly to the idiocies of history. The self as a geography of humanity that is trying, in a desperate but courageous bid, to transcend history: that seems far more meaningful than the self as the convoy of an inevitably false and ultimately one-dimensional storyline." Both comment upon literature's political capacity. How do the two intersect and diverge?

Further Resources – *Paulo*

As translator Robin Moger puts it, this excerpt of Paulo throws readers "in media res, into a bewildering thicket of dates and names and locations" in the time leading up to the 2012 Presidential Elections in Egypt. Below we've provided resources with details about the competing political parties and protests and demonstrations around the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak.

Timelines of the Egyptian Revolution:
Al Jazeera, February 2011-
http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112515334871490.html
PBS.org, 2013-
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/timeline-whats-happened-since-egypts-revolution/

Website of the Islamic Brotherhood Freedom and Justice Party:
http://www.fjponline.com/articles.php?pid=80

About the Nasserite Dignity Party (Al Karama Party); Al Jadaliyya, ASI's independent magazine:
http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3151/al-karama-party

About the Al Nour Paty; WashingtonInstitute.org, 2015:
http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-al-nour-party-a-salafi-partner-in-the-fight-against-terrorism

Lesson 2

Find below three subthemes within the general theme of "History Will Break Your Heart," that relate also to our present global political reality. Within each, you'll find discussion questions and assignments that act as axes of comparison across the *Asymptote* features we identify. We invite you to continue to reflect upon these features as instantiations of social memory. Each feature documents a moment in history, and in so doing, offers a preferred telling of that moment over other potential tellings. This may sound initially like a limitation of literature and storytelling. Instead, we see it as cause to celebrate the many voices that arise from any given time and place.

Consider again Lehulere's quote about the title of his featured exhibition as it speaks to the relationship between history, memory, and literature:

> *I wouldn't say that history has broken my heart personally, more that the title of the show speaks to a broader and more general kind of history of South Africa, and history of the world . . . I think the title speaks to marginalised histories, personal narratives—and those things will break your heart.*

FORCED MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

From This Issue:
Luce D'Eramo's *Deviation*, translated by Anne Milano Appel
Ivan Simić Bodrožić's *Hotel Tito*, translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac
Filip Springer's *Miedzianka*, translated by Sean Gaspar Bye
Marie Silkeberg's *The Cities*, translated by Kelsi Vanada and Marie Silkeberg

Discuss:
The movement of refugees around the planet right now is a major topic of conversation in the media. While there's no shortage of stories about refugees, the places they flee, the places they're trying to reach, how they are and should be received... it's much more difficult to find stories written by or inhabiting the position of the refugee (which these *Asymptote* pieces do). Furthermore, the contemporary narratives that exist often occupy genres other than the "literary." Discuss the ways in which point of view, voice, and genre affect your reception of refugee narratives.

The refugee crisis is linked to translation in so many ways: in the most immediate sense, refugees may need translators and interpreters to communicate in the new context they are forced into. The world also needs translators to magnify their stories. Finally, translation can be seen as a metaphor for transnationalism, displacement, or cultural reorientation experienced by those forced to migrate from their homes.

Engage:
Find a contemporary news story about the current refugee crisis. Compare and contrast its structure, content, and rhetorical devices with one of the above mentioned *Asymptote* features. Then compare and contrast the effects of the pieces on you as a reader.

THE AFTERMATH

From This Issue:
Margo Rejmer's *Bucharest*, translated by Olga Drenda
Maxi Obexer's *Glacier*, translated by Neil Blackadder
Ivan Simić Bodrožić's *Hotel Tito*, translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac
Ji Xianlin, *The Cowshed: Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, a review by Dylan Suher

Discuss:
These four features are retrospective - They reflect on the moment they portray from a future that knows, to some extent, how things played out. Discuss this reflective quality. How does the piece move through time and space (expand, contract, skip, linger...)?

Artist Wa Lehulere (quoted above and featured here) makes the distinction within the category of historical narrative between the "general" and "personal." It is in the contrast between the two, and often the marginalization of "personal" narratives by "general" narratives and their proponents, that one might have one's heart broken. How do each of the above mentioned Asymptote features

juxtapose "general" and "personal" narratives? Discuss the ways in which they foreground each in different moments, the ways in which each sheds light on the other, and the overall effect of these techniques on you as a reader.

