INTIMATE STRANGERS

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE
WINTER 2017

✦ASYMPTOTE

ASYMPTOTE
FOR EDUCATORS

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

WINTER 2017 | INTIMATE STRANGERS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **Winter 2017 *Asymptote* Educators' Guide**. 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 **seven 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 Winter 2017 issue of *Asymptote*, themed **"Intimate Strangers"** explores this seeming contradiction in a variety of settings. Within the individual, the family, the community, and even the nation, somehow the most familiar can turn foreign at the drop of a hat. On the other hand, perfect strangers can expose dreams, fears, and truths either hidden or deliberately buried. 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 for the *Asymptote* for Educators **forthcoming website**. 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 website 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
Civil Disobedience – Art as Rebellion

at the estuaries of many an ancient civilization
lies the scorched corpse of a woman and
scattered bones of humanity
- *Mohenjo Daro* by Vidrohi

From This Issue: Vidrohi's *One Poem, Two Translations*, translated by Rashmi Gajare, Patricio Ferrari, and Samrita Ganguly

Learning Objective:
Sudents will:
- Analyze the way context affects the reader's reception of a text
- Think critically about the role of art in resistance
- Analyze the way cultural perceptions affect the translator's craft

Aligned Common Core Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6
Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Approximate Grade Level(s): Lower-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1 hour

Materials Needed:
- *One Poem Two Translations* (1 per student either online or printed)
- Internet access
- Projector

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students complete this two-part preparatory assignment for homework before the class. Depending on time constraints, this can also be done in class.
1. Read the two translations of the poem and write a short response answering the following question: Which version do you like better and why?
2. Look up any references you do not understand and record your findings.

Warm-Up Activity

Have a student read each translation out loud to the class. Then watch the recording of Vidrohi performing his poem. In small groups, have the students discuss the following questions:
- Does Vidrohi look like you expect a poet to look? Does he look like a revolutionary?
- Does this look like a poem? Does it look like an act of resistance?
- Consider the space and the audience. Is this what you expect a poetry "reading" to look like? An act of rebellion?

- Compare Vidrohi's performance to your reading of the poems at home and to your classmates' recitation.

In-Class Activity I – Artist as Revolutionary

Read the translators' notes and Vidrohi's bio together. Ask students to take a few minutes to complete the following statement:

Vidrohi, meaning "rebel" or "revolutionary," was a name conferred upon the poet as he built his reputation on the JNU campus. The translators believe that this is an appropriate epithet, because…

Then, divide the classroom in half. Have the students who agree with the translators' arguments stand on one side of the room, and the ones who disagree stand on the other. Then have the two sides debate each other. If the sides are unbalanced, the teacher can play devil's advocate. Encourage the students to consider the following and to quote the translations, the bios, and the translators' notes as they craft their arguments:
- Vidrohi's conviction in orality and performance over the written word
- The poems' lack of titles
- Vidrohi's lifestyle and influence
- The lack of a single, fixed version of each poem
- The content of the poem

In-Class Activity II – Translation and Reception

Project the first of the two translations (*Mohenjo Daro*) on the board. Have a student come up and number the stanzas. Then project the second translation (*Mohenjodaro*) beside it. Have individual students come up in turn and try to reassign the stanzas of the second poem so that they align with those of the first. For now, you can ignore the part of the second translation that goes on past where the first one ends.

Choose one of the pairs of stanzas. Ask students to identify differences between the two. Then take a poll of how many students prefer each excerpt. Give students two minutes to individually write short reflections about why they chose their preferred excerpt. Then give another 5 for students to discuss their reflections in pairs.

Finally, direct the class' attention to the section of the second translation that continues after the first translation ends. Pose the following questions for full-class discussion (not all are necessary depending on time and the level of the class):
1. Do you like the ending of the second poem? Why or why not?
2. Find instances in which the poem makes use of the pronoun "you." How would you characterize this "you?" What is the narrator asking of "you?"
3. Both translations (and especially this last section of the second translation) make use of references to places, situations, myths, etc. The extent to which the reader is familiar with these references affects the way the reader creates meaning. Reflect upon the images and connotations (or the lack thereof) conjured for you by some of these references.
4. The two translations are meant to have the same source text. And yet they are drastically different in length. How is this possible? Reflect upon what this assertion means about the status of the original. Draw upon your knowledge from the translators' notes and bios.

