

Dr. Marci Vogel
GESM 110g: Seminar in the Arts | Fall, 2022

THE POETRY OF TRANSLATION

Poetry is that which is worth translating. —Eliot Weinberger

Languages are many, poetry one. —Andrei Voznesensky

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

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 made 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 poetry bridge the gap between shores?

These questions (& yours!) 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'll study and discuss a wide range of international poetry (in bilingual editions), with an eye toward the decisions and strategies effective translation requires. We'll consider contextual writings by theorists and practitioners, along with film, music, and visual forms of translation. 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, Persian, Russian, Swedish, Korean, French, Ukrainian, Japanese, Sanskrit, and Classical Greek, among others. Students will also have an opportunity to examine in depth a particular poet, language, culture, and/or historical era of interest. Knowledge of languages other than English is not required, but be prepared to become enamored of those you don't yet know; absolute beginners in poetry of any language enthusiastically welcomed.

BOOKS

- Collins, Martha and Kevin Prufer, editors. *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.
- Swirszczynska, Anna. *Building the Barricade*. Trans. Piotr Florczyk. Portland, OR: Tavern Books, 2017.
- **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/shared in class.