Engage:
Choose one of the features mentioned above and do your own research about the aftermath of the moment of crisis upon which it reflects. How does the information you find compare with what you've learned from the feature? These pieces have a retrospective quality. Have you found any sources that speculate about the future instead?

THE REVOLUTIONARY IMPULSE

From This Issue:
Youssef Rakha's *Paulo*, translated by Robin Moger
Werner Kofler's *Speculations About the Queen of the Night*, translated by Vincent Kling
Ji Xianlin, *The Cowshed: Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, a review by Dylan Suher

Engage:
Write a short piece (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, drama, audio...) about the eve or the moment of a major change in your life, in your community, or both. Look to the features mentioned above for examples. How do the features create a sense of expectation, hope, uncertainty, ominousness, etc? Consider mimicking their techniques.

WRITING, READING, AND TECHNOLOGY

Just as new technologies, like writing and the printing press, once changed definitions of what literature was and could be, the internet now challenges us to expand and adapt our understanding of the "literary." Broadly speaking, new technology impacts literature in the following ways:

- **Thematically:** Literature set in contemporary society encounters technology just as contemporary humans do.
- **Linguistically/formally:** Technology creates new vocabulary, new connotations for existing vocabulary, and new conventions for different modes of communication (for example, the way language is used in the news, on twitter, on facebook). For writers and artists, these become new materials to incorporate into their creations, pushing traditional boundaries of possibility ever-farther.
- **The Digital Archive:** Performance and oral literature are no longer bound to the single moment, but can be recorded and shared. Meanwhile, the written word is no longer bound by the static page, but can be affected by reader interaction.
- **Digital Humanities:** The intersection of traditional humanities studies and computational research and data analysis.

Asymptote's online platform exemplifies the ways in which digital archives can bridge various forms of media, and in so doing, challenge the frontiers of literature. Asymptote online status allows it to bring together texts and creators from across the world, and also to present this work in ways that traditional print cannot cannot—through audio recordings, videos, and visuals. In this section, we hope to offer lessons that use *Asymptote* features to encourage fruitful critical analysis of the points of contact between literature and technology.

From This Issue:
Aase Berg's *Hackers*, translated by Johannes Göransson
Uljana Wolf's *Subsisters*, translated by Sophie Seita
Kemang Wa Lehulere's *History Will Break Your Heart*

Discuss:
Hackers and *Subsisters*: In the translator's note to *Hackers*, Göransson discusses how Berg uses the "language" of computer hacking to critique gender dynamics. Seita makes a similar comment in her note to *Subsisters*. How do these assertions play out in the translation (or do they not)?

How do new usages of language/dialects/vernaculars that evolve to accommodate new fields shed new light on old conversations? Can the language we use change the reality that we live? How can or can't new language be used in the service of populations typically ignored by mainstream rhetoric? Can you think of some examples?

Check out the original German of *Subsisters* (even if you don't understand German). What do you notice as you compare the original and the translation? Discuss the ways in which this interactive platform affects your reading of the feature. As always, go back and read the translator's note!

Further Resource:
See this article for critical reflection on the intersection of technology, language, and gender equality: http://adanewmedia.org/2015/11/issue8-lane

History Will Break Your Heart: Lehulere's exhibit creates meaning in large part through the materiality of its components. In his interview he discusses the history of the found objects he uses and the significance of chalk as a medium. Discuss the significance of experiencing the exhibit two dimensionally, through the internet. In what ways does the introduction and interview adequately or inadequately compensate for the experience of being able to, for example, walk through the exhibit, or observe up close the texture of the materials?

Undoubtedly, technology has made this installation accessible to much wider audiences in a number of ways. People can travel to see the exhibit in person, can experience the exhibit from afar through the internet, and can easily research contextual information to understand layers of significance they may not have been previously exposed to. There are pros and cons to this sort of accessibility. Lehulere asserts an ethical imperative by describing his work as a "protest against forgetting," interested in personal/marginalized narratives as opposed to the broad-strokes of history. Discuss the ways in which the expanded audience made possible by the internet does service and/or disservice to his goals.

Engage:
In different ways, the artists of both of the above features find expressive freedom at the intersection of art and technology. New tools for creation and dissemination help them to resist mainstream rhetoric that they find in some way oppressive. We believe that critical, academic work can take a form that reflects its object of study by incorporating evolving technology.

Using the discussion questions above as prompts (or asking students to come up with their own questions) ask them to create an audio, photo, or video essay.

Further Resources- Audio, Photo, and Video Essays:
Audio: http://www.asymptotejournal.com/blog/podcast/
Photo: http://www.weareteachers.com/blogs/post/2015/09/02/teaching-the-photo-essay
Video:http://www.rogerebert.com/balder-and-dash/the-art-of-the-video-essay-a-page-by-kevin-lee-grandmaster-of-the-form

Further Resources- Innovative Literary Representations:
http://www.oraltradition.org/hrop/
Crowd Sourced / Networked Novels: http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/pullinger_flightpaths/
A "Think-and-do-tank" exploring the transition of text from the page to the screen, through a series of projects, blogs, and discussion spaces: http://www.futureofthebook.org/

CRITICAL ESSAY WRITING: BEYOND THE FIVE PARAGRAPH ESSAY

At some point or another, most young writers are exposed to the five paragraph essay: introduction, three body paragraphs of supporting examples, and conclusion. This is for good reason. The five paragraph essay teaches students how to make themselves understood by crafting an organized argument. However, once this skill set is mastered, we believe the model can become restrictive.

Some writers learn to break free from this mold, but this is easier said than done. We believe that much of *Asymptote*'s content can be used by writers as an alternative model, inspiration for freer forms of critical thought. It is productive, we think, for young writers to blur the lines between criticism and creativity. The pieces in *Asymptote*'s Writers-on-Writers Criticism section are most directly relevant as essay writing models, but so are the Translator's Notes.

Observe how these pieces are structured, how they incorporate sources and integrate textual evidence, how they balance their first person voice and their subject matter, without sacrificing organizational clarity. We hope that the questions and activities below will help students reinforce the writing skills learned through the five paragraph essay model, while illustrating how these same skills may be carried over into more fluid, personalized forms.

From This Issue:
Boris Dralyuk on Julia Nemirovskaya
Dylan Suher reviews The Cowshed: Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution by Ji Xianlin

Discuss:
What drives each of these essays? Does each have a thesis or clear position? If so, where does it appear? If not, what structure does each author use to organize his thoughts? Underline topic sentences and bracket supporting information. These pieces are both labeled as as "Criticism", but what are the important differences between them?

Think about the position of each critic. How does Drayluk interject himself into this essay, and how does Suher? How does each integrate his identity? What do you make of his use of the pronoun "I"? Contrast this with Suher's voice; how does he appear, or not appear in the essay? Instead of using the pronoun "I", what does he do to represent his opinion? Think about these different ways of positioning in relation to the subject matter or main text of each piece: what do you think of each critic's decision? Which style do you prefer? In your own writing?

How does Dralyuk integrate the words of the Nemirovskaya? How does he weave in bits of her poetry? How does he incorporate citations from other authors? Compare this to Suher's technique.

What key-words or ideas guide each piece? What patterns do you find? What phrases or concepts do Dralyuk and Suher repeat, and to what effect?

What do you think of Dralyuk's hook (his introduction that aims to grab the reader's attention). Does it work for you? What does it do well? What does it do poorly? What are the features of a successful hook?

Suher's book review requires historical context about the Cultural Revolution, which he weaves into his larger analysis. Where and how does he do this? How does it shape your reading experience? What do you think are some of the challenges of this task, and what techniques would you borrow in your own writing?

Engage:
Choose one of the poets in this issue and write an essay about your experience reading their poetry in the same style as Dralyuk writes about Nemirovskaya. Try to match his balance of first person voice, author biography, and textual citation. In the same way that Dralyuk references Elizabeth Bishop, bring in one other author whose work resonates with the author you've chosen from this issue.

Further Resources:
For more about Nemirovskaya's turbulent life and how it's impacted her spiritually and literarily, please see this article:
http://ethosmagonline.com/religion-taken-taken-back/

Other essays from this issue could serve as models as well:
Alex McElroy reviews Concerto for Sentence by Emiliya Dvoryanova
Pete Mitchell reviews Party Headquarters by Georgi Tenev
Patti M. Marxsen reviews Beauty on Earth by C. F. Ramuz

CLOSE READING THROUGH TRANSLATION

'Translation is the most intimate act of reading' – Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

It is often said that the process of translating is the closest a reader can come to a text, and for this reason, the reflections of translators provide us with useful models for the interpretive practice of close reading. The process of translation is also related to the process of textual analysis in that both are acts of re-creating—the analytical reader, like the translator, joins in the continued creative existence of the text through the art of close reading.

As Boris Dralyuk reflects in this issue:

> The expert conveyor examines the delicate item from every side, weighs it carefully, and asks the difficult questions. Long before anything can be brought across—before it can be properly packaged—it must be understood from the inside. The journey begins when a translator finds a way in.

Each translator's note provides readers with this point of access to the featured text. Beyond this, their reflections demonstrate the labor of vigilant and empathetic reading. In this section we ask readers to identify the translator's goals, and then to use the strategy of close reading to evaluate how successfully these goals were met—to discuss what is successfully transferred, what is "lost", and also what is gained through translation. Close reading requires attentiveness to grammar, sentence structure, parts of speech, vocabulary choices and the multiple valences or significances of words and phrases. It should also prompt discussion about cultural and historical context.

From This Issue:
Emilian Galaicu-Paun's *iov & vio*, translated by Adam J. Sorkin and Diana Manole
Ivan Simić Bodrožić's *Hotel Tito*, translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac
Margo Rejmer's *Bucharest*, translated by Olga Drenda

Discuss:
In each case, use the translator's note to identify the translator's goals. What is most striking for the translator about the original? What features of the original does the translator hope to convey in the target language?

Perhaps we can imagine a spectrum or cycle that connects the processes reading, translating, and writing. What are the differences between each of these acts? What is required of each? What are the goals of the translator, as opposed to the goals of the author?

How much of the author's goals are specific to the author's particular cultural context? What does this require of the translator? Considering this, what do you think constitutes a 'successful' translation? What metric should we use to judge the quality of a translation? By what basis should we judge each of these featured translations? As you discuss your own metrics for successful translation, consider whether or not these metrics, in your opinion, remain consistent across lines genre, language, time, and context. Please see *Asymptote*'s "Experimental Translation" feature from our January 2016 issue for ideas and examples.

Engage:
Choose a passage or two from the text. Use close reading to evaluate how effectively the translator accomplished her/his goals. What words or phrases strike you as points of negotiation for the translator? If you know both target and source language and the original text is available, compare the two.

Note any word or phrase that repeats frequently. Look up that word in the original language (you may be able to locate it in the original text, or you may have to use an online dictionary). What other word could the translator have used in place of this one? Think of as many options as you can. What would have been the repercussions of selecting one of these other words?

Further Resources- Close Reading Strategies:
http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading
http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/the-art-of-close-reading-part-two/510

TRANSLATION THEORY

Too often we talk about what is lost in translation. By drawing attention to *Asymptote*'s more experimental features, we can witness instead what we stand to gain politically, artistically, and conceptually from the process of translation. Translation involves an endless set of choices. While none of these options can be proven correct or incorrect, each will have unique effects on readers and will reflect uniquely back onto the source text. In this section we offer lessons that encourage students to identify and critically analyze these intentional choices and their effects. We also hope to engage a non-anglocentric understanding of the act of translation, in recognition of the fact that our conception of the process is already mediated by the dominant culture of translation.

Translation theory has a long and complex history in many global cultures. As *Asymptote* features have all been translated into English, this section automatically engages with Anglophone translation theory. We hope students and educators will compare the questions and sets of values embedded in Anglophone translation theory with those embedded in non-Anglophone traditions. We invite you to share the fruits of this line of inquiry with us in the feedback you leave us through this survey.

From This Issue:
Paol Keinig's *Bad Language*, translated and animated by Laura Marris and Matt Kenyon

Discuss:
What is the relationship between Keinig's moving translations and the work that translator Matt Kenyon references by photographer Eadweard Muybridge. Take a minute to explore Muybridge's work: http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/windows/southeast/eadweard_muybridge.html

How does Keinig's work reflect the relationship between French and Breton as discussed in the introductory essay? How else could he have portrayed this tension?

Marris depicts the translator as a sort of mediator in semantic conflict: "Almost every word in a poetry translation could be another word, each phrase could be another phrase. But what ends up on the page has won the argument." What do you think of this characterization? What kind of mediation does this visual translation achieve?

Engage- Erasure Poems (Blackout Poems)
Erasure poems are poems created by erasing words in an existing text. You can create an erasure poem from any found text by crossing out words or phrases from that text and framing or reforming the result. Continue the movement of Keinig's words by using them as sources for erasure poems.

Further Resources- Erasure Poetry:
http://www.writersdigest.com/whats-new/erasure-and-blackout-poems-poetic-forms
https://www.pinterest.com/explore/blackout-poetry/

BREAKING DOWN GENRE

Here we hope to offer a comparative, structuralist approach to world literature and translation. Genre is not only a point of access for analyzing the function a particular text, but also a way to explore literary forms and the role of literature across regions and contexts. This section of the guide will explore one feature in this issue through the lens of genre, to reveal intricacies within the text, and also to expose readers to non-anglophone literary structures.

Studies have shown that attention to genre is useful to non-native English speakers, helping them understand the particularities of the English language and its conventions.

From This Issue:
Khairani Barokka's *Anathema*

Context- Spoken Word Poetry:
Spoken Word poetry (Slam poetry, Performance Poetry), largely defined, is any kind of oral art that focuses on the aesthetics of the language as it is performed aloud. The form was popular among poets in the Harlem Renaissance (1920s), in American blues music, and also among poets of the Beat Generation (1960s). Of course, the art of oral recitation has much older origins that can be traced to East Africa and Ancient Greece.

Spoken word often carries political messages in an effort to raise awareness or speak truth to power. Khairani Barokka, motivated by a commitment to inclusive arts, organized the first ever live-streamed spoken word event in Indonesia.

In *Anathema*, Barokka uses the form to comment on the fraught relationship between Indonesia and Australia. Indonesia is hugely popular as a tourist destination for Australians. At the same time, Australia has played a role in Indonesia's colonial legacy, and today holds power in the region through trade agreements.

Discuss: *first read this text aloud!*
This text is intended to be read aloud as a spoken word/performance poetry. What happens when this work is transferred to the static page?

Barokka herself uses the labels "spoken word" and "performance poetry" (and so we follow her lead). In *Asymptote*, this feature appears in the Drama section, not the Poetry section. How does this categorization affect your expectations for the piece? How might your expectations differ if the journal had labeled the piece differently?

How does the genre of performance poetry serve the purpose of this text? Can a particular genre be especially well suited to a particular message? Why or why not?

How is this text playing with the concept of a telegram?

What is the effect of repetition in this poem, particularly of the word "anathema"?

What image does this create for you of the relationship between Indonesia and Australia (and between the disabled and the non-disabled)? How does this fit with your understanding of the political and social reality?

Engage:
<u>Read for each other</u>: Ask different students to read the same passage from the text and take notes the performance decisions. Compare as a class where each reader placed emphasis differently, or else performed the poem with a different effect. How does performance affect the meaning or interpretation of a text? How much of the creative labor of this kind of poetry is done by the author, and how much is done by the performer?

<u>Write Back:</u> Barokka challenges the reader/listener, perhaps sincerely and perhaps mockingly, to "write back." Take up this challenge. Compose a spoken word/performance poem responding to either the particular cultural tension depicted in this piece, or the concept of anathema and cultural tension in a different context.

Further Resources- Australia/Indonesia Political Relations:
September 30th Movement, 1965: http://global.britannica.com/event/September-30th-Movement
Controversial Australian Asylum Policy:
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/23/australia-indonesia-relations-the-downward-spiral-will-not-stop-until-morrison-goes

Further Resources- Spoken Word Poetry:
Barokka performing her own work: http://www.mukha.co/okka/#.VuVo9TZ97-Y
Barokka on Spoken Word Poetry: http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/archive/my-jakarta-khairani-okka-barokka-writer-performer/
From the Smithsonian, African American Spoken Word:
http://www.folkways.si.edu/say-loud-african-american-spoken-word/struggle-protest/article/smithsonian
From Huffington Post:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mehroz-baig/slam-poetry-a-history_b_4944799.html

MULTILINGUALISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Multilingualism is inherent in the process of translation, but this section will explore pieces in the magazine that explicitly perform or discuss the craft of multilingual writing. Here we will look at multilingual texts and strategies in particular features, and also offer suggestions for educators to integrate multiple languages into the traditionally monolingual classroom space. At the same time, we want to push on the categories of multi and monolingualism, challenging ourselves as readers, writers, and speakers to question the legitimacy and the implication of this divide.

For more on the topic of Multilingualism, stand by for Asymptote's July Special Feature on Multilingual Writing – or send us your multilingual creations here!

From This Issue:
Vincente Huidobro's *Sky-Quake: Tremor of Heaven*, translated by Ignacio Infante and Michael Leong
Ramapada Chowdhury's *India*, translated by Arunava Sinha
Luce D'Eramo's *Deviation*, translated by Anne Milano Appel
Allan Popa's *Us From All Evil*, translated by Marc Gaba, Jose Edmundo Ocampo Reyes, and Allan Popa

Discuss:
Sky Quake was written in both Spanish and French, and of course was translated from both. What does the presence of two source texts mean for the status of the original? Discuss why the author may have chosen to write the same text in two languages. What might the benefits be. Consider from the perspectives of self-expression, of reader experience, and of the qualities of the text itself.

BONUS: If the teacher or students have access to Spanish and/or French, have them read the texts out loud. Discuss differences in the aural quality. Compare the three texts. Can you find examples of when the translator may have made choices more faithful in some way to one or the other source text?

Both *Deviation* and *India* use words in languages other than the primary languages of the pieces. Discuss the effects that these words have on you as a reader. How do these moments shade the depictions of the cross-cultural interactions taking place? In *Deviation* these words (when not proper nouns) are italicized, while in *India* there is no font change. Do these visual choices have an effect on you as a reader?

Ostensibly, *Us From All Evil* is monolingual, but in many ways, it challenges the divide between monolingualism and multilingualism. Within a single official language exist multiple dialects, allusive references, and different registers. In these cases, aspects of a text may be inaccessible even to a fluent speaker of the language in which it appears. Discuss the ways in which *Us From All Evil* uses allusion to create meaning. Compare and contrast these instances of *intra-language multilingualism* with the examples mentioned above.

Ask the students to reflect on the languages that they know. Which languages are they most comfortable in, and in which settings? For students who consider themselves monolingual, do they

find themselves speaking differently in different contexts? Based on their own reflections, what seems to make one particular language a 'first language'?

Engage:
Consider the three types of multlingualism mentioned above (the same source text written in multiple languages, primarily monolingual texts that incorporate words or phrases of other languages to create a particular effect, and allusion). Create a piece (prose, poetry, drama, performance, audio, visual, etc.) that utilizes one of the three types to blur traditional language boundaries in some way. Pair students and have them interview each other about their creations. Make sure the interviews touch on both the intended effects of the instances of multilingualism and the effects on the interviewer as audience.

LINGUISTICS 001

This section will offer linguistic information about one language featured in the issue. Broadly, we can think of linguistics as the scientific study of languages, which breaks down and analyzes languages by their constitutive parts. The fields of Linguistic and Literary Analysis share important overlap. By drawing attention to a different language in each issue, we hope that this section will inspire readers unfamiliar with that language to seek a deeper understanding of it— its history, its literature, its speakers, and, of course, the particular questions and challenges it poses to translation. We will also provide resources for further research as well as materials for learning and practicing the language online. Finally, look out for vocabulary words (in **bold**) which students may find useful in continued pursuit of the field of language and linguistics.

From This Issue:
[from *Songs of Mexico*, Various Aztec Authors, translated David Bowles](#)

Overview

Náhuatl is spoken by about 1.5 million people today in south-central Mexico. Most, but not all, speakers of Náhuatl also speak Spanish. (about 85%). It was the lingua franca language of the Aztec Empire, which was at its height during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Nahuatl is sometimes referred to as Aztec, however the Aztec empire was wide and linguistically diverse.
Linguistically, it is a member of the Uto-Aztecian language family.

In the mid 16th century, when Spanish missionaries were trying to convert Nahuatl speakers to Christianity, they tried to replace Nahuatl with the Spanish language. However, Nahuatl speakers held firmly to their language and culture, and Spanish missionaries realized that they would have more success converting people if they learned Nahuatl themselves. Catholic Church records written in Nahuatl can be found from as late as the Eighteenth century.

Of course, Nahuatl has changed considerably since this time. The kind of Nahuatl spoken and recorded at the time of the Spanish colonial conquest is referred to as "Classical". This is the language of this Asymptote feature, which was recorded in Roman script around 1585.

Grammar

Phonology: What does it sound like?
  - One of the most notable features of Nahuatl is the use of the "tl" sound (as in the language's name). Both letters produce a single consonant. Not all dialects still use this sound—some have replaced it with a single "t" sound.
  - Another notable feature is the **glottal stop**, a sound produced by rapidly closing the vocal chords. The glottal stop is common to many languages. One example is the Estuary British accent.

Morphology: How do words form?
  - Nahuatl demonstrates **agglutinative morphology**. Complex (long) words are formed by stringing together **morphemes**. Morphemes are word parts, the smallest grammatical unit of

language. Unlike words, they may or may not be able to stand alone and create meaning independently. Words are formed by removing the **suffix** of the first morpheme, also known as the **base** or **stem**, after which the **affix** (ending) is added. The base (stem) does not change.

Syntax: How do words form phrases?
- Nahuatl is **Polysynthetic**, meaning that its words are composed of many morphemes. A common feature of polysynthetic languages like Nahuatl is the ability to create long sentences using a single word.

Orthography: How is it written?
- During and after the time of the Spanish colonial invasion, colonizers recorded Nahuatl using Roman script, and following many Spanish language practices.
- In 1645, the Jesuit missionary Horacio Carochi created a grammar and orthography for Classical Nahuatl that noted the vowel length and the glottal stop (which is referred to in writing as the "saltillo")
- Dialects of Nahuatl vary widely today, so there is not one set orthography. However, The Secretaría de Educación Pública (The Ministry of Public Education), introduced a single alphabet for its bilingual education programs in rural Mexican communities.
- According to scholar John Frederick Schwaller, the first book we know to have been printed in the Americas was written in Nahuatl. The book, published in 1539, was the *Breve y mas compendiosa doctrina cristiana en lengua mexicana y castellana,* published in 1539.

English Words that derive from Nahuatl include: avocado, chili, chocolate, atlatl, coyote, and tomato

Sources:
http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/etexts/nahuatl/index.shtml
https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-main-linguistic-characteristics-of-the-Nahuatl-language
http://www.houstonculture.org/mexico/nahuatl.html
http://global.britannica.com/topic/Classical-Nahuatl
http://www.ancientscripts.com/aztec.html

Discuss:
Listen to the recording of this piece in the original and also try to follow along with the Nahuatl text. Describe the performance of the poetry. How does it sound to do? Can you note any of the linguistic phenomena above?

Discuss the concept of the Lingua Franca, and the power dynamic between languages. Consider the relationship between Spanish and Nahuatl as well as the relationship between Nahuatl, its dialects, other languages in its language family, and other languages indigenous to the region.

Nahuatl both demonstrates **aggluntinative morphology** and is **polysynthetic.** From an anglophone perspective, the "word" is the basic, stand-alone unit of meeting, but in Nahuatl (and other languages that exhibit these characteristics) the word as it exists in English has little relevance as a unit of meaning. Discuss your understanding of the various units of meaning that exist in language (morpheme, word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc). How does the significance of these units remain

relevant or change across languages? What about oral vs written manifestations of the same language, or language as it is used differently across genres?

Engage:
Select a feature from this issue, and research its source language. Describe its linguistic and political history, and its current status. Are there different dialects? Where are they spoken? What other languages or cultural exchanges have influenced them? Then research each of the linguistic terms in this analysis of Nahuatl, but in relation to your chosen language: phonology, morphology, syntax, orthography. What seems distinctive to you about this language in comparison to ones you speak?

Further Resources- Nahuatl:
An Online Nahuatl Dictionary, produced by Wired Humanities Projects at the University of Oregon
http://whp.uoregon.edu/dictionaries/nahuatl/
A fun linguistic puzzle: http://lingclub.mycpanel.princeton.edu/challenge/nahuatl.php
A Pronunciation and Spelling Guide: http://www.native-languages.org/nahuatl_guide.htm

FEEDBACK

Thanks for taking the time to read the *Asymptote* Guide for Educators. We hope you found it useful and engaging. Have questions, comments, critiques, or anecdotes? Please leave your feedback here. We look forward to hearing from you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS