ASYMPTOTE EDUCATORS' GUIDE

Summer 2016

The Dive

ASYMPTOTE
FOR EDUCATORS

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

SUMMER 2016 | THE DIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **Summer 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 [Summer 2016 issue of *Asymptote*](#), themed **"The Dive"** (after one of our [fiction pieces](#)) contains works that plunge deep into the tragedies and joys of intimate family moments, the loneliness and the solidarity of the individual facing national turmoil, and the multiplicity that can exist within a single human living in more than one language and culture. We hope the following materials will help you to engage with the abovementioned concepts at their intersections with this versatile theme and with the work already occurring in your classroom.

We realize that the appropriate age ranges for each lesson will vary widely, so we encourage educators to adjust these lessons to meet their needs, and to record these modifications. Your classroom experience is very important to us, and hearing about it helps us to improve our offerings. Please leave **feedback and suggestions** [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 **contributors** willing to share **thoughts** and **experiences** about teaching world literature via features for the *Asymptote* for Educators **forthcoming blog**. We'd especially love to read and share your **anecdotes** from the lessons you teach based on this guide, or using other *Asymptote* content. Let your stories inspire others! The *Asymptote* for Educators blog is interested in publishing **student work** as well. If your students have produced excellent responses to the assignments offered in this guide, other work to do with *Asymptote* content, or if they want to participate in in the global conversation about translated literature as it relates to them, we are currently accepting submissions.

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

LITERATURE IN WORLD CONTEXT

In a world of Facebook memes and authoritarian comment feed grammarians, it has become increasingly obvious how our prescriptivist ideals so often perpetuate classism and racism. As bridge builders across cultures and languages, I believe that we translators ought to be the first to accept the ambiguity of descriptivism, to champion both the daunting opaqueness and searing clarity of linguistic innovation and experimentation, and begin to radically reimagine how we can use translation to share and interpret this mysterious gift called language
- David Shook, *on Translating "Bät Riting" by Jorge Canese*

Lesson 1: Border Crossings - Dangerous Journeys

The world is both shrinking and experiencing a renewed series of global crises in which millions are forcibly displaced. It is important to create opportunities to think about this contemporary paradox through the paradigm of the untranslatable, by which crossing the border is always potentially transgressive.

From This Issue: Edi Matić's *Zeetza*, translated by Una Krizmanić Ožegović
Learning Objective:
Students will
- Understand historical and social context of Croatian refugee crisis
- Analyse how audience and purpose affect the structure and content of texts
- Recognize and critique significance of audience and purpose (in relation to narrator, author, translator, reader)
- Practice speaking and listening through role play
- Read for inference and meaning

Approximate Grade Level(s): Lower-level high school
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 45 mins

Lesson Plan

Introduction
Crossing the border can have multiple meanings, all of which cause us to reflect upon the socio-cultural construction of a 'boundary' in both life and literature. In this lesson, the border is foregrounded as a reflection on perspective, a voice in translation, a correlation between form and prose, and the articulation of a physical journey, contextualised through today's global refugee crisis.

Please discuss the power of the narrative to bring to life a contemporary global crisis. Ask them to travel in the footsteps of those who are forcibly displaced and encourage them to reflect on

the concepts of the border, narrative voice, and transgressing limits. Read the first paragraph and listen to the audio excerpt in Croatian. Then continue reading the rest of the piece as a class.

In-Class Work
Split the class into groups. Each group will select a specific paragraph from the text. Assign each group to create a freeze frame reflecting the key themes/issues and action encountered in their excerpt. Ask all students to 'freeze' at once, and reflect on the overall effect this creates.

Read the UNICEF document '[Danger Every Step of the Way.](#)' Ask students to draw out 5 key quotes , then narrow these down to three, then one. Share and compare findings with partners.

Role play: Split the students into pairs. Drawing on the text, have one student play the role of the narrator from the story and the other play a border guard. What questions might the border guard ask? Ask the students to think about how the narrator would frame his answers, what details he would leave out, and how his language might change.

Conclusion
Using quotes and details from the text, write a newspaper report of the incident at the end of the story. Think about whether the newspaper's purpose and target audience would change the perspective, and which narrative your particular newspaper would be trying to present. This can be drafted in pairs and finished for homework.

For Homework
Create a short film depicting this short story in under 3 minutes.

OR

Research other first-hand experiences or stories written by refugees making dangerous journeys, and turn this research into a poem or write your own story, from a different perspective.

Resources
About narratives of refugee experiences:
http://www.asymptotejournal.com/blog/tag/50-shades-of-refugee/
http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/world-refugee-day-10-tales-in-literature-1.2200747
http://wowlit.org/links/booklists/refugee-experience-in-literature/
http://compasanthology.co.uk/migration-film-literature/

Suggestions from the UN Refugee Agency about teaching refugee crises through literature:

http://www.unhcr.org/getinvolved/teachingtools/45f173012/unit-plan-ages-15-18-language-literature-depiction-refugee-experience-literature.html

From This Issue: Alessandro Cinquegrani's *Poachers*, translated by Matilda Colarossi
Learning Objective:
Students will
- Apply theoretical approaches to trauma theory and narrative to a text
- Identify the use and effects of literary techniques and form to support their interpretation
- Present a written paragraph of theoretical interpretation of the text, supported by literary analysis of form

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school; Undergraduate level
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50 mins

Lesson Plan

Preparation
For homework the night before the lesson, have students read *Poachers*. Either have them print their own copy, or have printed copies ready for them to use in class.

