

## Special features:

### Literary translation, part 1:

The Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture (excerpts) ... producing a new translation of an old classic ... recent Australian releases, and who's publishing them ... prizes: nominations open soon

**Vicarious trauma:** Practitioner and research perspectives, plus self-help tips

### From Alexandria to Alice

A varied T&I career bookended by two desert cities  
< pages 14–16

### 2018 AUSIT Conference, NAGM and JBML

Adelaide here we come!  
< pages 4–5

### Victory in Victoria!

Professionals Australia achieves 30% pay rise  
< page 6

### PLUS MORE ...

... including a call for book reviews; a successful AUSIT PD workshop; and more profiles of practitioners

**WARNING:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that an article in this issue contains images of deceased persons.

## < In Touch

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# A letter from the editor

Many thanks—from the Editorial Committee and from me—to the increasing number of members who are submitting articles and reflection pieces, news (both national and state), poems and cartoons ... Although we can't guarantee that everything will be published, all suggestions are welcome and taken seriously.

To contribute, take a look at our Submission Guidelines under 'Contribute' at: [ausit.org/AUSIT/Publications/In\\_Touch\\_Magazine.aspx](http://ausit.org/AUSIT/Publications/In_Touch_Magazine.aspx) ... email any questions to me, the editor, or an Editorial Committee member (this page, first column) ... check the submission date (for our next issue it's 1 October) and ... go for it!

## Call for book reviews

Have you read a T&I-related book recently? Would you like to? *In Touch* is looking for book reviews and/or reviewers. It's sometimes possible to obtain review copies for free, so it can be a good chance to expand your horizon at no cost ... except giving your opinion. If you've read a work in translation, or a work by a T&I colleague (on any topic) ... or you've written, translated or edited a book (again, on any topic) and would like to offer a review copy ... we're interested. If you have something in mind or would like a suggestion, drop us an email (for contact list see this page, first column).

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay respect to them and their cultures, and to Elders past and present.

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*Between T/Is ...* by Tania Pineda-Stuart in collaboration with Filiberta Losada (based in Portugal)



Member organisation Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs International Federation of Translators

**AUSIT** FOCUS ON AUSTRALIA'S NEW AND EMERGING LANGUAGES

## Contents

	PAGE
News in brief	3
<b>2018 AUSIT National Conference</b> <b>'Do you understand me? Intercultural aspects of interpreting, translation and communication'</b> plus <b>AUSIT Awards, NAGM</b> and <b>Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture</b>	4–5
Industry news and events	6
<b>Professionals Australia: Victorian pay win</b> <b>Feedback: AUSIT NSW PD workshop on conference interpreting</b> by Majida Toma	
<b>Special feature—Literary translation</b>	8–13
<b>The Unethical Illusionist: reflections of a jobbing translator (JBML 2017—edited excerpts)</b> by Kevin Windle	
<b>Literary translation prizes: entries open soon</b>	
<b>The local literary translation scene</b> (four notable recent releases)	
<b>Swann's Way: Translation as Literary Criticism</b> by Brian Nelson	
<b>Alexandria to Alice: a case for a multilingual Australia</b> by Maya Cifali*	14–16
<b>Special feature—Feeling the pain: vicarious trauma in community interpreters</b>	17–21
<b>Interpreting trauma</b> by Majida Toma	
<b>Vicarious trauma / secondary traumatic stress in community interpreters: a research perspective</b> by Michael Grunwald	
<b>Member profiles:</b>	
<b>Stella Alves da Motta—Sophia Sakellis</b>	22

\* WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this article contains images of deceased persons.

# News in brief

(a review of T&I-related items that have appeared in the mainstream media since the last issue of *In Touch* went to press):

## **19 April: MISSION COMPLETE: Dutton's office confirms case review**

An Australian army captain's five-year fight to bring his Afghan interpreter to Australia, to protect him from the Taliban, ends in success after a week-long vigil outside the office of the federal Minister for Immigration. *The Fraser Coast Chronicle*

## **14 May: Morris Stuart, the charismatic choir director ...**

The repertoire of the Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir includes German hymns that were translated into local Indigenous languages by German missionaries in the late 19th century. *ABC News*

## **19 May: The Odyssey, by Homer: teasing out the gender politics**

The first English-language translation of Homer's *The Odyssey* by a woman (British classicist Emily Wilson) is praised as 'attentive' and 'nuanced'. *The Weekend Australian*

## **17 June: Pivotal role for man, 19, in WWII**

Alister Kentwell, now 92, was a teenager when he interpreted for Japanese forces during their surrender in Borneo in 1945. His "efforts in WWII and peacekeeping" were recognised recently with the presentation of two Saluting Their Service Certificates of Appreciation. *The Courier Mail*

## **3 July: Migrants face challenges of adapting to new and very different life ...**

This report features a young Burmese woman, Wah Ree Paw, who arrived in Australia eight years ago with her parents from a refugee camp in Thailand, and is now "working as a case worker and translator, helping other Burmese migrants adapt to Australia". *ABC News*

## **6 July: Interpreter trial ensures hospitals are no longer places where Aboriginal people 'go to die'**

A trial introduction of interpreters to hospitals in Western Australia's far north, intended to "make hospitals a less intimidating place for Aboriginal people", is improving patient–staff relationships. It is hoped this will reduce the number of Aboriginal people who leave hospital "against the advice of medical staff". *ABC News*

## **8 July: TechKnow: Translation devices for travellers tested**

After trying out a "small hand-held device" designed in Holland and an Australian-developed smartwatch, this SMH reporter concludes that while universal translation devices "may still be the stuff of science-fiction," there have recently been "significant leaps towards making them a reality". *The Sydney Morning Herald (Entertainment)*

## **8 July: Calls for more bilingual midwives and doulas**

Midwives and multicultural groups express concerns that pregnant migrants and refugees "deemed to have basic English skills" are not receiving adequate access to interpreter services. As a representative for ethnic communities points out, "it's easy to imagine how things can go horribly wrong when a patient can't communicate with their doctor or even worse, there's a miscommunication". *SBS News*

## **10 July: NDIS makes Auslan interpreter shortage worse, say users**

Deaf people in South Australia are regularly having to cancel medical appointments, delay court hearings or miss work and other meetings due to "a dire shortage of Auslan interpreters". *ABC Radio National*

## **11 July: Adul Sam-on, 14, played a crucial role in Thai rescue mission**

A 'stateless' teenager played a vital role as interpreter in the rescue mission of his teammates and coach. Speaking five languages—English, Thai, Burmese, Mandarin and Wa—his knowledge of English was crucial in facilitating communication between the group and British rescue divers. *news.com.au*

# AUSIT Biennial National Conference 2018



## **‘DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME? INTERCULTURAL ASPECTS OF INTERPRETING, TRANSLATION AND COMMUNICATION’**



**16–17 NOVEMBER 2018**  
**Flinders University, Adelaide**



**Accompanied by the annual AUSIT Awards presentation and Gala Dinner,  
the Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture and the NAGM**

The SA–NT branch has the pleasure of announcing that we are hosting the AUSIT National Conference in Adelaide this November. It’s a long nine years since the 2009 Mini-Conference took place in South Australia’s capital city. Two years later our branch asked the question “Do you hear me?” in Alice Springs. Now we’re looking forward to greeting our colleagues from around the country in Adelaide once again, and taking that conversation a step further by asking “Do you understand me?”

The work translators and interpreters do evolves in sociocultural contexts that go well beyond the mere linguistic transfer between two languages. This year’s conference will explore intercultural communication in different fields of expertise, and will look into the different methodological and ethical approaches translators and interpreters take in order to perform successfully in these complex cross-cultural communication settings.

**Call for papers (deadline for submission of proposals 31 August 2018):**  
**[https://ausit.org/AUSIT/Events/National\\_Conference\\_2018.aspx](https://ausit.org/AUSIT/Events/National_Conference_2018.aspx)**

## KEYNOTES and JBML

### OPENING: DAVID MOORE

The keynote address will be presented by SA-NT branch member David Moore. David—an interpreter and translator in the Alyawarr and Anmatjerr languages and a forensic linguist and educator based in the Alice Springs Language Centre—is a man with a revolutionary vision for the profession of interpreting and translating in Central Australia, and we anticipate a stimulating and thought-provoking presentation on the process and beneficial outcomes of his successful campaign to promote T&I in Central Australia.

### Translation Tracks: vocational pathways for the language professions of the future

*We live on the Indigenous continent of Australia in the Asian region of the world. Many Indigenous languages are spoken in the Northern Territory. This presentation is about the development of interpreting and translating courses in the Northern Territory and supporting the use of Indigenous languages in the classroom. The courses started as the 'Translation Tracks' program and have developed into 'applied language' courses run by the Northern Territory Education Department in high schools. They aim to recognise the value of Indigenous languages to the student's identity, and also to support their vocational choices in the language professions.\**

David Moore

### CLOSING: PROFESSOR RITA WILSON

The closing keynote address will be given by Professor Rita Wilson from the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University. Rita's research interests focus on the complexities of cultural contact and the relationship between language, culture and social inclusion. She has published work on identity and culture in migratory contexts, multilingual creative practices and cultural mediation.

### JILL BLEWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE: THE HON. JING LEE MLC

This year's JBML will be given by The Honourable Jing Lee—Member of the Legislative Council in the South Australian Parliament and Assistant Minister to the Premier—whose portfolio includes multicultural affairs.

\* For more on David's work, see the article in our last issue (Vol 26, #1), page 4.

## ACCOMMODATION

Conference delegates may be eligible for a 10% discount off the daily rate at all Mantra, Breakfree and Peppers properties in Adelaide using the promo code AUSIT. The discount will apply for any room type, between 15 and 18 November 2018, if booked online before 15 November (subject to availability). See the conference website for instructions on how to book. For full terms and conditions go to: <http://www.mghotels.com.au/terms-and-conditions>

## VISITING ADELAIDE

The AUSIT conference is a great excuse to visit SA's beautiful capital city, renowned for its cultural richness and diversity, both Indigenous and immigrant. Adelaide is a cultural hub for the arts, wine and food, and also offers a wealth of options for lovers of natural beauty and the great outdoors. A few special suggestions:

- At the time of the conference, a major retrospective of the work of master bark painter John Mawurndjul—*I am the old and the new*, developed and co-presented by the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) and MCA Australia in association with Maningrida Arts & Culture—will be showing at AGSA.
- The National Wine Centre and the Magill Penfold Winery are both conveniently located inside city limits for those who'd like to taste what the region has to offer, but don't have time to venture as far as the Barossa, McLaren Vale or Kangaroo Island.
- Insider tips for nature lovers from organisers Ludmila Berkis and Joe Van Dalen: Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens, Hallett Cove, Morialta Falls Conservation Park, Waterfall Gully and Encounter Bay.

Below: Adelaide Central Market, a gourmet hub since 1869

Bottom: Penfolds Winery, Magill Estate

Opposite page: Alere Function Centre, Flinders University



## Professionals Australia: Victorian pay win

Translators and Interpreters Australia (TIA)—the division of Professionals Australia that covers the T&I industry—reports on the significant increase in fees for Victorian Government interpreting assignments that has been achieved recently, and calls on T&I professionals Australia-wide to join the campaign.

**T**he Victorian Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Robin Scott, has delivered on his commitment of last year, made at the celebration of a \$21.8 million funding boost to language services.

On 25 June the Minister announced an increase in interpreter fees on all Victorian Government assignments, effective 1 July.

TIA commends the Victorian Government and Minister Scott for recognising the profession, and for this first crucial step in returning the T&I industry to the standards of decades ago. TIA lobbied for three years for this outcome,

but for interpreters it has been twenty years coming. Professional interpreter and TIA committee member Giuseppina Pungitore described this watershed as “the start of a much brighter future for translators and interpreters.”

The increases average thirty per cent, with fifty-five per cent more for a full-day court booking. In contrast, Fair Work Australia achieved an annual minimum wage review of only 3.5 per cent, making this a highly significant achievement for language service professionals.

Minister Scott also announced the introduction of a language services consultative committee on which TIA will represent members. In the meantime, TIA is monitoring implementation of the new rates and will address any member concerns. Further reforms are pending, and the union continues to consult and campaign for

members. Further details on minimum rates are available on TIA’s website: <http://tia.professionalsaustralia.org.au>

It is time to stop standing on the sidelines. Queensland and Western Australia have already formed committees and are developing campaign plans. Join the campaign for further change across Australia, for both interpreters and translators: <http://tia.professionalsaustralia.org.au/TIA/Membership/>

TIA extends thanks to AUSIT and ASLIA for their ongoing support and collaboration.

TIA is the only union advocating for language services professionals.

## Feedback: AUSIT NSW PD workshop

I attended the two-day conference interpreting workshop held over the last weekend in June at Western Sydney University’s Parramatta campus. Between us, the interpreters present covered 13 languages: Arabic, Assyrian, Bengali, Cantonese, Chaldean, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Persian, Serbian and Spanish.

I thought the workshop would be very bland, but to my surprise I was in for a lively and educational weekend. We practised in booths with real life scenarios, and we were all very excited and overwhelmed by this unique experience, delivered by an excellent lecturer with fabulous presentation skills.

Our speaker and trainer was Margot Seligmann, a conference interpreter who has had extensive experience over many years and

also lectures in T&I at WSU. Margot delivered a very informative, practical and useful workshop, and presented the key information very well.

I think we (T&I professionals) would benefit from having access to more workshops with such targets, offering practical ways to reshape and extend our skills.

Here’s some of the feedback given by my colleagues who attended:

*It was an excellent course, no time to relax, busy from start to finish, lots of practice and then feedback. Margot was excellent.*

*The speaker has presented the information very well and in a very professional way. I enjoyed the course very much.*

*Wonderful course, excellent presenter, great atmosphere. A must-do course for every interpreter.*

A big “Thank you!” to the organisers and our presenter Margot Seligmann for all their effort and hard work!

*This AUSIT PD workshop—aimed at experienced community interpreters wanting to develop their conference interpreting skills—was organised by Associate Professor Mustapha Taibi from Western Sydney University (WSU). It took place in WSU’s brand-new conference interpreting lab, and was open to both AUSIT members and non-members.*

AUSIT members practise in booths  
Majida Toma (left): NSW Branch Committee member and Arabic, Assyrian and Chaldean interpreter; and  
Amelia Lemondhi: Indonesian T&I





# SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES



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The Master of Arts in Chinese Translation and Interpreting provides intensive training in translation from English into Chinese and vice versa, as well as interpreting between English and Mandarin.

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Undertake 100 hours of field practice in translation and interpreting. This supervised practice is designed to introduce you to active translation

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Students who complete this NAATI endorsed qualification may be eligible to undertake the following NAATI certification tests: Certified Translator, Certified Interpreter, Certified Specialist Interpreter - Legal, and Certified Specialist Interpreter - Health.



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This two-year, full-time program is ideal for applicants with an approved degree or equivalent in any field, and high levels of competence in both Japanese and English. You'll build a foundation for a career in translation and interpreting, and develop advanced linguistic competence in both languages.

Hone your skills through interlinked theoretical and practical training that covers interpreting and translating on a wide range of topics, including

diplomatic, financial, legal, technical and medical subjects, as well as professional areas such as ethics and business.

Participate in live interpreting forums on a variety of topics. You'll study translation into your native language, and consecutive and simultaneous interpreting in both directions.

The MAJIT Program is endorsed by NAATI at the Certified Conference Interpreter/Certified Advanced Translator levels, as well as being listed on the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) Schools Directory.



Students who complete this NAATI endorsed qualification may be eligible to undertake the following NAATI certification tests: Certified Translator, Certified Interpreter, Certified Conference Interpreter and Certified Advanced Translator.



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## The Unethical Illusionist: reflections of a jobbing translator (JBML 2017—edited excerpts)



At the outset of his Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture 2017, AUSIT's Kevin Windle—winner of FIT's Aurora Borealis Prize for Outstanding Translation of Non-Fiction Literature 2017—was quick to clarify that the title cast no aspersions on his colleagues; the 'unethical illusionist' (a term he would later explain) "refers only to me, nobody else!" The following are edited excerpts from his lecture.

**I**n the last fifteen to twenty years I've undertaken a number of commissions for academic publishers of specialised works in various fields—linguistics, classics, history, psychology and archaeology—with all their scholarly apparatus. I have also translated, analysed and edited numerous documents from the archive of the Communist International,<sup>1</sup> and from Russian historical archives.

Literature (fiction, drama, literary memoirs) has formed part of my output; although how large a part depends, of course, on how we define 'literary' and 'literature'. If we accept Anthony Burgess's broad definition of literature as "the aesthetic exploitation of language", perhaps I've done quite a lot of literary translation without realising it—just as Molière's Monsieur Jourdain was astonished to discover that he'd been speaking in prose for forty years.

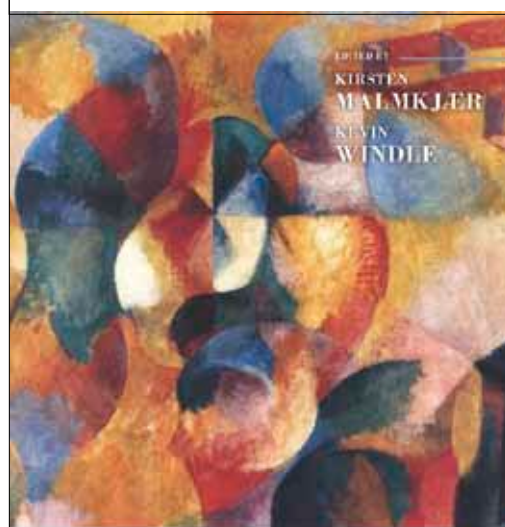
And the literary and the technical can overlap: an example of this from my own *oeuvre* is

*Notes of a Provincial Wildfowler* by Sergei Aksakov, a 19th century Russian novelist who spent his spare time shooting birds. Aksakov's account of his pastime is, in a sense, technical—requiring precision in identifying and describing species—but at the same time no less 'literary'—in its wonderful descriptions of landscapes and nature—than Turgenev's similarly themed and titled *Hunter's Notebook*.

My earliest tentative forays into translation were in short fiction, from Polish. This led me to work on some wonderful modern Polish plays, learning something of the complexity of translation for the stage by experiment, with the playwrights Ireneusz Iredyński and Jerzy Lutowski my victims. Given that theatre has formed part of my translation career, I thought I might venture a few reflections on this subject.

Assuming well-crafted, natural SL dialogue, the aim must always be the same in the TL. This also applies to dialogue in fiction, of course, but it's that much more salient in drama: after all, one is dealing almost exclusively with direct speech. If the translated dialogue sounds like thinly disguised Polish or Russian, that—to me—is a failure; the same applies if it's less intelligible than the original; and if there's humour in the original, but none in the translation (or vice versa!), again the translation hasn't quite worked.

I'll digress for a moment on matters related to dialogue: I tend to be wary of literalism. It has its place, of course: many words and phrases can be rendered word-for-word; but too often literalism produces utterly unacceptable results, and it cannot, of course, be pursued as an end in itself in prose, let alone in drama or verse:



The Oxford Handbook of  
**TRANSLATION  
STUDIES**



it's no good claiming 'fidelity' if it produces unwanted obscurity or loses the point.

A competent editor will be alert to undesirable literalisms—sometimes known as interference—but won't always be able to suggest an alternative; so some lazy literalisms persist, and can be found in every kind of translation. For example, in a travel brochure about Italy with parallel Italian and English copy, I recently found a prominent heading '*Come arrivare*' translated as 'How to Arrive'—grammatical enough but slightly puzzling, as nobody would say this; we'd say 'getting there' or perhaps 'how to get there'. [...]

There exists a view, popular in recent years though with its roots in the early 19th century, that the (literary) translator should not 'domesticate'; that to do so constitutes 'ethnocentric violence'; and that the translation should reflect and respect difference. You will gather that I've never been able to fall in with this line of thinking, mainly because the reader—and I mean the attentive, educated reader—by and large finds it difficult to accept the product, tending to regard it simply as 'bad translation'. Its jarring effects are particularly striking in the theatre: Ronald Hingley—the translator of the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's complete works—wrote of avoiding "the limbo of translationese", in which a text is suspended between two languages, fully inhabiting neither one nor the other. [...]

I will refer here to a Czech translation specialist whose work I think particularly valuable: Jiří Levý, whose classic work *Umění překladu* (1963) is now available in English as *The Art of Translation*. Levý speaks of the translator as an 'illusionist', and of the 'illusionist method' which, in a way, parallels theatrical performance. The theatre aims to evoke the illusion that what is happening on the stage is reality, in a tacit agreement with the spectator, who knows it is not reality but accepts the illusion that it is. Similarly, the translator creates an illusion that the translation is an original text, while the reader, as a rule, knows that this is not so, but demands that the new version observe the same conventions as an original and retain the original's quality.

Robert Dessaix, writing on translating Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, also

*Ronald Hingley—  
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which a text is suspended  
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one nor the other.*

speaks of maintaining an illusion. In fact, in the case of translated drama, theatre and audience conspire to maintain a double illusion—that of theatre *per se*, plus that of the translation being an original—in a sense suspending our disbelief on these twin counts.

In drama, almost by definition we're dealing with the spoken word—words written to be spoken from the stage or on air, rather than read on the page. They can, of course, be read on the page too, and actors have to learn their lines; but the ultimate goal is that they be declaimed to an audience—a fundamentally different kind of communication in which the audience is listening, not reading.

Translation theorists may argue the toss over the virtues of the 'domesticated' versus the 'foreignised' translation. Directors, actors, reviewers and audiences, however, generally agree that they want a text to possess the qualities for which the Austrian theorist Fabienne Hörmanseder uses the German terms *Sprechbarkeit* (speakability) and *Spielbarkeit* (playability)—qualities not to be found in Hingley's 'limbo of translationese'. [...]

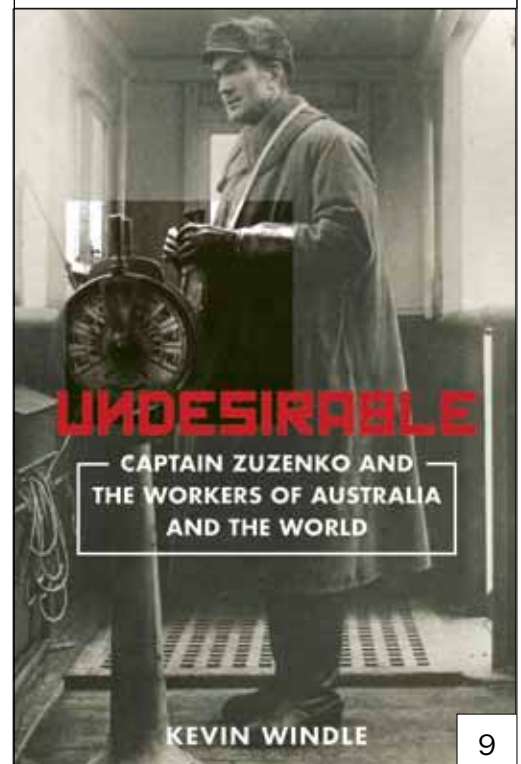
Maintaining these qualities usually requires moving some distance from a literal rendering, with idioms not rendered word-for-word—obvious perhaps, but it often happens, sometimes producing spectacular clashes of register. For example, Arthur Schnitzler's play

*Sylvesternacht* (*New Year's Eve*) is set in comfortable German bourgeois society in about 1910, so is liberally laced with polite formulae like *gnädige Frau* (my lady / madam). An amateur English version repeatedly has 'gracious woman', and one character refers to his 'mum and dad'. These literalisms produce unintended humour because, although we understand the meaning, the register is wrong. [...]

To sum up, what are the general guiding principles I try to follow as a translator? I make no claim to originality; they are time-honoured principles—and best illustrated, I think, by their opposites: Here is Vladimir Nabokov, in the foreword to his translation of Lermontov's *Hero of our Time*.

In the first place, we must dismiss once and for all the conventional notion that a translation 'should read smoothly' and 'should not sound like a translation'.

The experienced hack [...] will tone down everything that might seem unfamiliar to the meek and imbecile reader visualized by his publisher. But the honest translator is faced with a different task.



*... as a reader, I admit to being firmly of the meek and imbecile persuasion; and as a translator, in Nabokov's terms, apparently dishonest (and probably also unethical and thoroughly disreputable ...*

Well, as a reader, I admit to being firmly of the meek and imbecile persuasion; and as a translator, in Nabokov's terms, apparently dishonest (and probably also unethical and thoroughly disreputable).

Nabokov also wrote—in the foreword to his version of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*—of his “ideal of literalism”, to which he “sacrificed everything (elegance, euphony, clarity, good taste, modern usage, and even grammar) that the dainty mimic prizes higher than truth”. This seems to me an admission that his unrhymed and unmetrical *Onegin* is less than satisfactory on many counts, and that the ‘ideal’ equated with ‘truth’ has produced what the self-described ‘oligoglot’ Douglas Hofstadter has termed “tedious and heavy-handed, strained and straining prose”.

So, at risk of being termed a ‘dainty mimic’ and an unethical falsifier, I admit to being an adherent of Levy's ‘illusionist’ school (which doesn't imply delusion or deception). There's a tacit understanding by the parties: the reader is usually told that a translation is a translation, but the product should not provide constant reminders of the fact; it should quite simply read as well as the original, while conveying as fully as possible the original content and manner. As we know, that's often easier said than done; but as the Spanish>English translator John Rutherford said, “translation is a strange business, best avoided by sensible people”.

*Kevin Windle is an emeritus fellow in translation studies and Russian in the Australian National University's School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics. Since joining the school in 1987—after a six-year stint in the BBC Monitoring Service (UK)—his roles have included Head of School, Assistant Dean and Associate Professor. He has published English translations from a variety of European languages and genres, co-edited The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies, written and co-written many articles on translation, and worked on two dictionaries. In recent years Kevin has won the FIT Aurora Borealis Prize (2017—see leader paragraph) and the AALITRA Translation Prize (2014), come second in the John Dryden Translation Competition (2015), and been shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Translation Prize (2009).*

*Kevin's lightly edited version of the full transcript of his lecture can be accessed here:*

[ausit.org/AUSIT/Events/Jill\\_Blewett\\_Memorial\\_Lecture.aspx](http://ausit.org/AUSIT/Events/Jill_Blewett_Memorial_Lecture.aspx)

1 The Communist International—abbreviated as Comintern and also known as the Third International (1919–43, founded in Moscow)—was an international communist organisation that advocated world communism.

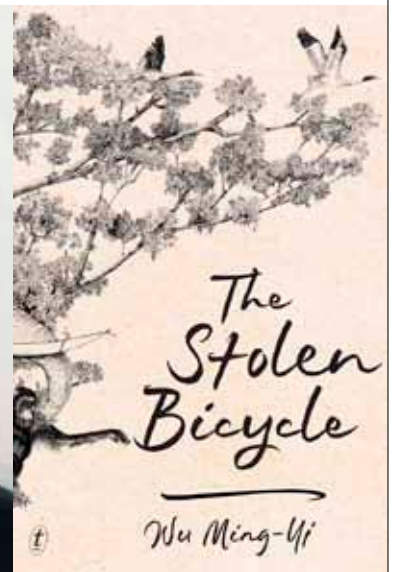
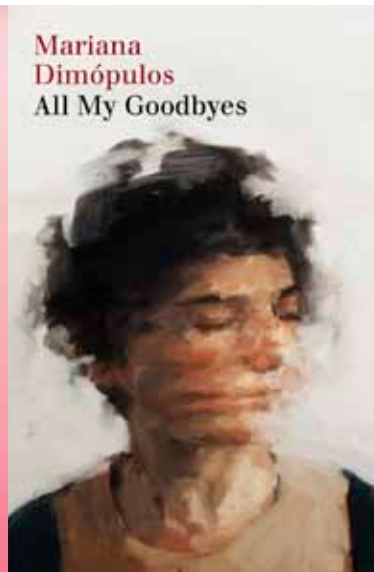
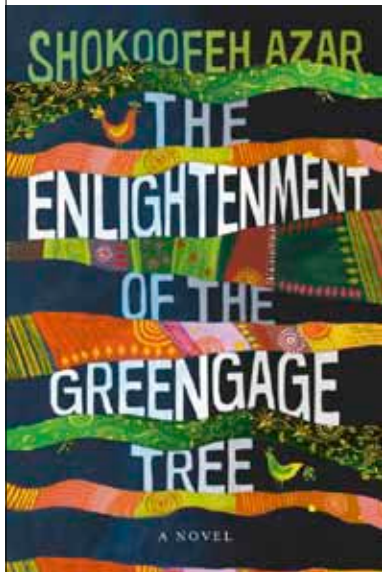


## Literary translation prizes: entries open soon

Among the state-based literary awards, only New South Wales has categories specifically for translators, but nominees don't need to have any special connection to NSW, the awards are open to all Australian citizens and permanent residents.

- **The NSW Premier's Translation Prize (\$30,000)** is offered to translators who translate works into English from other languages and can show evidence of a substantial body of literary work which has been professionally published or performed in recent years. This can include poetry, stage and radio plays, and fiction and non-fiction works of literary merit (but not the subtitling of films or television programs).
- **The Multicultural NSW Early Career Translator Prize (\$5,000)** is intended to offer acknowledgement, encouragement and financial support to translators in the first ten years of their practice.

Both prizes are offered biennially and will be next awarded in 2019. Nominations for next year's awards will open in late August, at which time the full guidelines and conditions will also be released.



## The local literary translation scene

Small Australian presses are leading the way in supporting the publication of literature in translation. Here are four notable recent releases, and their publishers.

***The Enlightenment of the Greengage Tree* by Shokoofeh Azar, translated from the Farsi by Adrien Kijek (Wild Dingo Press)**

Set in Iran in the period immediately after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, this novel uses the lyrical style of classical Persian storytelling to present the tale of a family living through the post-revolutionary chaos. Its nomination for this year's Stella Prize for Australian women's writing makes it the first translated work to be included on the list since the prize's inception in 2013.

Initially set up to give voice to refugees seeking asylum in Australia, **Wild Dingo Press** "brings to light the stories of individuals quietly doing extraordinary things." It launched its list in 2008 with *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-sharif* (co-written by the protagonist, Afghan refugee Najaf Mazari, and Robert Hillman), which became an Australian bestseller.

***Apple and Knife* by Intan Paramaditha, translated from the Indonesian by Stephen Epstein (Brow Books)**

This collection of short stories inspired by horror fiction, myths and fairy tales is infused with contemporary feminist and political critiques.

**Brow Books**—the new books imprint of Melbourne literary magazine *The Lifted Brow*—recently announced a co-publishing agreement with the UK-based Tilted Axis Press, which publishes translations of works from regions and languages underrepresented in Western literary markets. The partnership will be launched in August with the publication of *The Impossible Fairytale* by South Korean novelist Han Yujoo, translated from the Korean by Janet Hong.

***All My Goodbyes* by Mariana Dimópulos, translated from the Spanish by Alice Whitmore (Giramondo)**

This novel, made up of a series of vignettes, follows the travels of a young Argentinian woman across Europe and back to Argentina. Her series of 'goodbyes' weaves together psychological self-analysis and a murder mystery. This is the first publication in **Giramondo's** new Southern Latitudes series, which will focus on innovative fiction and non-fiction from the Southern Hemisphere.

***The Stolen Bicycle* by Wu Ming-Yi, translated from the Chinese by Darryl Sterk (Text Publishing)**

In this latest work—a novel—by a highly acclaimed Taiwanese artist, author, academic and environmental activist, the protagonist is himself a novelist; the bicycle, once owned by his father, was stolen many years ago; the father himself has been missing for twenty years; and the son's search for the bicycle turns into an epic quest in which multiple stories and characters intertwine. *The Stolen Bicycle* was longlisted for this year's Man Booker International Prize, which celebrates the finest works of fiction in English translation, and is awarded to author and translator together.

**Text Publishing**—an award-winning small publisher with a strong record of publishing works in translation—is also the Australian publisher of the winner of the prize: *Flights*, by Olga Tokarczuk, translated from the Polish by Jennifer Croft.

# Swann's Way: Translation as Literary Criticism



Having recently published a new translation of *Un amour de Swann* (*Swann in Love*) by French literary luminary Marcel Proust for the Oxford World's Classics series, **Brian Nelson** muses on the “questions of style that confront anyone attempting to translate Proust”.

In a short story entitled *The Walk*, Lydia Davis writes of a translator and a critic who happen to be together in Oxford, having been invited to take part in a conference on translation at the University. There is a certain tension between the two because the critic has previously written negatively about the translator's work. The translator-narrator, referring to the critic, with whom she goes on a walk around the town, remarks:

He felt that she kept too close to the original text. He preferred the studied cadences of an earlier version and had said so in person and in print. She felt that he admired lyricism and empty rhetorical flourishes at the expense of accuracy and faithfulness to the style of the original, which was far plainer and clearer, she said, than the flowery and obfuscating earlier version.<sup>1</sup>

*'Accuracy' and 'faithfulness' are not quite the same.*

Davis is alluding to a review by André Aciman<sup>2</sup> of her own translation of *Du côté de chez Swann* —*The Way by Swann's*—for the Penguin edition of Proust, while the “earlier version” is that of CK Scott Moncrieff, which was subsequently revised by Terence Kilmartin and DJ Enright. I invoke Davis's story not to adjudicate between her and Aciman, but to bring into focus questions of style that confront anyone attempting to translate Proust.

Moreover, I would echo—loudly—the words of Mark Treharne, translator of *Le Côté de*

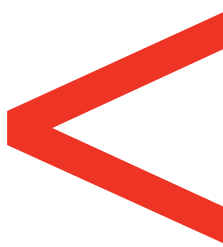
*Guermantes* as *The Guermantes Way* for the Penguin edition, when he says in his Translator's Introduction: “I have worked very much in the shadow of these previous translators and with much gratitude towards them.”

For fifty years, Moncrieff's translation *was* Proust for English-speaking readers unable to read him in the original. This translation was not simply majestic in its scale but was in many ways admirable in its realisation. Moncrieff had an exquisite ear for the cadences of Proust's prose, and a considerable talent for elegant phraseology. He was prone, however, to tamper with the text, through embellishment or the gratuitous heightening of language; and his translation also contained numerous little errors and misapprehensions and the occasional howler. The reservation most commonly voiced about his translation is that it falsified Proust's tone. He tended to make Proust sound ‘flowery’ and precious, whereas—as Davis rightly stresses—Proust's style, though marked by syntactic complexity, is not in the least affected or self-consciously ornate. His prose is rigorous, concentrated, exact. Kilmartin made hundreds of small, deft changes (including occasional syntactic adjustments) to Moncrieff, making his prose overall plainer and more accurate, though his revised edition remains fundamentally Moncrieff's. Davis's translation is impressive in its exactitude; but her determination to stay as close as possible to the original, not only in terms of diction but also in the retention of the precise order of elements in a sentence, runs the risk of compromising her ability to write idiomatic English. ‘Accuracy’ and ‘faithfulness’ are not quite the same.

The aim of the Oxford edition of *Swann in Love*<sup>3</sup> is to introduce Proust to a new and wider audience by offering, in a manageable compass, a well-crafted example of his key themes and

signature style. That *Proustian* style is largely identified with his famously long sentences, with their “coiling elaboration”.<sup>4</sup> As they uncoil, the sentences express the rhythms of a sensibility, the directions and indirections of desire, the complication and conflicts of a mind—Swann's—in the grip of doubts and uncertainties, obsessions and fantasies. I have tried to capture the intricate harmonies of those sentences, which combine syntactic complexity with complete clarity. Grand rhythm and aphoristic concentration often work together. Proust's sentences are elaborately constructed, but they have a beautiful precision and rhythmic balance: a musicality that becomes particularly apparent when the text is read aloud.

I tried to maintain the full range of Proust's tones and registers, and the shifts between them; and to catch as much as possible of his humour. Proust is not only a great prose stylist but also a great comic writer. His comedy is various: the out-and-out comedy of characters like the buffoon Cottard (with the consequent need to catch such characters' particular idioms of speech—to mimic Proust's mimicry, so to speak); the high comedy of the great set-scenes; the narrator's wry wit; and the irony that informs the portrayal of Swann's tormented feelings as well as the social pretensions of his circle. It is important to capture the ‘double-think’ subtleties of Swann's interior monologue expressed in free indirect style: to capture, as one of the anonymous readers of an early sample translation nicely put it, “the veneer of genteel intellectualism over Swann's frustrated lust, and the algebra of sentiments and calculated motives [which comes across] as representing the way the character is thinking (rather than, in reality, the way the narrator is constructing his thoughts with his omniscience and literary artifice)”.



*The aim of the Oxford edition ... is to introduce Proust to a new and wider audience by offering, in a manageable compass, a well-crafted example of his key themes and signature style ... [which] is largely identified with his famously long sentences, with their “coiling elaboration”<sup>4</sup>*

Style is vision. In general terms, I would characterise the art of translation as a particular, and particularly intense, form of critical reading and creative writing, involving a multiplicity of exact choices about voice, tone, register, rhythm, syntax, echoes, sounds, connotations—the colour, texture and music of words: all those factors that make up ‘style’ and reflect the marriage between style and meaning. I agree very much with Christopher Prendergast’s statement that “the kinds of judgments and decisions bound up with literary translation make it one of the higher forms of criticism”<sup>5</sup>.

*The original version of this article was published last year in the UK-based journal for literary translators In Other Words (No. 49, pp. 67–69).*

**Brian Nelson** is emeritus professor of French Studies and Translation Studies at Monash University. He is well known for his translations and critical studies of the novels of Émile Zola, and won the New South Wales Premier’s Prize for Translation in 2015. Brian’s most recent critical work is *The Cambridge Introduction to French Literature (2015)*.

<sup>1</sup> L Davis, *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ‘Picador’, 2009), p. 576.

<sup>2</sup> A Aciman, ‘Proust’s Way?’, *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 52, #19, December 2005.

<sup>3</sup> M Proust, *Swann in Love*, trans. B Nelson, intro. and notes A Watt, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> R Howard, ‘Intermittencies of the Heart’, in A Aciman (ed.), *The Proust Project*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), p. 98.

<sup>5</sup> C Prendergast, cited in B Tonkin, ‘Christopher Prendergast: “Proust is an invitation to slow down”’, *The Independent*, 12 October 2002.



## Marcel Proust

### Swann in Love

A new translation by Brian Nelson

OXFORD WORLD’S CLASSICS

# Alexandria to Alice: a case for a multilingual Australia

AUSIT (SA–NT branch) member **Maya Cifali** sketches the trajectory of her T&I career—bookended as it is by two desert cities—and shares her wishes for the linguistic future of her adopted country.

*WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that the following article contains an images of deceased persons.*



**W**hen I arrived in Central Australia in 1985, a whole world opened up which reminded me of my childhood. I was born in 1937 in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, founded around 332 BC by Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia. In ancient Alexandria, with its historic Pharos and Library, people of many origins spoke many languages, and discussed ideas in a fusion of cultures and religions. The cosmopolitan city in which I grew up was still both multicultural and multilingual. Once you felt its magic spell ... it remains in your soul forever. Arriving in Alice Springs I was again surrounded by people for whom communication in more than one language is a natural way of living.

Here in Central Australia the colours and the flavours, the sand and the rocks, the sun and the blue skies, even the majestic river red gums and the fluffy wattles are similar to the landscapes of Egypt's Western Desert, while the Indigenous people remind me of its Bedouin tribespeople. These similarities gave me joy, and I stayed ... for thirty-three years now, and still counting.

Today, I breathe both the hot dry air of another Western Desert, and the salty mist of my Mediterranean memories. Between here and there: a lifetime of readjustment and many pathways.

I'd left Alexandria aged eighteen, with a French *baccalauréat*, thinking that I would return for the usual summer holidays; but the political events of 1956 decided otherwise, and I was denied the going back home. For nearly thirty years I lived in a sort of limbo, not knowing where I belonged, only that I had in me the rich values of an upbringing where people of many cultures mixed in harmony, each of us able to speak several languages. I'd grown up with French as mother tongue and Italian as father tongue, Arabic as local vernacular, and

English in a country over which the British retained administrative and military control until the 1951 nationalist revolution. I've recounted my early memories in my book *The Silver Bracelet: An Egyptian Girlhood*.

The forced exile from Egypt took me first to Paris to finalise my tertiary education; then Switzerland, where I married a geologist and had two lovely daughters. Geology led us to Australia, where its young capital became our home base, as well as to Papua New Guinea and to Tehran (where I lived through my next revolution).

In Paris, having upgraded my Egyptian-style Italian and high school English, I was the fifty-fourth graduate of the Sorbonne's highly regarded T&I school, renamed while I was there: *École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs* (ESIT). In addition to its linguistic and semantic content, the T&I course included contextual studies in political science, basic economics and administration, and commercial law—a broad set of knowledge which helped me find work wherever I went,



in areas as diverse as banking, engineering, tourism, health, international relations, community radio and language teaching. Then one day—in May 1985—I arrived in Alice Springs, looking for a sea change after my marriage broke down. Love at first sight. I'd finally found a place where I felt a deep connection; I was satisfied. This is now where I belong.

In Alice I worked with the Indigenous community right from the start, initially at the renowned Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD). As their administration manager, I secured funding for their recently established interpreter service, which offered interpreting in Central Australian Aboriginal languages for people attending hospital or court in Alice Springs.

Later, in 1997, I rejoined the IAD to customise and deliver their first interpreter training program that gave NAATI accreditation, while also fighting for the establishment of an interpreter service to cover the whole of the Northern Territory. Once federal funding was secured, the NT's Aboriginal Interpreter Service—with offices in Darwin and Alice Springs—began to offer interpreting in the many traditional languages of the NT. Then in 2002, I was asked to develop their first manual of policies and procedures—in three sections: for interpreters, for users and for the service itself—which I think has remained largely unchanged to this day.

While offering French and Italian T&I services—via the Interpreting and Translating

Service NT until early 2017—I worked at Katherine Regional Aboriginal Legal Aid Service; the Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Programmes Unit; and Yipirinya School, which offers two-way (bilingual) primary education to the children of the Alice Springs town camps.

Later, as a consultant, I developed projects for the Katherine Region Aboriginal Language Centre, Danila Dilba Health Service in Darwin, and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs; assessed the multicultural needs of Alice Springs to facilitate conversion of the defunded Migrant Resource Centre into the Multicultural Community Service of Central Australia; and provided a new, non-clinical delivery model to the Mental Health Association of Central Australia.

And finally, for twelve years to 2017, I was the community rep and chair of the Alice Springs Community Visitor Panel for people receiving treatment and care in accordance with the territory's Mental Health and Related Services Act—insisting, in every report to the NT Anti-Discrimination Commission, on the need for good Aboriginal interpreting in mental health.

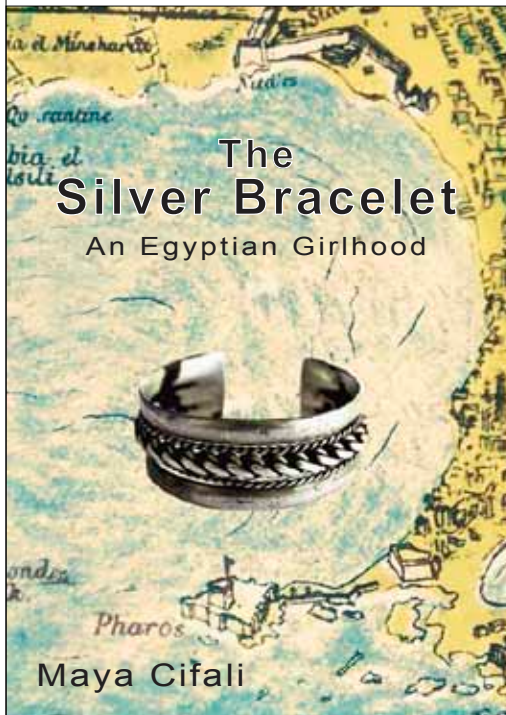
In each of these environments I was shocked by the profound lack of linguistic skills and cultural awareness in the majority of those who provide basic human services, and their need to rely on (often poor) interpreting to communicate with their clients.

I would like to stress that it is through the initial language and cultural versatility I had acquired from childhood that I felt comfortable

*When I arrived in Central Australia in 1985, a whole world opened up which reminded me of my childhood ... Arriving in Alice Springs I was again surrounded by people for whom communication in more than one language is a natural way of living.*

Left to right: a Luritja lady holding up a goanna like the man with fresh fish in Alexandria, and Luritja ladies out of Titjikala, NT sitting on the ground, like the old ladies in front of their esbah (mudhut) in Luxor, Egypt.





Before settling in Alice Springs, **Maya Cifali** had a varied career in T&I and related areas. This included translating French<->English for a French firm in Tehran in 1978—the troubled year leading to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran; followed by a seven-year stint as director’s secretary, assistant director and company secretary at the Australian Institute of International Affairs in Canberra.

Also a published poet, Maya was awarded the honour of ‘Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes

Académiques’—for services to French language and culture—in 1983; and in 2013 she was the driving force, together with David Moore, behind the very successful 2013 AUSIT Mini-Conference ‘Do you hear me?’ in Alice Springs.

Maya’s autobiographical book *The Silver Bracelet: An Egyptian Girlhood*, published in 2017, can be purchased from Red Kangaroo Books online or by phone: (08) 8953 2137.

in such a diverse and exciting range of occupations. This, in turn, allowed me to observe closely and become familiar with the breadth of people that form humanity—from the rich and secure to the poor and vulnerable—and to contribute in my own small way to social justice and human dignity.

I wish to see our so-called multicultural society become a multilingual society. I believe that to remain monolingual in a multicultural society is a contradiction in terms; culture and language go hand in hand, and language learning opens the mind and nurtures the ability to accept ‘otherness’.

I wish to see our governments develop a language policy for Australia that mandates the teaching of—alongside the language of the early Anglo-Celtic colonisers—other languages and their semiotics.

I strongly believe that such multilingualism—from the old languages of Australia’s First Nations to the many languages of its recently arrived peoples of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds—would effectively nurture community cohesion and combat racism throughout Australia.

# NAATI

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INTERPRETERS**



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Earn PD points when you attend a webinar, event or conference. PD points are also awarded when you share your knowledge and experience:

- Write an article
- Host a webinar
- Run an event

### Remember an Ethics activity!

You need one activity from the ethics sub-category every 3 years.





# Feeling the pain: vicarious trauma in community interpreters

Interpreters often work in emotionally charged settings. In addition to conveying information that may be of a sensitive nature and/or linguistically challenging, they frequently have to deal with their own emotions when responding to the situation at hand; and over time this can lead to them developing vicarious trauma.

Over the following pages, health care and legal interpreter **Majida Toma** examines this debilitating condition, and the events that cause it, through the lens of her and her colleagues' personal experiences; then **Michael Grunwald** gives his perspective as a psychologist, translator and researcher.

## Interpreting trauma

by Majida Toma

**I**n one of my early experiences as an interpreter I was faced with a very confronting and emotional situation. I was booked for a mental health tribunal hearing, to interpret for a young female patient who was suffering from hallucinations, and also for her very emotional parents, who wanted their daughter to be under their care at home. When I left the room at the end of the hearing, I immediately burst into tears. I was not offered a briefing session before—or debriefing after—this assignment.

At this time I was not aware of vicarious trauma (VT) and its effects, but I sought support from a friend who was a psychologist. She helped me understand what was happening to me: I was experiencing VT.



VT is defined as the “cumulative transformative effect” on persons “working with survivors of traumatic life events” (Saakvitne et al., 2000). Without adequate preparation, training and support it is largely unavoidable. It is a natural consequence of being human, of empathising with and caring about our clients as we are directly exposed to the effects of trauma upon their lives. Interpreters often fail to recognise the development of VT, misinterpreting or not noticing our own symptoms amidst the emotionally charged settings in which we are employed.

When interpreting in legal, medical or mental health, court or conflict zone settings, we never fully know what challenges we may face at our

next appointment, and we regularly find ourselves in difficult and challenging situations. For instance, we can be called upon to convey a doctor’s prognosis that their patient has only months to live, or tell parents that their child has been diagnosed with a rare disease; interpret for the defendant in a murder trial; or assist medical staff and police officers to communicate with a rape victim who doesn’t speak fluent English. Prolonged work in such settings, where we are repeatedly exposed to trauma of various kinds, can have serious psychological consequences.

A fellow interpreter recounted a heartbreaking experience she was faced with at a hospital. She was booked on an urgent call, and when she arrived there were people crying, and a mother holding her little boy. The doctor asked my colleague to advise the family that the child had died. She was shocked, but had to suppress her own feelings while she explained this devastating news to the little boy’s parents. The mother refused to believe her. My colleague described this task as the hardest she had ever had to face; the experience left her shattered for days.

Another colleague who works in a major hospital reported the following: “Often I encounter situations when interpreting can take a huge emotional toll on me as I can relate



to those situations. I interpreted for a family with a terminally sick father and because I could relate to the family feelings and distress, that immediately affected my impartiality as I became very empathetic and even teary. This, however, did not affect my role as interpreter and being accurate, [I didn't] let my own personal experience impact my [interpreting]. I showed my sympathy and solidarity to the members of the family as I have been through the same situation, but did not offer any advice or suggestions”.

Other interpreting situations may also trigger strong emotions, for example working in an amputee clinic, for a young woman after

mastectomy surgery, or with terminally sick children. As a mother or father this last example can be particularly emotive and affect our performance. We are human; it is extremely difficult to interpret when crying with a mother whose child is dying. I've sometimes withdrawn from a situation briefly for a 'toilet break' to compose myself, hoping that the real reason isn't obvious, and I know other colleagues do this too. Theoretically we should remain impartial, but that doesn't mean that we can't be empathetic and understanding while also being pragmatically accurate.

Interpreters need to be aware of the effects of VT, together with other related issues such as

compassion fatigue, burnout and work stress. Interpreters who are informed about VT and who actively maintain a balanced personal and professional life are in the best position to provide an ongoing quality interpreting service with minimal risks to their emotional health.

One of my colleagues added, “My feeling would be sad and down and also mixed with thankful and appreciative sensations as well about what I have and to enjoy it as much [as possible]. Being positive is very important and crucial in our industry, otherwise, it will reflect in our performance.”

To sum up, I would like to see more training about VT for interpreters, more debriefing sessions after emotional assignments, and professional development targeting stress management and dealing with anxiety. To work sustainably and at a high standard, and at the same time protect our own mental health, we need the right tools to help us face emotionally challenging situations.

*Majida Toma is a medical and legal interpreter in Arabic, Assyrian and Chaldean, working for the police, courts, local health districts, and various federal and state government departments; including for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, in immigration detention centres both on- and offshore. She holds an MA in interpreting and translation studies from Western Sydney University, and recently re-enrolled there on a master's of research degree course.*

### What can you do to prevent or reduce VT?

I found a list of helpful tips on the website of the US-based Wendt Center for Loss and Healing. I've paraphrased them below, and you can find the full list here: <https://www.wendtcenter.org/resources/for-professionals/>

- **Monitor yourself:** be aware of any so-called 'burnout' symptoms. (For a list of VT symptoms see Michael Grunwald's article, page 21.)
- **Take care of yourself:** get plenty of rest and physical exercise, and eat healthy, balanced meals. (There are many online 'self-assessments' you can use to check whether you're adequately engaging in self-care.)
- **Take time for yourself:** take breaks during the working day to give your mind and spirit respite, and make sure you engage in activities that you find enjoyable and restorative outside of work.

- **Separate yourself:** remember that the pain and stress is not your own; you're just "holding it for a little while".
- **Limit yourself:** limit the number of traumatised clients you interpret for, and try to vary the type of work you're doing.
- **Seek help yourself:** you may need to seek professional help yourself, not only to help you cope with VT, but also to maintain (or even improve) your professional performance.
- **Be honest with yourself:** work out what kind of work you enjoy most, and/or find most stimulating—therapy? advocacy? community outreach?—then try to acquire more of this type of work.

*For other self-help resources see the box inset into Michael Grunwald's article, page 21.*

If you are concerned that you—or a colleague, friend or family member—could be developing vicarious trauma, more information and assistance can be accessed by:

- dialing 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732), or
- going to [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au) (click on the 'professionals' tab).

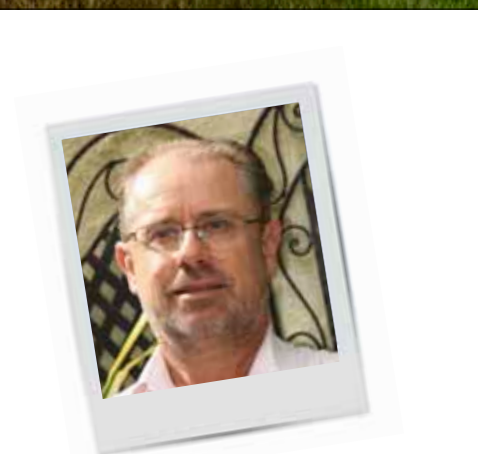
AUSIT organises PD events on vicarious trauma from time to time, such as the workshop in ACT in June which featured cross-cultural psychologist and public speaker Judy Saba. Check the website and e-flashes for future events.



### Vicarious trauma / secondary traumatic stress in community interpreters: a research perspective

by Michael Grunwald

**A**lthough the media stereotypically portrays interpreters plying their trade in international conference booths, most Australian interpreters work through T&I agencies on ad hoc jobs, mainly in community settings such as hospitals, government offices, schools, law enforcement and courtrooms. Consequently, on many routine assignments interpreters hear,



comprehend, process and reformulate client discourse involving traumatic content, thereby bearing witness to and embodying client suffering to some degree (Harvey, 2001; plus see Majida Toma's article on preceding pages).

Furthermore, in stark contrast to other occupational groups which include community first responders (such as police, fire, ambulance and mental health services), in which trauma-based training, supervision and support facilities are mandatory, Australian community

interpreters are provided with very little preparation or support for dealing with exposure to other people's trauma. However, in the current socio-legal climate it is conceivable that in the near future employers (and perhaps contracting agents) may be obliged not only to assume responsibility for any work-related psychological injuries suffered by interpreters resulting from a lack of adequate precautionary measures, but also to proactively provide prevention resources.

It is also worth noting that despite rising demand for appropriately trained, resourced and motivated community interpreters in an increasingly multicultural Australia, industry research indicates a significant level of job dissatisfaction amongst interpreters.

One aspect of practitioner satisfaction that is largely neglected by almost all T&I service stakeholders in Australia is the wellbeing of interpreters who experience the aforementioned exposure to deeply upsetting content and/or incidents on the job—exposure with a clear potential to cause vicarious trauma (aka 'secondary traumatic stress') or other stress-



expectations with respect to fundamental psychological needs concerning issues such as safety, trust, power, esteem and intimacy (schemas).

It is hypothesised that helpers are vicariously traumatised as a result of the disruption of these schemas through direct exposure to the narrative of the client’s traumatising event, subject to the helper’s own individual development-related susceptibility. In other

*... in stark contrast to other occupational groups which include community first responders ... Australian community interpreters are provided with very little preparation or support for dealing with exposure to other people’s trauma.*

related conditions. For example, in a landmark study Lai, Heydon & Mulayim (2015) found that 68% of the 271 Victorian community interpreters they surveyed had been exposed to traumatic material on a weekly basis, leaving 3% of them extremely upset for a long time, and 40% unprepared to work in the area again.

## What is vicarious trauma?

### Definition

The adjective ‘vicarious’ derives from the Latin ‘vicārius’ meaning ‘substituting, equivalent’, and in this context refers to the emotions a helper feels when exposed to the experience reported by others. In a psychological sense the term ‘trauma’ (Greek for ‘wound’) refers to both an experience that produces psychological injury or pain, and the injury caused by that experience. Consequently, ‘vicarious traumatisation’ denotes exposure to the trauma experience of others, while ‘vicarious trauma’ (VT) refers to the impact of this indirect

exposure on the psychological wellbeing of the helper (Molnar et al., 2017). The terms ‘vicarious trauma’ and ‘secondary traumatic stress’ are often used interchangeably.

VT can therefore be described as negative changes to one’s physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual health that occur in response to absorbing another person’s trauma (pain, fear and/or terror) as a result of engaging empathetically with them. This profound transformation in the self and inner experience of the helper can persist for months or years after working with the traumatised person, and sometimes only surfaces after considerable time has elapsed (Vigor, 2012; NCTSN, 2011; McCann & Pearlman, 1990).

### Process of vicarious traumatisation

McCann and Pearlman (1990) explain the process of vicarious traumatisation in a series of steps, starting with the proposition that all humans construct their own personal realities by developing complex cognitive structures (schemas, frameworks) to explain events and make sense of their experiences in the world. These include beliefs, assumptions and

words, the occurrence and/or degree of vicarious traumatisation is a function of the potentially disturbing situation/narrative and its applicability to the psychological state of the helper exposed to that situation/narrative (Clare, 2000). This helps explain why different people are impacted differently by, and/or cope differently with, the same or similar potentially traumatising events; and therefore why community interpreters need specific psychological support—both during training, and while practising their profession (Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012; Crezee et al., 2015)—to facilitate trauma-informed interpreting (Bancroft, 2017).

The risk of developing VT appears to be greater among women; individuals who are highly empathetic by nature; and those who have

unresolved personal trauma of their own, such as domestic violence, torture, etc. The risk is also higher for professionals who are frequently exposed to traumatic material; are socially or organisationally isolated; or feel professionally compromised due to inadequate training.

To sum up, the impact of VT on interpreters may vary as a function of the individual's history, resilience, personality, coping mechanisms, maturity, training, experience in the field, gender and cognitive ability. External elements such as the severity of the situation, the environment, the degree of exposure, and the nature of the content being interpreted can also be factors (Macdonald, 2015).

### Symptoms of vicarious trauma

From a trauma-focused psychological point of view, the symptoms of VT can be experienced physiologically, cognitively, emotionally (i.e. affectively) and behaviourally.

Common **physiological** signs are high blood pressure, chest pains, headaches or backaches, nausea, insomnia, intestinal discomfort, and changes in appetite and eating habits. At the **cognitive** level, the most perceptible signs are confusion, bewilderment, paranoia, feelings of guilt, suicidal tendencies, flashbacks, dreams, nightmares, recurring thoughts and poor concentration. At the **emotional** level, it is common to experience shock, sadness, fear, anxiety, irritability, low self-image and diminished joy (NABS, 2017). Many of these symptoms run parallel to those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which—according to the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual (DSM-5, 2013)—encompasses the symptoms of intrusion, avoidance, arousal and emotional numbing.

Any of the above symptoms, whether experienced alone or combined with other symptoms, can lead to **behavioural** changes such as antisocial behaviour and avoidance of environments that could potentially trigger their recurrence. Some people attempt to avoid thinking about the issues by working excessively, while others might experience relationship problems, resulting—among other things—from difficulty in talking about one's emotions and rejection of closeness or intimacy. Furthermore, it is not unusual for a traumatised person to self-medicate through the consumption of alcohol, tranquilisers and other drugs, in an attempt

to ease the psychological pain (Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012).

It is obvious that any one, or a combination, of the aforementioned symptoms is likely to have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of the interpreter, which in turn will almost certainly result in suboptimal (if not substandard) work outcomes (Whynot, 2012).

*Michael Grunwald is a Sydney-based registered psychologist and an AUSIT Senior Practitioner (German>English). He is currently completing a master's degree in counselling and applied psychotherapy through Torrens University Australia, culminating in a research project into help-seeking by spoken-language interpreters following traumatically stressful assignments.*

*For a full reference list for both articles, please contact either Michael Grunwald: mail@german-translation.com.au or editor Helen Sturgess: editor@ausit.org*

## Some useful self-care resources, and where you can access them

1. NCTSN (National Center for Child Traumatic Stress) (2011). *Secondary traumatic stress: A fact sheet for child-serving professionals*. [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/secondary\\_traumatic\\_stress\\_child\\_serving\\_professionals.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/secondary_traumatic_stress_child_serving_professionals.pdf)
2. Volk et al. (2008). *What about You? A Workbook for Those Who Work with Others*. The National Center on Family Homelessness. <http://508.center4si.com/SelfCare-forCareGivers.pdf>
3. Crezee et al. (2015). *Teaching interpreters about self-care*. [http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/9146/g%20IJIE%207\(1\)%20001\\_Com\\_14\\_Crezee%20Atkinson%20Pask%20Au%20and%20Wong.pdf;sequence=7](http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/9146/g%20IJIE%207(1)%20001_Com_14_Crezee%20Atkinson%20Pask%20Au%20and%20Wong.pdf;sequence=7)
4. NABS (National Auslan Interpreter Booking & Payment Service) (2017). *Vicarious trauma*. <https://www.nabs.org.au/vicarious-trauma.html>



### Upcoming call for participants

Michael Grunwald is currently working on a research proposal to interview experienced AUSIT interpreters, in order to obtain insights into interpreters' support-seeking decisions following exposure to potentially traumatising experiences on the job.

If you would be interested in taking part, please watch out for the official call for participants via an AUSIT e-flash in the coming weeks.

# Member profiles



## **SOPHIA SAKELLIS**

Sophia Sakellis has been a member of AUSIT since 2000. She is an English↔Greek translator, and is based in Sydney.

Sophia has been practising since 1997. She works freelance in any area, including legal, medical, commercial and government, often for federal, state and local government organisations.



## **STELLA ALVES DA MOTTA**

Stella Alves da Motta has been a member of AUSIT for around fifteen years. She is a Portuguese↔English interpreter, and is based in St Kilda, Melbourne.

Stella has been practising since 1992, in all areas as required.

# Q&A

**Q1**  
How did you come to be a translator and/or interpreter?

**Q2**  
Tell us about a project you have worked on that was especially interesting or challenging (within the bounds of confidentiality of course).

**A1**  
I studied physics in my home country of Greece and came to Australia for postgraduate studies. I completed my master's in physics at UNSW, followed by further research in astrophysics and radio-astronomy; but when I started a family it was increasingly difficult to continue in research.

Always interested in the Greek language, and with English—heavy on translation and terminology—a compulsory subject throughout my undergraduate degree, it was natural that I would turn to translation as a vocation.

I've recently completed a Diploma of Language Studies and an MA by Research in the University of Sydney's Department of Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies, where I'm currently a PhD candidate. I've taught Greek and translation studies, and tutored in linguistics, at a number of Sydney's universities.

**A2**  
I've undertaken many interesting and challenging projects, but the one that stands out for me was translating the book and materials for Australia's contribution to the Cultural Olympiad exhibition for the 2004 Athens Olympics, *Our place: Indigenous Australia now* (co-produced by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney and Museum Victoria, Melbourne). This project, with its tight deadlines, was full of complex cultural concepts that I had to transfer from one language and culture to the other—the first cultural exchange of its type at the time. In our team of two—translator and checker—I was responsible for translation, final editing and proofreading. A thoroughly enjoyable but also extremely challenging project.

**A1**  
I started interpreting by chance. My first career was as a teacher in my birth country, Brazil, and when I arrived in Australia I did some relief teaching. It was then that a friend asked me for some assistance, interpreting for her in an appointment with a psychologist. I've now been interpreting between English and Portuguese for twenty-three years.

**A2**  
For me the most challenging projects that I've worked on are within police investigations. I can see the whole process, from initial inquiries to putting together a case and finally going to court. I've worked with paedophiles, drug lords and all sorts of characters. It's a big world out there, one that I would never know so much about if I wasn't working in this profession. I love every minute of it.