Home Assignment

Option 1: Research other non-violent revolutionaries, and those who use art in the service of rebellion. Write/recite a response poem based on what you learned.

Option 2: Write a short reflection paper using one of the following prompts:
1. What do you think is/can be the role of art in political resistance?
2. Knowing that Vidrohi's passed away, consider his legacy. His work has been archived, documented, recorded, and translated by his friends, fans, and others. Given what you know about his attitude towards his work and art, do you think this archiving and dissemination of his work serves or detracts from his goals… or both? Why?

Resources
Vidrohi's obituary in *The Indian Express*: http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/after-30-years-in-jnu-poet-and-perennial-protester-vidrohi-dies/

On teaching art as resistance: http://www.tolerance.org/blog/art-resistance-part-1

WRITING, READING, AND TECHNOLOGY
Everyday Fragments in a Technological World

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* brings together texts and creators from across the world, and presents 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: Monika Rinck's *Getting Closer to the Sources*, translated by Karl Hoffmann

Learning Objective:
Students will
- Examine the ways in which technology can impact literature thematically and linguistically/formally
- Analyze technological references embedded within a text
- Analyze how technology affects the development of language

Aligned Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6
Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Approximate Grade Level(s): Mid-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1 – 2 hours

Materials Needed:
- Internet access
- *Getting Closer to the Sources* (both online and enough printed copies for half the class)
- Projector

Lesson Plan

Warm-Up Activity

Have *Getting Closer to the Sources* available for the class to view online (either as a class or in groups/individually) within the classroom. Additionally, give half of the class a printed copy and explain that they can use this to make notes if they would like to. Read through once as a group – asking for a volunteer reader for each paragraph. After the reading, ask students to quickly write bullet-point lists answering the following questions:

1. What forms of technology are utilized in this piece? (encourage students to consider both the thematic – references to mobile phones, slot-machines etc. and the formal – the interaction between the reader and the text through hyperlinks for example)
2. What themes are addressed within the text?

As a class, quickly compile a list of student answers. Ask students how they found this task using the following questions:

- Did the group that had a paper copy of the piece find it easier to respond to the prompts than those without, or were they more distracted by additional physical material?
- If there was a difference, was it simply a matter of personal preference, or is there something fundamentally different about the way we respond to the text online and in hard copy?

In-Class Activity I – Thematic Impact of Technology on Literature

Project the following quotes from Monika Rinck's reviewer, George Potts, for students to see.

- "[Rinck's work is like a] process of scavenging"
- "Fragments are yoked together throughout her work."
- "[Rinck herself sees] the value of broken pieces of thought."

Ask students to work through the piece in pairs and identify 'fragments' which they see as references to technology and the interplay of antiquity and modernity. If you find it necessary to provide examples, they might include:

- "Do the stuff-thoughts now arise? Are they now germinating? The door to the mess is left open by the compulsive hoarder – overabundance is also a fear of chaos"
- Contrast between dowels and mobile phones, homeopathy and slot-machine casinos
- "the contours of an as yet content-free thought. It is not out of the question that the new, in order to reach the light, has to traverse a dark corridor of stupidity. That is the only way, and therefore tennis, the pump and latex were invented in ancient times."
- "Many people—supported by multiple applications—want to submit themselves to a panicky simultaneity, or at least no longer resist it, using distracted multitasking to constantly prove (or swipe) their ability to do so."

In-Class Activity II – Linguistic/Formal Impact of Technology on Literature

Point out to students that Rinck uses hyperlinks within the body of the text to elaborate further on a point and reference external influences. Then pose the following questions for class discussion:

1. What does this add to the piece?
2. Are these merely a more embedded form of footnotes, or does the ability to instantaneously read the note and the reference add something to the literary process?

Closing Activity

Read aloud one of Monika Rinck's translated poems available from Poetry International Amsterdam. Ask the class to close their eyes, and simply listen to the poem without technological distractions. Have the students write a paragraph comparing this experience to that of reading her work online.

Home Assignment

Have students write brief reflection papers responding to the following quotes from *Getting Closer to the Sources*:
- "It is indeed a small everyday miracle to laugh together with strangers, because it comes about and a contagious impulse spreads. It transforms situations, in which one maybe waits next to others indifferently or morosely, into collective happenings."
- "If it is ethically tenable, even imperative, to laugh at those in power, on the one hand, and reprehensible to ridicule the weak, on the other, the situation must always be negotiated anew. Where is the divide? It can change depending on the perspective and those involved. Sharing the worldview of the person telling the joke can contribute to finding something funny, but not necessarily, for example, in face of a sort of satire that "requires unjustified stereotypes to formulate justified critique.""

In their responses, have students address the following two prompts:
- What are some of the students' favorite jokes? How do these relate to their own cultural and societal experiences? Can they remember first hearing a joke that offended them? How did that make them feel?
- Is laughter only meaningful in the 'real' world, as opposed to the virtual?

Resources
About Monika Rinck, including more translations of her poems:
http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/2217/19/Monika-Rinck

CRITICAL ESSAY WRITING: BEYOND THE FIVE PARAGRAPH ESSAY
Writing Interpretive Responses to Literary Texts

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. *Asymptote* offers both abundant examples of artful critical writing and opportunities for students to practice such writing themselves.

From This Issue: Han Chang-hoon's *I Like it Here*, translated by Jason Woodruff
Emmanuel Ordóñez Angulo's *Submarine*, translated by Robin Myers

Learning Objectives:
Students will
- Analyze character's moral dilemmas in literary texts
- Write an interpretive response to a literary text that extends beyond summary and literal analysis and provides evidence from the text

Aligned Common Core Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3
Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Approximate Grade Level(s): Lower-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): Two 1-hour Sessions

Materials Needed:
- *I Like it Here by Han Chang-hoon* (1 per student)
- *Submarine by Emmanuel Ordóñez Angulo* (1 per student)
- Journals
- Sentence stems (can be found following this lesson) cut into individual squares and placed in a container
- Technology (Tablets, laptops, or student smartphones) (1 per student)
- Internet access to Read Write Think Character Trading Cards Creator
- Claim, Reason, Evidence graphic organizer (can be found following this lesson)
- Claim, Reason, Evidence Explanation and Examples

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students read *I Like it Here* for homework

Session 1
Warm-Up Activity

> Have students respond in their journals to the prompt: Describe a time when you faced a moral dilemma.

In-Class Activity

1. Tell students they will work with a partner to analyze the characters of *I Like it Here* and to create trading cards for the characters of *I Like it Here.* Although students may collaborate on their responses, each student is responsible for creating his/her/their own trading cards.
2. Model how to pull up Read Write Think Character Trading Cards Creator and enter information.
3. Reconvene as a whole group and lead a discussion about how the character traits the students have identified contribute to the characters' moral dilemmas.

Closing Activity

Have students select a sentence stem starter from the container and complete the statement in their journals related to *I Like it Here*.

Home Assignment

Students will read *Submarine* for homework.

Session 2
Warm-Up Activity

1. Have each student select a sentence stem from the container.
2. Give students a few minutes to finish the statement about *Submarine.*
3. Tell students to walk around the room and share their statements with at least 10 other students.
4. Instruct students not to say anything other than their completed sentence stem to each other.

In-Class Activity II

1. Place students in groups of 4-5.
2. Give each student a copy of the *Claim, Reason, Evidence Graphic Organizer.*
3. Model how to use the graphic organizer by making a claim, a reason, and citing evidence from the text to support the claim.
4. Instruct students to discuss *Submarine* in their groups and to make five claims about the moral dilemmas the characters face in the story.
5. Reconvene as a whole group and facilitate a class discussion on student findings.

Closing Activity

Have students respond in their journals to the following question: Name one difference or similarity between the moral dilemmas faced by the characters of *Submarine* and *I Like it Here*.

Home Assignment

Write an essay comparing the moral dilemmas of the characters of the two stories. Be sure to discuss the characters' options for resolution and to use textual evidence to support your thesis.

Ideas for Extension

- Use future sessions as checkpoints on student progress as they develop their essays.
- Hold revision clinics to focus on specific areas of improvement.
- Read passages in class and guide students through reading comprehension strategies.

Sentence Starter Stems

This reminds me of…	How is it possible that…	I like/don't like ____ because…	At first I thought _____, but now I…
This relates to…	If this were a movie…	The most important message here is…	What this means to me is…
I wonder why…	I can picture…	This author is trying to make me (see, feel, know, do) …	I think this represents…
What if…	I can relate to this to other readings because…	A conclusion that I'm drawing is…	The idea I'm getting is…
How come…	The character I most identify with is…	This word or phrase stands out for me because…	A term or idea that was unclear to me was…

Claim, Reason, Evidence Graphic Organizer

Claim	Reason	Evidence

TRANSLATION THEORY

Translation and Inference as Cultural Bridges

***Translator Tiffany Tsao is available for Q&As via email or skype. Please email education@asymptotejournal.com **for arrangements.**

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: Norman Erikson Pasaribu's *Sergius Seeks Bacchus*, translated by Tiffany Tsao

Learning Objectives:
Students will
- Recognize two key strategies used by translators
- Evaluate key challenges faced by poetry translators
- Discuss contemporary Indonesian LGBT rights issues
- Analyze the cultural experience reflected in the poem

Aligned Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6
Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.7
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1 – 2 hours

Materials Needed:
- *Sergius Seeks Bacchus* (1 per student)
- Projector or white/chalk board

Lesson Plan

Introduction

[Please first read the translator's notes on *Sergius Seeks Bacchus* for additional context].
In a world characterized by global communication, translation plays a key role in exchanging information between languages. Poetry was reportedly considered by the 20th century American poet Robert Frost to be "what gets lost in translation." This lesson will look briefly at some of the challenges faced by poetry translators, and some of the strategies they might adopt to circumnavigate these challenges. It will briefly consider the merits of direct translation versus oblique translation and the difficulties of translating literature that employs a great deal of figurative language.

Pre-Class Activity

For homework, have students read the following poems from *Sergius Seeks Bacchus*:
1. *He and the Tree*
2. *Curriculum Vitae 2015*

Warm-Up Activity

Ask students to work in groups to write a definition for the following Indonesian noun:

JAYUS

Emphasize that there is no 'right or wrong' here, simply the act of enjoyable creative interpretation! (this activity is based on 'untranslatable words' cards from theschooloflife.com). Hint – if the students find it too challenging to write a full definition, ask them to simply write a few words which they think will evoke a sense of the meaning behind this word (for example 'fun', 'scary', 'animal', 'place', 'silly', etc.)

Ask the groups to read their descriptions or definitions aloud. Then pose the following questions for class discussion:
- Are there any similarities?
- What made you choose these descriptive words?

When all the groups have had a chance to share, reveal the following definition:

JAYUS: a lame joke that nonetheless elicits good-natured amusement – rather than irritation – at its sheer innocent silliness. The ability to treat an idiotic remark as a jayus is a sign of wisdom and kindness; evidence that we can accept that our minds are low as well as high.

If there are any multilingual children in the class, ask if they think of any word in another language that won't translate directly or easily to English. If they're happy to share with the class, gather up and celebrate a few of these 'untranslatable words' (perhaps you can even start your own class collection as an ongoing project).

In-Class Activity I

Share this quote from the translator's note: "Corresponding with [the poet] has been a vital part of the translation process…our exchanges have enabled the English version of these poems to take on lives of their own. Yes, of course, they seek to replicate the style and structure of their

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[source language] counterparts; but they also take advantage of their new, English medium to magnify their [source language-ness] and augment their playfulness'.

Display the following two key translation strategies, noting for students that these are broad categories within which more detailed strategies exist.

1. Direct Translation - used when structural and conceptual elements of the source language can be transposed into the target language;
2. Oblique Translation - used when the structural or conceptual elements of the source language cannot be directly translated without altering meaning or upsetting the grammatical and stylistics elements of the target language.

(At an introductory level, these can still be quite complex definitions. If you think your students would benefit from the opportunity to expand on these ideas further, before moving on to the main activity, please see *Ideas for Extension*).

Present *He and the Tree* silently and orally. Present the poem at least twice with different readers, then ask students to work in groups to answer the following questions (making notes as they do so to share their learning with the class afterwards):

- What do you feel when you read this poem?
- What are the major themes introduced in this poem?
- Does the poem feel geographically rooted anywhere? Can you easily imagine yourself in the context of the poem?
- Find and list examples of figurative language (such as similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration, oxymoron, apostrophe and synesthesia). What figurative language particularly stands out? What does it add to the poem?

Compare these two lines:

'The man embraced the tree,
and hugged the tree.' (a direct translation taken from google translate)

'The man hugged the tree,
the tree hugged the man.' (oblique translation)

Pose the following questions for class discussion:

- How has the meaning changed?
- What might be the value of adopting oblique translation methods as opposed to literal translation?
- Consider the English term 'tree-hugger.' The translator mentions in her translator's note that this particular dual-meaning is not obvious in the original source language, but that she believes it helps to 'augment the playfulness' of the source poem. What does she mean by this?

In-Class Activity II

Explain that the author of these poems is Norman Erikson Pasaribu, an Indonesian writer born in Jakarta in 1990. Ask students to write brief reflections to the following prompts:

- Does knowledge about the author change your interpretation about the poem?
- Why or why not?
- Do you know anything about the past or present in Jakarta or Indonesia? If so, how did you come by this knowledge?

Present the poem *Curriculum Vitae 2015* silently and orally. Present the poem at least twice with different readers, then ask students to work in groups to answer the following questions (making notes as they do so to share their learning with the class afterwards):

- What do you feel when you read this poem?
- What are the major themes of this poem? Are there any themes that occur in both *He and the Tree* and *Curriculum Vitae 2015*?
- Does the poem feel geographically rooted anywhere? Can you easily imagine yourself in the context of the poem? What makes it familiar? What makes it unfamiliar?
- Find and list examples of figurative language (such as similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration, oxymoron, apostrophe and synesthesia). What figurative language particularly stands out? What does it add to the poem?

Draw students' attention to the following extracts:

a. Some parents in his neighborhood refused to let their children play with him and his brothers because their family was **Bataknese** and **Christian**.
b. Not long after he graduated from college he discovered the rest of the **Bataknese** community called him "**the faggot**" behind his back.
c. "He will grow old. You will grow old. You both will grow old and be wed before the Three-Branched God—the tree-like God—and have a child named **Langit**. Your descendants will fill the Earth so that whenever anyone is walking in the dark by themself they will hear, from every window on every building on both sides of the street, voices reaching out—'**Salam**!' '**Salam**!' '**Salam**!'"

Pose the following questions for class discussion:

1. Consider extracts a) and b). Can you give a clear definition of **Bataknese** and **Christian**? If not, does it matter for your interpretation or enjoyment of this poem?
2. The target language term "**the faggot**" in extract b). Do you think that this would have been a literal or oblique translation from the source language? Within this context, why might an oblique translation be valuable?
3. Consider extract c). The translator has made an active decision, in communication with the poet, to keep the name '**Langit'** and the final three words **'Salam! Salam! Salam!'** in the source language. Why do students think she made this decision? What does it add to the 'mood' or 'tone' of the poem? If she had chosen to use the literal translations ('sky' and 'Greetings! Greetings! Greetings!' respectively), how would that have altered the overall 'feel' of this last section of the poem?

Closing Activity

Have students write brief responses to the following prompts:

1. How has the culture and ethnicity of the poet influenced his work? What are the issues of major concern to the poet within these two poems?
2. Explore the feelings that the poems evoked in you most strongly. What were they and why were they so strong?

Home Assignment

Research the poet's life and cultural background. Find out what societal, cultural, political forces influenced the work. Then write a poem that captures and responds to the information you learned in your reading. Finally, write a short accompanying statement describing:

- Your writing process
- The key findings of your research to which you were responding
- Any words, phrases, or images in your poem, that you think may be unique to your language, and therefore difficult to translate

Ideas for Extension

- Arrange a Q&A with translator Tiffany Tsao, either by email or skype, for your students by emailing education@asymptotejournal.com.
- Introduce Lawrence Venuti's concepts of 'domestication' and 'foreignization' in translation:
    - Domestication - the source language text is made palatable to the target language reader by making it more familiar.
    - Foreignization - the text is not manipulated to suit target language readers. It retains the 'foreignness' of its content or sentence structures, forcing the reader to adjust her expectations of the text.
  Pose the following question for class discussion: Venuti argues that translations of texts into English tend to be domesticated because of the unequal power dynamics that exist between the Anglo-American English speaking world and the other countries where English is not the language of daily life. What do students think has been adopted here?
- Use either google translate or the American Translators Association website to offer some entertaining examples of 'bad' direct translations.

Resources
Further information on concepts of 'foreignization' and 'domestication' in translation from the Journal of Language Teaching and Research, Jan 2010:
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.472.1452&rep=rep1&type=pdf

A useful exploration of 'literal/direct' and 'oblique' translation:
http://www.uv.es/tronch/TradEspII/Trans-Techn-Molina-Hurtado.pdf

BREAKING DOWN GENRE
Exploring the Limits of Cultural Nostalgia

> *"Bolesław Leśmian and Bruno Schulz used archaisms, and, well, you know, everyone used to talk like that. Back when everything was better and wiser, and they wrote elegantly in the newspapers, not stuff about pop stars and tits, and people in cafés talked about intelligent, meaningful things."*

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 of 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: Ziemowit Szczerek's *Mordor's Coming to Eat Us: A Secret History of the Slavs*, translated by Scotia Gilroy

Learning Objectives:
Students will
- Analyze the way genre conventions affect how content is presented and how readers interpret a text
- Think critically about the composition of nostalgia and how the characters experience it differently
- Consider the role of literature and other artistic modes in confronting alterity
- Write a close-reading analysis

Aligned Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3
Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school (given some of the language in the excerpt); Undergraduate level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 45-50 minutes

Materials Needed:

- *[Mordor's Coming to Eat Us: A Secret History of the Slavs](1 per student)*
- e-Learning page (optional)

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students read *[Mordor's Coming to Eat Us: A Secret History of the Slavs]*, highlighting words, names, and places with which they are unfamiliar. (Optional) Working in pairs/groups, ask students to research these terms and post brief descriptions on the class' e-Learning page.

Warm-Up Activity

Briefly address any lingering contextual questions from the homework assignment. Then have students write brief reflections in response to the following prompt: Did this "feel" like fiction? Non-fiction? Travel writing? Something else? Broadly speaking, how might a text's genre affect your expectations of it?

In-Class Activity I

Pose the following questions for class discussion:

- Note the text's use of juxtapositions (ex. characters' expectations vs. reality). How do we experience these disparities differently if we consider the text a work of fiction or non-fiction?
- Consider the instances of dialogue. How does the text use expletives, mistranslations, and "heightened" language (Bożena's "It doth soothe me so") to guide the reader's interpretation of the characters?
- How does the chapter's ending, especially the visually arresting scene of the truck driver and the dog, contrast Bożena's and Marzena's nostalgic illusions with 'reality'? What was different about this scene?
- Bruno Schulz—whether as referent, author, or commodity—is obviously an important symbol in the story; how well or how little do the characters seem to know him or his work? Has Schulz himself become a brand, or, in his own words, a "façade"? How does the excerpt comment on the relationship between "real people" and literature? Think back to our first discussion question: is nostalgia transmitted or evoked more effectively through fiction? Through real or imagined history?
- Using your responses to the previous questions, construct a working definition of 'cultural nostalgia.'

In-Class Activity II

Divide the class into small groups and have each group discuss one of the following questions. Then have each group present its findings/thoughts to the rest of the class:

- The excerpt's introduction mentions that this is a "rather typical journey for young Poles" and the narrator claims that the characters are "doing the classic *tour de Schulz.*" Can you think of a culturally analogous trip/pilgrimage for you and your peers? What are some of the similarities and differences to the characters' trip?
- Given that a racial/cultural hierarchy seems to rest at the center of the characters' trip, do you see a similar dynamic at play in the nostalgic modes with which you are familiar? (Think about the black-eyed girl's pointed remark about this type of cultural slumming:

"I'll tell you why you come here," she said, ignoring my question. "You come here because in other countries they laugh at you. And they think of you the same way as you think about us: as a backward shit-hole you can sneer at. And feel superior towards.")

- Nostalgia is often described as an effect at once "soft" and "wistful." Does this piece support or reject such a description? How does your answer affect the way you understand your own experience of nostalgia?
- Name some culturally popular figures similar to Schulz for you and your peers? Who, effectively, has become an analogous brand or commodity even if his or her work eschews that transference? How does Szczerek's chapter make you reevaluate your perception of that figure?

Home Assignment

Option 1 – In a written response, Vlog, Prezi, or other medium, ask students to (1) define cultural nostalgia in their own words and (2) assert whether or popular/familiar narratives that take up cultural nostalgia are most effective (or persuasive) as fiction or non-fiction—or if each narrative mode reveals a different valence. Encourage students to support their assertion with the evidence from the text and from the class discussion.

Option 2 – Have students perform a close reading (in a paragraph or two) of a selection from Szczerek's chapter not discussed in class in response to one of the questions from *Activity II*. These short papers can be submitted online or brought to class to workshop/peer edit.

Resources
A "Foreigner's Guide" to Polish literature that offers both an overview and recommendations for further reading: http://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-literature

On the postwar social conditions that led to the rise of the Beat Generation: http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/america7/content/multimedia/ch32/documents_01.htm

Svetlana Boym's scholarly article "Nostalgia and its Discontents: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/cfcb/eba8cb80315ffebfcf16fe4d17fa6f31286e.pdf

On Ziemowit Szczerek: http://culture.pl/en/artist/ziemowit-szczerek

A more comprehensive list of Polish literature and further resources: http://polishlit.org/contemporary.html

On Bruno Schulz from *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2010/dec/03/brief-survey-short-story-bruno-schulz

Russell Brown's "Bruno Schulz and World Literature" (on JSTOR)

GENDER STUDIES
Working Towards an Understanding of the Feminine

From This Issue: Christiane Singer's *The Feminine, Land of Welcome*, translated by Hélène Cardona

Learning Objectives:
Students will:
- Familiarize themselves with the psychological concepts of masculine and feminine.
- Reflect critically on the role of these two forces in both the individual life and society.

Approximate Grade Level(s): Undergraduate Level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50 minutes

Materials Needed:
- *The Feminine, Land of Welcome* (1 per student)
- White/chalkboard

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students read *The Feminine, Land of Welcome* for homework.

Warm-Up Activity

Divide the board into two sections, one headed 'Masculine' and one 'Feminine'. Ask students what they associate with each category. You can write their associations as they speak them, or you can distribute chalks/markers and have them come to the board and write.

Review the content on the board with the class:

- What are the most common associations?
- Are there any implicit or explicit value judgments?
- Ask students to keep these associations in mind throughout the class.

In-Class Activity

In pairs or small groups, have students review the main points of Singer's piece:

- What is Singer's view of difference?
- What are the positive and negatives aspects of equality?
- What examples does Singer bring as illustrations of the feminine working in society?
- Singer affirms that she does not know what the feminine is, yet her piece offers many instances of what she means by 'feminine'. Based on the examples she provides, what do you think her definition of feminine could be?

Bring the class together for a whole-class discussion:

- Briefly review the points discussed in the groups/pairs
- Singer does not explicitly talk about the masculine, but it is the obvious counterpart to the feminine. What, in your opinion, would be her view of the masculine?
- What are the roles of the masculine and the feminine in your culture? Is any of the two considered better than the other? Why? Discuss specific examples.

- Consider the following excerpt: "Subordination is only possible when the subtle mechanism of self-denigration, or self-deprecation is put in place." Do you agree? Justify your opinion.

Home Assignment

Choose one person (writer, politician, sportsman, religious figure, relative, etc.) that you consider particularly important for you personally and/or your society, and write her or his biography through the lens of the category offered by Singer, i.e. was her/his life predominantly masculine or feminine? What in her/his actions or assertions substantiate your claim? How did this impact the life of those around him/her?

You can experiment with a variety of forms, digital and not: a short video, a slide presentation, a poem, a handmade book, a comic…

LINGUISTICS 001

One Country, Many Languages

From This Issue: Indian Languages Special Feature
Anvar Ali's *Three Poems*, translated from the Malayalam by Rizio Yohannan Raj
Vidrohi's *One Poem, Two Translations*, translated from the Hindi by Rashmi Gajare, Patricio Ferrari, and Somrita Ganguly
Shubham Shree's *Three Poems*, translated from the Hindi by Daisy Rockwell
Mrudula Bhavani's *Come girl, let's kick up a row*, translated from the Malayalam by Ra Sh
Chinchu Zorba Rosa's *Theories of Probabilities*, translated from the Malayalam by Ra Sh
Siraj Khan's *My Son has Learnt to Cuss like the City*, translated from the Char Chapori dialect by Shalim M Hussain
Kutti Revathi's, *Four Poems*, translated from the Tamil by Padma Narayanan and Vivek Narayanan
Kanji Patel's *Three Poems*, translated from the Gujarati and Panchmahali Bhili by Rupalee Burke
Jitendra Vasavas' *Two Poems*, translated from the Dehwali Bhili by Gopika Jadeja

Learning Objectives:
Students will

- Familiarize themselves with the language plurality of India and its main linguistic families
- Gain an appreciation of the political, social, and literary repercussions of linguistic policies
- Reflect critically on the linguistic policies enacted in their societies

Approximate Grade Level(s): Undergraduate Level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50 minutes

Materials Needed:

Online discussion board (optional)

Journal (optional)

Projector (optional)

<div align="center">Lesson Plan</div>

Introduction & Note to Teachers
India is a vast and diverse country with an extremely diversified linguistic situation: it has no national language, although the official language of the Union should be Hindi in the Devanagari script (and English has the status of subsidiary official language). This is because there are hundreds of languages and dialects spoken on Indian soil. 75% of the Indian population speaks languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan linguistic family, such as Hindi-Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi and many more. These languages are in turn part of the broader family of Indo-European languages, to which most modern languages spoken in Europe and Western, Central and South Asia belong. 20% of the population speaks Dravidian languages, such as Telegu, Tamil, and Marayam. These belong to a family of languages spoken mostly in Southern India. The remaining part of the population speaks languages belonging to other linguistic families, such as the Austroasiatic, the Sino-Tibetan, and the Tai-Kadai. In addition, all these languages are written in different alphabets. What a Babel, right? This issue's Indian Languages Special

Feature therefore represents only a tiny portion of this incredible variety, yet it gives an idea of the vitality of Indian literature in its many nuances. The following lesson plan aims to introduce students to the incredible linguistic diversity of India.

Pre-Class Activity

Have students brainstorm what they know about Indian languages and literature *without* consulting outside sources. They can write a journal entry available only to the teacher, or post a brief paragraph to a shared online discussion board.

Use the following prompt:

> What do you associate with India in terms of languages and literature? What languages are spoken in India? Think about the country's geography and history. Do you think India has a national language? Do you think India is characterized by linguistic uniformity or variety? Name some famous works of Indian literature? Have you read any works of Indian literature? If so, which? Justify your answers. If you do not know much, make guesses.

Warm-Up Activity

At the beginning of class, pull out your students' entries or posts. You can organize them in a Power Point presentation, project the online discussion board on a screen, or make a verbal summary of the views they expressed in their journals.

Compare and contrast their answers with the information provided in the *Introduction* and in the **Resources**. You can use India's linguistic map to help students visualize the language distribution in India.

You might also consider doing the *Pre-Class Activity* in class. Using the same prompt, you can have a quick brainstorming discussion with your students to transition to the second part of the *Warm-Up Activity*.

In-Class Activity – National Languages: Yes or No?

Have students take a look at the table of contents of *Asymptote*'s Indian Languages Special Feature and discuss the following questions:

- What languages are represented in the selection?
- Where are they spoken (look at the map)?
- What scripts are they written in (you can click around the original texts)?

In small groups or pairs:

- Hand out Tara Chand's article *The Problem of a Common Language for India* and have students read it together. Alternatively, give a short lecture on the same points.
- Have students discuss the following points in their groups/pairs

i.	What are the main points of Chand's article?
ii.	What are the main issues related to language, in India and elsewhere?
iii.	What is the situation in your own country? Does your country have one or many national languages?
iv.	Compare the advantages and disadvantages of having vs not having a national

language.

Bring the class together and briefly go over the answers of each group/pair.

Divide the class into two groups for a debate: one group argues in favor of having one national language, the other argues against.

Closing Activity

Bring the class together and see if students can reach a consensus over the issues debated.

Home Assignment

In an essay or short fiction story, Compare what you now know about the linguistic situation of India with a hypothetical scenario in which India had one national language. Discuss the issues that would arise and compare them with the current issues India is facing. It might be helpful to refer to a country you know that has one official language, for instance, the United States.

Resources
Map of languages spoken in India: http://www.mapsofindia.com/culture/indian-languages.html

Jason Baldridge's *Reconciling Linguistic Diversity: The History And The Future Of Language Policy In India*. This paper is also an inspirational story: Jason Baldridge wrote it as his undergraduate honors thesis, and went on to become a professor of Linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin. He now works at People Pattern, of which he is co-founder and Chief Scientist: http://www.languageinindia.com/may2002/baldridgelanguagepolicy.html

Tara Chand's *The Problem of a Common Language for India*:
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/tarachand/01problem.html

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 testimonials? Please leave your feedback here. We look forward to hearing from you!

CREDITS

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