Introduction, Part 1: Repeat, repeat, repeat
In the text's margins, add line numbers to the side of the text in multiples of 5. Next, get each student to pick 1 phrase which they notice has been repeated throughout the excerpt. Have students highlight each repetition. Share the findings with the class using the line numbers as a guide.
Prompt students to observe any patterns: Are the repetitions more or less intense as the excerpt progresses? Do they change in meaning at any point? Which repeated phrases have the strongest associations with each other?

Part 2: A Short Introduction to Trauma Theory and Trauma Narratives
Using the handout on the next page, take 10 minutes to introduce students to the two main schools of thought about trauma narratives, i.e. stories that deal with deeply distressing or disturbing experiences.
Give students a heads-up that they will be entering a more theoretical, abstract part of the session. It is important that students grasp that while both perspectives are different, they can both be valid depending on the context applied.
To check students' understanding, have them summarise each school of thought in a sentence or two, using simple language, in three minutes. Display as many responses from students as possible.

In-Class Work

Please use the following questions to prompt class discussion:
- Which theoretical perspective do you think better describes the trauma narrative in Cinquegrani's 'Poachers'?
- In her translator's note, Matilda Colarossi describes how Cinquegrani "was able to recreate the force of that imaginary locomotive on those very dead tracks, where the protagonist's wife awaits a train that will not come, through repetition, an attentive choice of words and expressions, numerous poetic devices, and a sparsity of full stops". How can you use 2-3 examples of Cinquegrani's use of form to support your chosen theoretical perspective for *Poachers*?
- Students may draw upon the opening exercise on repetition to use as their first example. Encourage them to find more examples.
- Strive to make comparisons between examples, especially ones that best show a sense of progression and/or connection between different parts of the text.

For Homework
Write one paragraph of literary analysis that answers the question:

Which perspective of trauma theory do you think better describes the trauma narrative in Cinquegrani's *Poachers*?

Consider the following questions to support your analysis: How would you describe the extreme states of mind as narrated by the protagonist? Are they symptoms of an illness? Unresolved trauma working its erratic course? How many narrative layers are there to work with? What does the contemporaneous nature of the narrated experience suggest about the protagonist's state of mind? Does the excerpt hint at a possible resolution of this extreme state of mind?

A successful paragraph will paraphrase the student's understanding of her/his chosen theoretical perspective and support it with 2-3 examples of Cinquegrani's use of form.

Resources
Opening Chapter from *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* providing an overview of Literary Trauma Theory:
https://he.palgrave.com/resources/sample-chapters/9781137365934_sample.pdf

The Saylor Foundation's, An Introduction to Literary Theory. Page 29 on Trauma Theory:
http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/ENGL301-CP-FINAL.pdf

On introducing students to the use of literary theory:
http://readingon.library.emory.edu/issue1/articles/Marder/RO%20-%202006%20-%20Marder.pdf

Handout

A Short Introduction to Trauma Theory and Trauma Narratives

Let us examine 2 main schools of thought approaching trauma narratives, i.e. stories that deal with deeply distressing or disturbing experiences.

One suggests that trauma narratives are aporetic. They are about gaps and absences. It is indeterminate, and the narrative necessarily defies and resists resolution.

Another suggests that trauma narratives are therapeutic. They enable a "working through" and eventual resolution of trauma, acknowledging the possibility of recuperation and empowerment precisely through the act of narrating traumatic events and memories.

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a)   APORETIC

The dominant model in cultural trauma studies was first formulated by critics of the Yale School in the early 1990s. Cathy Caruth posits two inherent paradoxes of trauma, predicated on Sigmund Freud's *Nachträglichkeit:*

1.   "Trauma is not experienced as it occurs, [but] is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time"

2.   "The most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness"

3. Trauma narrative will not be characterized by resolution, healing, or integration of the traumatic experience.

b)   THERAPEUTIC

However, Judith Herman, in her book *Trauma and Recovery (1994),* argues that against the inaccessibility or 'unspeakability' of trauma. She argues instead that in cases of trauma:

1.   "Narrative is a powerful and empowering therapeutic tool, enabling integration of the traumatic experience and aiding healing and recovery."

Works Cited:

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. Print.
Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York, NY: Basic, 1992. Print.
Visser, Irene, 'Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies', Journal of Postcolonial Studies, 47.3 (2011), 270-282.

WRITING, READING, AND TECHNOLOGY
When All Becomes Mechanized and 'Words Dissolve into Noise'

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—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: Kinga Tóth's *Voice and Machine* (visual)*,* essay by Eva Heisler
Learning Objective:
Students will
- ● Critically evaluate the interaction between poetry, language and technology
- ● Explore, reflect upon, and understand how patterns of language and sound can influence meaning
- ● Analyze poetic form and structure
- ● Produce their own creative writing
- ● Engage in cooperative learning

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 45 mins

Lesson Plan

Introduction

Multimedia poetry creates a distinctive landscape in which the aural, the visual, and the performative are evoked, instigating new possibilities for poets, readers and audiences to experience the world of the text. The growth of shared spaces online and interactive media tools have enabled a plethora of locative narratives, textual experiments involving social media networks, streaming videos and collaborative audio files to develop. As a consequence, this particular breed of poetry provides a fertile ground for exploring the relationship between technology and literature in the twenty-first century, and the pedagogical possibilities arising from this relationship. Such technology has not only fundamentally changed the way in which we communicate, but has also challenged the morphology of literature itself. Multimedia poetry forces us to acknowledge the potential possibilities for literary criticism and to engage in creative ways. For example, consider the limits of a poem if it can be experienced aurally, in multiple locations, through a GIS tracking device. Do we count as readers when we are commenting on a video clip of a poem? What is the role of the reader as translator if the text can be delivered to us through an online translation tool?

Give each pair of students a picture from the slideshow accompanying the text. Ask students to give their 'poem' a title. In pairs or as a group, discuss the following questions: Is this a poem? Why? Why not? What is a poem? What are the limits of poetry?

In-Class Work

Organize students into groups. Ask them to use a computer to find their favorite poem, then print it out. Next, write the poem on a piece of paper. Feel free to decorate the page. Prompt the students to reflect on the experiences of reading the three versions (screen, print, handwritten). Read 'Voice and Machine' and briefly write about the method Tóth uses to create her poems.

Watch 'All Machine' on YouTube. What effect does this presentation have on the meaning of the poem? How does this change the students' perception of 'reading'? Ask students to underline sentences in the text which feature Tóth's explanation of why she has chosen to explore language in this way.

Tóth intended to 'insert' language as 'visual noise' into the mechanised world. Ask the students to think about one piece of technology they use every day. On a sheet of size A4 paper, in eight lines, write down a description of this equipment, why you use it, when you use it, and what it means to you. Pass this piece of paper to your left, and cut out one word from the piece of paper you receive. Repeat this process 5 times. Gather the students into groups of four or five

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and ask them to draw their piece of technology in black lines on a sheet of size A3 paper, then direct them to glue on their cut-up words in any order they like, as a group. Share the poems as a class.

Conclusion
Ask the groups to think about a way they could use communicative technology to enhance, exaggerate or challenge their poem: they could, for example, record their poem as a series of text messages, film the poem being read and then play this recording at a thematically connected site, or perhaps take pictures of parts of the text and relay the 'fragments' to each other across social networks.

For Homework
Research and prepare for a debate (perhaps starting with the resources listed below) in which students must argue either for or against the infinite possibilities technology brings to the construction, dissemination and reading of poetry.

OR

Explore the work of other multimedia poets in *Asymptote*. See, for example, Gozo Yoshimasu's [Parnassus Paper](#) and this feature on [Erasurist poetry](#). Write a review of a multimedia poem you particularly like.

OR

Create your own sound-visual poem reflecting on technology and see how many 'layers' you can add. Think about the different platforms you could use to display your work, the incorporation of voice and moving images, and the site in which your poem is (and may be) 'read'.

Resources
Kinga Tóth's *All Machine*:
https://youtu.be/kOMzdzDKPG8

Carrie Noland's *Poetry at Stake: Lyric Aesthetics and the Challenge of Technology*, description, reviews, and link for purchase:
http://press.princeton.edu/titles/6729.html

About multimedia poetry:
http://petapixel.com/2010/01/21/multimedia-poetry/
http://www.unask.com/teaching/litnet/litnet02/08/students/index.htm
http://www.soundpoetree.com/blog-native/2015/11/2/interview-with-multimedia-poet-and-translator-denise-newman

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CRITICAL ESSAY WRITING: BEYOND THE FIVE PARAGRAPH ESSAY
Dealing in the Quotable - Textual Citation

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: Stiliana Milkova reviews Jovanka Živanović's *Fragile Travelers* and Saskya Jain reviews *Sudden Death* by Álvaro Enrigue
Learning Objective:
Students will
- Select, present, and integrate quoted material into an essay or book review so that the writing is self-aware, controlled, and aids the reader's comprehension while providing an apt example for a given paragraph or point
- Understand the effect of varying a quote's presentation--giving its contents' summary before or after the quote, or placing the quote against the blankness of a paragraph's start or finish

Approximate Grade Level(s): Undergraduate level; Upper-level high school
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1 hour

Lesson Plan

Introduction

These book reviews are very nicely written--not all critical writing is!--and show strong but different writing voices and styles. They employ some useful reviewing techniques in parallel ways, particularly in how they present quoted material. While Milkova tends to use quotes from *Fragile Travelers* exclusively, Jain brings in quotes from a range of authors, including tennis star Andre Agassi. Jjust as there is a purpose and need for including the quotes that they do, there is a purpose to the *kinds* of quotes each reviewer utilizes. Especially in book reviews, quoting the book showcases some of the writing (its most attractive and pertinent bits) so that the reader will bite. That there is a need for quoting is without a doubt. There are various ways to place quoted material within your writing, and this lesson will have you identify and get a sense for how you might do so yourself.

In-Class Work
Either for homework or in class, students will each scan a text she has previously read entirely, noting (highlighting/underlining, then compiling) sentences or phrases that stick out to her for any reason. *This will allow the student creative flexibility to identify whatever she likes about the writing--whether the sentences or phrases belong to particular plot moments in the text or they possess some other grandeur, applicability, or musicality.*

In or before class, students will also read the selected book reviews from *Asymptote*'s July issue. They will note (by highlighting/underlining) all of the quoted material--even from books other than the ones being reviewed--and then discuss with each other in small groups, perhaps dividing the class so that each group has one to two quotes to work with/one paragraph each. Have them investigate how each instance of a quote is accompanied by some kind of reiteration, summary, or argument, and how this links into topic sentences belonging to each paragraph or even across paragraphs.

Ask the following questions by way of prompting the students: What is being quoted (note each instance) and to what effect (why is it quoted)? How does the surrounding writing make way for each quote? Where is quoted material *not* given in the writing, and why is not quoting there a wise writing decision? Where are quotations used as points of transition, and how? What similarities in quote usage exist between the two book reviews? When reviewing a literary work in translation, what might influence the reviewer's choice whether or not to include quotations in the source language? Regardless of whether or not the reviewer includes the source language, how might she discuss the quality of the translation?

Conclusion
Have all groups share their findings as a whole class. Compile, together, the important elements to presenting and integrating quoted material into writing.

For Homework
Have students develop sentences before and after four of the quotes they previously selected from the text. This could turn into a future assignment, winding through lessons about fleshing out paragraphs, essay structure, and closing a piece of writing successfully, etc.

Resources
James Parker and Anna Holmes, "Is Book Reviewing a Public Service or an Art?", *The New York Times*

Purdue OWL, "Writing a Book Review"

CLOSE READING
The Goddess - Word, Image, Sound

The process of textual analysis, like that of translation, is an act of re-creation—the analytical reader, like the translator, joins in the continued creative existence of the text through the art of close reading. Close reading requires attentiveness to grammar, sentence structure, parts of speech, vocabulary choices, and the multiple valences or significances of words and phrases. It can also prompt discussions about the cultural and historical contexts of the text.

From This Issue: Kanya Kanchana's *Grammar of the Goddess*

Learning Objectives:
Students will
- Develop and strengthen their close reading skills
- Gain a deepened appreciation of the proposed texts
- Acquire or refine their skills for cross-cultural understanding

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school; Undergraduate level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50-60 mins

Lesson Plan

Introduction
Show students the pictures of the goddesses featured in the texts to lead them into the class topic.
> *Suggestion: as students enter the classroom, play culturally related music or Kanchana's reading of her poems. Suggested music:
> - Ravi Shankar
> - Masood Ali Khan
> - Sawaswati Mantra (invocation to the goddess of knowledge and wisdom)

Offer the following questions to prompt class discussion:
- Describe the images. What do you see?
- Who are these women? Make guesses.
- What do you know about these goddesses? About the culture they belong to?
- Transition question: if you were a poet, what kind of poetry would these images inspire you to write?

  *Suggestion: give a brief introduction on the system of goddesses in the Hindu
  tradition. Useful information can be found [here](#).

In-Class Work, Part 1
To form pairs/groups, pass out images of the goddesses randomly. Have each student find the other(s) with the same image to form a group. Each group will work on the poem that goes with the assigned image.

Offer the following discussion prompts:

Style
- Do the poems have any identifiable meter?
- What are the main rhetorical devices utilized in these poems? Make reference to the text.
- What is the effect of the mixed use of Sanskrit and English?
- Choose a few lines from a poem of choice and describe them as thoroughly as you can (sounds, choice of words, sentence structure, tropes, etc).

Themes
- Are there any recurrent themes in these poems? Which ones? Provide examples from the text.
- The poem addresses only the goddesses (and not the gods). Discuss the effects this has on the reader. Provide examples from the text.
- How does the interplay of texts and images affect the reading of these poems? Provide examples from the text.
- In her *Note*, Kanchana states that: "In the intimate dusk of the heart, there is nothing that may not be said." How does this statement relate to her poetry? Provide examples from the text and discuss them.

Part 2
In her *Note*, Kanchana writes that: "These poems are born of *sādhanā*—practice—and inner experience". Sadhana is a concept of Indian philosophy that can be defined as consistent practice (of yoga, meditation, etc.) focused on God-realization with the faith that enlightenment is possible.

- Do you see any of these elements reflected in Kanchana's poetry? If so, how? Make textual references.

- In your culture (or another culture you know), is there any poetry inspired by religious or spiritual practices? What forms do they take? Here are some other devotional pieces published in *Asymptote*:
  Aandaal, from *The Sacred Song of the Lady*, translated by Priya Sarukkai Chabria
  Hafez, *Two Ghazals*, translated by Roger Sedarat
  Nurduran Duman, from *Neynur*, translated by Andrew Wessels
- How would you compare the spiritual/religious poetry of your culture/another culture you know with Kanchana's poetry? Make textual references. Note that one or two poems can't fully and accurately represent an entire cultural or religious tradition. These are just examples.

For Homework

Pin it! Have students choose an image that speaks to them and pair it with a poem - a poem they read, a poem they wrote, a poem they translated – within the 500-character limit of Pintrest. Have students pin their image+poem to a Pinterest board of your creation (the poem will go in the description). For inspiration, or to show your students how the final board might look like, take a look at the board created by our Educational Team. You can use the Pinterest board for a follow-up discussion based on students' pins.

   *Optional: have students write a short paragraph explaining their choice.

Resources

On Close-Reading:

How to do a Close Reading : http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading

The Art of Close Reading: http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/the-art-of-close-reading-part-one/509

Specific to this Piece:

Kanya Kanchana's website: http://www.alarmelyoga.com

Overview on women in Vedic culture: http://www.stephen-knapp.com/women_in_vedic_culture.htm

TRANSLATION THEORY
The Fruits of the Untranslatable

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. 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.

From This Issue: Elsa Morante's [The World Saved by Kids](#), translated by Cristina Viti
Learning Objective:
Students will
- Read and critique a translated poem as a *translation*
- Identify and analyze features of the poem, such as word choice, literary devices, and syntax in order to discuss the intentional choices involved in producing a translation without making qualitative judgments about those choices
- Locate instances of cultural specificity embedded within the language and content of the text in order to explore the implications of rendering said instances of cultural specificity into another language and culture

Approximate Grade Level(s): Undergraduate level; Upper-level high school
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50-60 mins

Lesson Plan

Preparation
For homework the night before, have students read the poem once straight through, then a second time annotating for words, idioms, syntactical structures, and content that seem like they may be challenging to translate across languages or cultures. Students don't need to have any particular target language or culture in mind. The goal is to shine a spotlight on the idiosyncratic specificities of English and of culture in general. If students understand Italian, they can use the source text for comparison.

Introduction
Background about author and time period in Italy
- Elsa Morante, Italy, 1912-1985. Morante wrote children's books early in her career, and eventually published many celebrated novels, poems, and short

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stories. Half Jewish, she and her husband, who was also active against the fascist regime, left Rome during World War II to lay low in the countryside until the end of the war. (Please find more in-depth resources below if desired)

- Translator Cristina Viti, in her Translator's Note, identifies the social, political, and personal turmoil of the 1960s as motivation for *The World Saved by Kids.* Like much of Europe and much of the world at large, Italian society was pushing back against the changes caused by a rapid period of industrialization, and against certain conservative attitudes that were embedded in the traditional culture, heavily influenced by Catholicism. The movements originated in the universities, particularly amongst Marxists, and spread through the working class. Though widespread protests, strikes, and other disruptive activities caused instability and hope for change, differences of opinion splintered the left-wing, and there are differing opinions about the concrete effects of the movement. (Please find more in-depth resources below if desired)

Read the translator's note together as a class. Then have students identify remarks from the translator's note that point towards aspects of the piece that Viti considered important to maintain in the English rendering.

An example to work through as a class: Viti says that she "sought at all times to maintain the rhythm and breathing pattern of the original." Listen to the recording of the Italian poem together as a class. Then have one student read the corresponding English translation out loud. Discuss whether or not Viti achieved her stated goal.

In-Class Work
In small groups, have students go through the poems and find examples characterized by the translation goals previously identified as a class. Reconvene and share some examples.

Returning to their groups, have students discuss their homework from the night before (examples from the poems that may be challenging to translate between languages and cultures), as well as anything new they may have found during class today. Conversation can include cultural or linguistic knowledge that they may have from their personal lives. Consider techniques that may facilitate the rendering of these instances in other languages and cultures. How might these renderings, or even the process of creating them, be especially fruitful, rather than disappointing or inadequate?

For Homework
Students can choose one instance of difficult-to-translate cultural specificity that they identified and discussed in class, that has particular resonance for them. Perhaps they can relate through

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their own personal experience, or perhaps they had trouble relating to that aspect of the text. For example, a student may have grown up Catholic, or religious, and the religious allusions strike a chord for her. Or maybe the opposite is true. Find a creative medium to express that resonance. This could be a short story (fiction or creative non-fiction), a responsive poem, a recorded interview or monologue, a photo-series, etc. A successful piece will clearly and incisively identify the relevant word, idiom, syntactical structures, or subject matter from the poem, express the student's connection with (or distance from) that textual feature, and reflect upon the (potentially   exciting) challenge of rendering the instance meaningfully across languages and cultures.

Resources
A book review of Morante's biography and riveting overview of her turbulent life:
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/books/review/Riding-t.html?_r=0

A general overview of world events in 1968 from a Socialist perspective. Briefly includes events in Italy:
http://socialistreview.org.uk/325/1968-year-world-caught-fire

Bonus Lesson: Compare and Contrast
The Dive by Pedro Novoa, translated into English by George Henson, was also translated into **14** other languages for this special issue! Check out the list. Do your students know any of these languages? If so, have them write a short essay comparing and contrasting two different translations. How did the translations deal differently with different challenges? What features of the source text did make it into the target language? Which didn't? What was successful or unsuccessful about each translation?

BREAKING DOWN GENRE
Sound Poetry and Visual Noise

In this section 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-traditional and non-anglophone literary structures.

From This Issue: Kinga Tóth's *Voice and Machine* (visual), essay by Eva Heisler
Learning Objective:
Students will
- Explore the experimental practice of sound poetry, and create their own sound or sound-image poetry through engaging with the work of Kinga Tóth

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school; Undergraduate level
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 75 mins

Lesson Plan

Introduction
Kinga Tóth is a sound-poet-illustrator, a musician-songwriter, philologist-educator (German language and literature), a journalist, an editor, a cultural organizer, among other hyphenated and unhyphenated things. This lesson will focus on her most recent poetry project, ALL MACHINE, but you can find more about her other practices in Further Resources, and you can read her biography here.

ALL MACHINE, Sound-Noise-Poetry
On facebook: https://www.facebook.com/allmachineallmachine
On bandcamp: http://allmachine.bandcamp.com
On youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQfDPXR3tZE

Sound Poetry is an abstract art form, something between music and poetry, where language is broken up into parts and then reconstructed.

The Futurists and The Dadaists are credited with initiating this genre at the start of the 20th century. The form since expanded into more image based Concrete or Visual poetry (image-word-art).

In order to "read" a sound poem, we have to hear it aloud, to hear the language in performance. Sound poetry exists somewhere between music and languages, where words do not signify

their common (semantic) meanings, but instead take on meaning from the noise they produce and they effect they create in the poetic context.

Below is a survey by Richard Kostelanetz offering a more detailed description of Sound Poetry, including links to canonical sound poets like Gertrude Stein, Raoul Hausmann, Hugo Ball, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and others.
http://www.ubu.com/papers/kostelanetz.html

In-Class Work
Please use the following prompts for seminar-style discussion:

Tóth identifies herself as a sound-poet-illustrator. How does her work in ALL MACHINE combine each of these mediums? What do you think of this title for her practice?

What is the relationship here between machinery and music? In the context of her work, what is "a machine"?

Tóth has chosen not to translate the Hungarian prose in her work, positing, as Heisler explains that "translation is not necessary, that legibility is not the point." What do you make of this decision? What is the effect of the prose for you?

Dadaist poetry is related to destruction. In Dadaist sound-poetry, language in destroyed, words are severed from their original meanings. Emerging in the context of the First World War, Dadaist poetry was political in origin, seeking to comment on language's instability and potential for manipulation and distortion. "By destroying everyday language, sound poems offered both a metaphor for the destruction caused by war and a commentary on the deceitfulness of language. Wariness of the competing nationalisms that fueled the war also led dadaists to resist any particular language, a primary indicator of national identity." (National Gallery of Art) What political messaging to do you find in ALL MACHINE? How does Tóth's sound-image-poetry reflect themes of destruction and manipulation?

In her review of Tóth's work, after her discussion with the artist, Heisler mentions briefly how these poems reflect on the practice of human trafficking (Crane), and human illness (Organ). Reviewing them in this light, are these messages visible to you in these texts? Can you pinpoint moments and details, or can you characterize an overall effect of these works that evokes these themes?

Reflect on Dadaist practices, and on ALL MACHINE as a project. What do you think of these genres as forms of expression and social or political critique? What do they allow for? What are their limitations?

For Homework
A pastiche assignment:

Students create their own sound poetry, selecting a theme they would like to express through abstracted language.
Students then transfer their poetry into designs or illustrations, that further reflect their chosen theme, or enhance the effect of the sound poem in some way.

Optional collaboration:
After students create their own sound poems, they each give these works to another student who will add another layer to the creation by re-presenting the poem through a drawing or a sound-text. After returning the sound-poem-illustrations to the original author, students reflect on this process of transfer and exchange.

Resources
About poetry as a genre: http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/11/what-is-a-poem/281835/

Further reading on Dadaist and another possible engage assignment, thanks to MyEnglishTA @myenglishTA
"The Poem Will Resemble You". How To Dada

More works of Sound Poetry:
http://epc.buffalo.edu/sound/soundpoetry.html

More about Tóth, her work across different mediums and her philosophy and practice
http://tothkinga.blogspot.fr/

More about All Machine Project, installation-video-sound poetry
http://tothkinga.blogspot.fr/p/all-machine-project.html

MULTILINGUALISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Multilingualism is inherent in the process of translation: "Borne from a certain "multiplicity of being," these [multilingual] projects blur the lines between translation and original" as Yew Leong Lee puts it in his *Editorial Note*. In this section will explore pieces in the magazine that explicitly perform or discuss the craft of multilingual writing, looking at multilingual texts and strategies in particular features, as well as offering suggestions for educators to integrate multiple languages into the traditionally monolingual classroom. At the same time, we wish 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.

Lesson 1: "Neither language nor dialect" - the 'Kiezgerman' multilingual revolution

From This Issue: Greg Nissan's *For Whom the -R Rolls*
Learning Objectives:
Students will
- Investigate the concepts of language, dialect, bi- and multilingualism, code-switching
- Acquire/refine their skills to explore broader historical, cultural, and socio-political issues through literary texts

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school; Undergraduate level
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50 mins

Lesson Plan

Introduction
　　　　*Suggestion: show some videos (or just play the audio) as a starting point. For instance: clips from this video ('Spanglish'); this video ('Itanglese' - Italian and English); this video (examples of Kiezdeutsch):

- What language(s) do you hear?
- Can you guess who the speakers are and where they are from?
- If you are not showing the video, have students imagine who the speakers are and describe them.

Please use these prompts for class discussion:
- What is the difference between a language and a dialect?
  Useful resources are this article from The Atlantic (easy read) and this video (more techinical; duration: 11:12).

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- Do students know people or who are bi-/multilingual and/or code-switch (including themselves). In what situations do people switch?
- How are social issues related to the use of different languages? For instance, in what situation/with whom do you speak the standard language vs dialects? In what situation/with whom do people speak several languages and/or code-switch.
- How do students feel when they hear someone speak a language they only partially understand (fascinated, frustrated, intrigued, angry, etc).

  *Suggestion: this last topic could be used to take a detour and explore one's implicit biases regarding language and all their implications. This might bring up a 'difficult conversation', for which we signal the resources listed here.

In-Class Work
Have students individually read the first two paragraphs of Nissan's *Note*.

Focus:
- What is Kiezdeutsch?
- What is the role of the rolled -R in this text according to Nissan?

Regroup to discuss these questions and clarify Nissan's *Note*.

In groups or pairs, have students read Nissan's poem. Remember, it's not important to understand everything! According to translator David Shook, a complete understanding is not only impossible, but also unnecessary (read his essay here).

  *Suggestion: have students react to the text with one word. They can write it on a post-it and stick it to the board. Teacher groups notes to open up the discussion: Why does this text make you feel x or y? Ask for volunteers to share their reaction making textual references.

Using the think-pair-share format, prompt class discussion with the following questions:
- What effect does this text have on you as a reader? Make textual references.
- What main issue(s) does it address?
- What are the potential implications of using art to explore social issues, both in the social context from which it arose and in foreign societies?
- How does the rolled -R affect the text? How does this relate to what Nissan states in his *Note*?

Conclusion

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As a class, have students discuss the theme of cultural intersections:
- Nissan's poem refers to the social phenomenon of Turkish immigration in Germany, and the impact that this has had on German society and culture, in particular from the perspective of language. Can you think of other instances of immigration that have produced a multilingual population?
- What are, in your opinion, the possible consequences of the development of a new linguistic variety, mostly spoken by a minority, within the larger sociocultural context of the 'standard' language?
- Do you think literature can affect integration in any way? If so, how? If not, what could?
- Nissan is an American who has moved to Berlin as an adult. In your opinion, does his position as an 'outsider', in a way, affect his perspective on German culture? If so, how? Support your position by making textual references.

For Homework
Give students a list of multilingual texts, or have them research and choose a multilingual text (it does not have to be poetry. There are many examples of multilingual writing in the current and past issues of *Asymptote*). Ask them to analyze the text focusing on one or more of the following aspects: language and style, cultural intersections, sociopolitical issues. Students can use any of the following formats: short paper, in-class presentation, final project.

Resources
Definition of Kiezdeutsch:
http://virtuallinguist.typepad.com/the_virtual_linguist/2008/11/kiezdeutsch.html

Interview with linguist Heike Wiese (in German): http://www.welt.de/kultur/article3885539/Ey-Alter-So-funktioniert-das-moderne-Kiezdeutsch.html

Video reportage on Kiezdeutch (in German):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akMs67XHWeU&list=PLmOjs_5ke7KqVZI8td-7sif0jKX7h0JQq&index=5

Language vs dialect (easy-read article from *The Atlantic*):
http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/01/difference-between-language-dialect/424704/

Language vs dialect (detailed explanation): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbvCD29Sg58

On having a 'difficult conversation' in the classroom (list of resources from the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion of Brown University):

https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/institutional-diversity/transformative-conversations/suggested-reading

Lesson 2: Code-Switching and Hybridity

From This Issue: Karina Lickorish Quinn's "Spanglish"
Learning Objective:
Students will critique the ideas of hybridity and multilingualism, and experiment with creating voice in creative writing, by exploring the following questions

- How does code-switching between not just two, but three languages--two distinct ones plus a hybrid of those two--complicate and/or deepen access to a story's information and its narrative voice?
- What reading experience does this author's multilingualism provide?
- What ethic toward each language does the author seem to be upholding? What do you think--do you agree?

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level undergraduate; Graduate level (with intermediate ability in Spanish, at least)
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1 hour

Lesson Plan

Preparation
Have students read *Spanglish* for homework before class, letting them experience the story and its effects on them as readers (without prompts or frames).

Introduction
Languages can secure people within communities, affording them a sense of identity, belonging, and even protection; and by the same token can isolate those who don't share a particular language. We've all experienced this lack of access at some point or another; even reading this line of Old English "Hwæt! Mínne gehýrað ánfealdne geþóht" appears (roughly, "Listen! Hear my simple thought"). When a bilingual or multilingual person--a translator--is introduced into a situation of language divide, a bridge is formed. What of the language of the bridge? This story excellently uses the distinct languages of Spanish and English as well as the hybrid, new language born from the intersection of the two: Spanglish, in order to convey the isolating experience of knowing all three languages.

In-Class Work
Task three groups of students to locating words or phrases in the text that fall into one of three categories: English, Spanish, and Spanglish. Have the first group underline all English words in the text, then develop a list of these words that seem particularly important to the information of

the text; the Spanish and Spanglish groups will do the same. Have the students all note the ways in which words in their assigned language function within the sentence.

After the groups have finished searching the text, as a class discuss how each language functions within the text/serves the story; why is it there, what does it do? This will likely lead (and should) to a discussion about language crossover, and about the definition of Spanglish and bilingual, multilingual identities.

For Homework
Write a bi- or multilingual narrative paragraph--beginning with either/any language--that may develop into or form part of a future creative story. Allow your brain and instincts decide when to switch languages. Afterwards, write a paragraph about your experience producing this narrative paragraph, and when and why you think you used one language over the other in specific instances.

Resources
Edward Soja, *Thirdspace*

Julio Cortázar's "La noche boca arriba" ("The Night Face-Up") for a different though complementary example of code-switching in a story (in terms of identity and place)

About code-switching: http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/04/13/177126294/five-reasons-why-people-code-switch

LINGUISTICS 001
Language change and evolution

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: Kanya Kanchana's [Grammar of the Goddess](#)
Learning Objective:
Students will

- Investigate language families and language change and evolution across major language family groups and in one's own language
- Discuss possible causes for language change and evolution
- Discuss and reflect upon one's own and other's opinions about language evolution
- Conduct academic research

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school
Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 75 mins

Lesson Plan

Part 1, Introduction
This lesson is inspired by [Grammar of the Goddess](#) from this July issue. The main bulk of text is in English but the English is interjected with sounds from Sanskrit, a classical language from Greater India that was spoken in its earliest form (Vedic Sanskrit) in 2000 BCE - 600 BC.

Despite the varying sound systems of these languages, which can be easily identified by listening to the translator's recording, and the great geographical distance between England, the country from which English originates, and Greater India, the country from which Sanskrit originates, the two languages are part of the same language family. They are both **Indo-European** and share the same root language, **Proto-Indo-European,** a **reconstructed language** spoken by the Indo-Europeans in around 3500 BC. This lesson will focus on language change and evolution and will ask students to examine their own language and how it

has changed. Students will also be asked to reflect upon the positive and negative aspects of language change. This lesson will also touch upon the concept of language families.
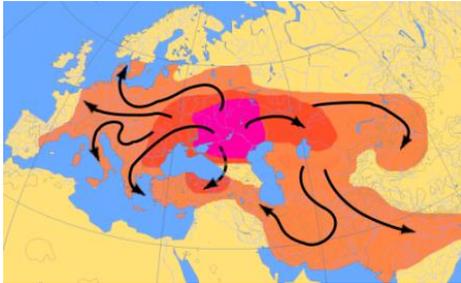
Part 2, Language change and evolution
The modern languages we speak today are not like languages spoken hundreds of years ago. All languages go through various processes of **language change** over time, or **language evolution**. Below is a list of some processes by which a language can change:
- Borrowings from other languages
- Changes to the sound system (phonology) of a language
- The introduction of a literacy system
- Changes in meanings of words
- Changes in the grammar
- The movement of people
- Changes in external environment

Below is an non-exhaustive list of more specific and advanced language change processes:
- Deletion (deletion of a phoneme)
- Cluster reduction (e.g. in some accents 'friend' might become 'frien' ')
- Regularisation (when irregular grammatical forms (e.g. man-> men but man-/->mans) become regular over time (e.g. if 'mans' becomes the used plural of 'man' in a few generations we can say regularisation has occurred)
- Broadening (of meanings)
- Narrowing (of meanings)
- Amelioration and Pejoration (change in positive or negative connotations)

The movement of people is significant to this lesson because the link between Sanskrit and English is that they came from the same root language, Proto-Indo-European (PIE), which is thought to have spread from what is known as the Pontic-Caspian Steppe. This area is shown in magenta in the image below and the arrows (the dotted arrow indicates the Anatolian migration, which could have taken place either across the Caucasus or across the Balkans. This information is not important for this lesson, but has been included for clarity) indicate the migration of the Indo-Europeans. Through this migration, they would have carried their language with them and spread it to the areas they went and it would have changed over time as speakers of PIE would have come into contact with other languages, or the language might have just changed naturally on its own, taking up different forms as new societies grew.

Much more recently, we can see this kind of language change in many modern languages. For example, English, from England, has migrated all over the world. If we take just American English (AE) and British English (BE), we can see that the same root language has manifested itself quite differently in the two different geographical regions (bare in mind language evolution is slow so both are still recognisable as English). Some of this may be because of contact with other languages (the settlers in America from Britain would have come into contact with migrants from other countries such as The Netherlands, Sweden or Italy to name a few, and this could have changed the vocabulary, grammar and phonology of the then BE speakers). Other reasons for the change in the language might be more natural e.g. it is common that in fast speech parts of words might be missed out. After some time, this may become the normal way of pronouncing that word.

In-Class Work
The following questions are designed to be discussed in groups or with the whole class and the lists (above) may be helpful in answering some of the questions. Either or both lists can be used depending on the group.

1. What are some ways that you think your language has evolved and changed? Can you see any differences between your parents'/teachers' way of speaking and your own? What about your grandparents? Has your own language changed in your lifetime? Think about the different parts of language: the sound system (**phonology**), the grammar (**syntax**), the meanings of words or phrases (**semantics**), the parts of language that goes beyond the words themselves like the way sarcasm is used or humour (**pragmatics**).

NB: When we speak about a grammar in linguistics, we don't talk about the grammar you might find in a textbook. What linguists want to investigate is what your own **internal grammar**, the rule system for your language in your head, allows or disallows. For example, an English grammar book would disallow a double negative, it would label this as 'incorrect' or 'improper'. However, many speakers of English use double negatives freely so a linguist would look at this language use as acceptable - they simply want to study the way people use language, not dictate how they should use it.

2. Why do you think the observations you have made in the previous question came about?

3. Do you think language evolution is positive, negative (or (n)either) and why?

The next two questions might require access to a computer or books:

4. Can you find examples for the bullet points in the lists above from your own language or other languages?

5. Can you find any more processes (with examples) by which a language might change and evolve?

Conclusion
Listen to this recording of someone telling a story in Proto-Indo-European (PIE):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P78SJf8NL2k

Do take note of the uploader's disclaimers: They arbitrarily chose the sounds 'h1', 'h2', 'h3' and 'hx' (which are just some placeholder-symbols for some sounds that are under debate) and there were also some mistakes in the pronunciation of 'ǵ' and 'ḱ'. Also, it's important to remember we have no actual recordings of PIE by PIE speakers.

Can you find the similarities between languages you know and PIE? There is one listed in the description, which is that the god, Wérunos, is related to the Sanskrit Varuṇa, the Greek Ouranos and the Latin Uranus. The translation in the video will help for this.

For Homework
Write a short piece about your thoughts from the in-class discussion.
<div align="center">OR</div>
Create the language family tree for your own language (focus on the main groups only if you want).
<div align="center">OR</div>

Draw a world map and highlight where the Indo-European languages are spoken. Are there any surprises? Are there any texts from this July issue that are not Indo-European? You can use this map (blank and white, without country names) or this map (white, with country names) as an outline.

Resources
The King and the God Fable in Proto-Indo-European and other proto-languages
http://dnghu.org/indo-european-kingandgod-fable.pdf

References for learning PIE (or Modern IE - updated with words for things like 'computer')
http://dnghu.org/en/indo-european%20language%20learning/

List of modern language families
https://www.ethnologue.com/statistics/family

PIE in Ridley Scott's Prometheus
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTOcA_y1R_U

IPA Chart with links to flash animations of the sounds
http://www.yorku.ca/earmstro/ipa/

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!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS