

The Poetry of Translation

SPRING 2018

GESM 110g: Seminar in the Arts [#35302]

Tuesday and Thursday 3:30-4:50 pm | LUY 3Y

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Poetry is that which is worth translating. —Eliot Weinberger

Between the language of the universe and the universe of language, there is a bridge, a link: poetry. The poet, says Baudelaire, is the translator. —Octavio Paz

Languages are many, poetry one. —Andrei Voznesensky

Course Description:

With over 200 languages spoken inside an area of fewer than 500 square miles, Los Angeles is one of the most linguistically diverse cities in the world. How might such verbal multiplicity and cultural abundance contribute to an art form created of words? Poetry has been said to be what is lost in translation, but what do we gain by the translation of poems into other languages? Can a translation ever achieve the aesthetic and emotional immediacy of a work in its original language? If translation is what gets *carried across*, how might the language of poetry bridge the gap between shores?

These questions will serve as a focal point around which we'll explore, discover, and participate in the rich artistic tradition of literary translation. The course is comprised of two interconnected strands: critical and creative. We will read and engage with a wide range of international poetry (in English and/or bilingual editions), with an eye toward the choices and strategies of translation. We will also read and discuss essays about the art of translation and interviews with literary translators. And we will create new works as we practice and experiment with translation in its many manifestations, including invention, homage, and collaboration.

Our study will include poetry in translation from the Chinese, Spanish, Polish, Italian, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Turkish, Swedish, Korean, French, Sanskrit, Classical Greek and Latin. Students will also have an opportunity to examine in depth a particular poet, language, culture, and/or time period of their choice. Knowledge of a second language is not a requirement; beginners and English-only readers/writers are very welcome.

Course Readings/Film:

- Collins, Martha and Kevin Prufer *Into English: Poems, Translations, Commentaries*. Minneapolis, MN: Grawolf Press, 2017.
- Kaminsky, Ilya and Susan Harris, editors. *The Ecco Anthology of International Poetry*. New York: Ecco/Harper Collins, 2010.
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. *In Other Words*. Trans. Ann Goldstein. New York: Vintage, 2017.
- Paz, Marie José and Octavio Paz. *Figures and Figurations*. Trans. Eliot Weinberger. New York: New Directions, 2008.
- Pizarnik, Alejandra. *Diana's Tree*. Trans. Yvette Siegert. Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2014.
- Swirszczynska, Anna. *Building the Barricade*. Trans. Piotr Florczyk. Portland, OR: Tavern Books, 2017.
- *The Woman with Five Elephants*. Dir. Vadim Jendreyko, 2010. (screened in class)
- Please note: You will also select **one** text from a course bibliography provided early in the semester. Brief, additional readings will be posted on Blackboard and/or shared in class.