

## AWP 2021 Event Outline

**Event Title: Voices of Exile: Translating a Lost Homeland** (75 minutes total)  
 (2 min.) Nancy welcomes everyone and asks the panel what “exile” can mean.  
 [Nancy reads bio of each panelist before they read; Jen introduces Nancy]  
 (12 min.) Chun Ye  
 (12 min.) Mauricio Espinoza  
 (12 min.) Jennifer Rathbun  
 (12 min.) Russell Valentino  
 (12 min.) Nancy Naomi Carlson  
 (10-15 min.) Q & A  
 (1 min.) Nancy thanks everyone

**Event Description:** Exile has inspired a diverse body of literature from around the world. Translating exile-themed writing takes into consideration the cultural, historical, personal, and especially political differences unique to each language and country. This panel of writers and scholars, translating from such languages as Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Chinese, French, and Spanish, will briefly discuss, then read bilingual examples of the many faces of exile, then address audience questions.

**Event Category:** Translation: Craft, Criticism and Readings

**Event Organizer:** Kelsi Vanada

**Event Moderator:** Nancy Naomi Carlson

### **Event Participants & Short Bios:**

**Ye Chun** is a bilingual writer and translator and has published four collections of translations, including *Ripened Wheat: Selected Poem of Hai Zi* and *Long River: Poems by Yang Jian*.

**Mauricio Espinoza** is a poet, translator and assistant professor of Spanish at the University of Cincinnati. He has translated several Central American and U.S. Central American poets.

**Jennifer Rathbun**, The Academy of American Poets 2021 Ambroggio Prize recipient, has published sixteen poetry books in translation and the poetry collection *The Book of Betrayals*.

**Russell Scott Valentino**'s latest book is his translation of Bosnian author Miljenko Jergović's 900-page family saga *Kin*, which was published in 2021 by Archipelago Books.

**Nancy Naomi Carlson**, twice an NEA translation grantee, has authored twelve titles (eight translated). *An Infusion of Violets* (Seagull, 2019) was named "New & Noteworthy" by *The New York Times*.

### **Moderator Welcome:**

Welcome to **Voices of Exile: Translating a Lost Homeland**. I'm Nancy Naomi Carlson, the moderator. A few reminders before we begin:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let me know, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
- Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
- Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
- Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone's use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

Today I am joined by Chun Ye, Mauricio Espinoza, Jennifer Rathbun, and Russell Scott Valentino. I'll introduce each speaker, and they will briefly discuss what "exile" can mean before giving a 10 minute bilingual reading of their translations. Our program will finish with an audience Q & A.

### **Participant Remarks:**

#### **Ye Chun**

1. Commentary: Rather than exile in its physical and geographical sense, I'll look at the emotional, psychological, and ecological dimensions of exile in the poetry of the contemporary Chinese poets Hai Zi and Yang Jian.
2. Below are the bilingual poems I'll be reading:

自画像

--海子

镜子是摆在桌上的  
一只碗  
我的脸  
是碗中的土豆  
嘿，从地里长出了  
这些温暖的骨头

## Self-portrait

The mirror is a bowl  
on the table  
My face  
is the potato in the bowl  
Growing out of the field  
these warm bones

十四行：夜晚的月亮

--海子

推开树林  
太阳把血  
放入灯盏

我静静坐在  
人的村庄  
人居住的地方

一切都和本原一样  
一切都存入  
人的世世代代的脸  
一切不幸

我仿佛  
一口祖先们  
向后代挖掘的井  
一切不幸都源于我幽深而神秘的水

## Sonnet: Night Moon

Pushing open the woods  
the sun pours blood  
inside a lamp

I sit quietly  
in my people's village  
my people's dwelling

Everything is the same as it was  
Everything is stored  
in people's faces  
generation after generation

I am a well  
my ancestors dug  
for their offspring  
Every suffering comes from my deep and secret water

泪水

--海子

最后的山顶树叶渐红  
群山似穷孩子的灰马和白马  
在十月的最后一夜  
倒在血泊中

在十月的最后一夜  
穷孩子夜里提灯还家 泪流满面  
一切死于中途 在远离故乡的小镇上  
在十月的最后一夜

背靠酒馆白墙的那个人  
问起家乡的豆子 地里埋葬的人  
在十月的最后一夜  
问起白马和灰马为谁而死.....鲜血殷红

他们的主人是否提灯还家  
秋天之魂是否陪伴着他

他们是否都是死人  
都在阴间的道路上疯狂奔驰

是否此魂替我打开窗户  
替我扔出一本破旧的诗集  
在十月的最后一夜  
我从此不再写你

## **Tears**

On the last mountaintop leaves redden  
The mountains are a poor child's gray horse and white horse  
On the last night of October  
they fall in a pool of blood

On the last night of October  
the poor child goes home holding a lantern tears cover his face  
Everything dies on the road in a small town far away from home  
on the last night of October

The man leaning on the white wall of the tavern  
asks about the person buried in his hometown's bean field  
On the last night of October  
he asks for whom the white horse and gray horse are dying... crimson blood

Whether their owner is going home holding a lantern  
Whether the spirit of autumn accompanies him  
Whether they are all dead  
running crazy down the road of the nether world

Whether the spirit opens the window for me  
Throwing out an old book of poetry  
From the last night of October  
I will not write about you again

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*Poems of Hai Zi*. Ed. Xi Chuan. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House,  
1995

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Selected Poems of Hai Zi*

郊外

——杨键

落日下，  
一个农民  
挽着裤管·  
他腿部的泥干了，  
地里的坑也一个个挖好。  
河里没有鱼·  
唯有烂不了的泡沫饭盒。  
一只麻雀站在泥巴上，飞向一棵柳树·  
又站到泥巴上，飞向柳树·  
很像我们·  
吃饭·住下·  
又吃饭·住下。  
我现在想通了·  
要在苦中更加诚恳·  
像狗对待主人的踢打·  
总是摇尾。  
一头来受罪的老牛·  
在干涸的小溪里，  
摇晃了很久·才在卵石的缝隙里  
站稳脚跟。  
冬天在孕育，  
郊外的火车在怒吼·  
我傻愣在那里·  
看着天上的乌云·  
迅速地变暗了人世。

## Outskirts

Under the setting sun,  
a farmer  
rolls up his pants,  
the mud on his legs already dry,  
the pits all dug in the ground.  
There's no fish in the river,  
only styrofoam boxes that won't rot.  
A sparrow stands on the mud, flies to a willow, flies  
back to the mud, back to the willow,  
so much like us,  
eat, stay,  
eat again, stay.  
Now I've figured out  
I need to be more sincere in pain,  
like how a dog treats its owner's kicking,  
always wagging its tail.  
An old ox that comes to suffer,  
stumbles for a long time in the dried creek  
before finding a firm foothold  
in the cracks among the pebbles.  
Winter nurtures us.  
A train in the outskirts roars.  
I stand there,  
watch the dark clouds in the sky  
quickly blacken the world.

神秘的恩情

——杨键

他们没有挖到水，他们在坑边虔诚地睡了。  
 睡梦中看见一条红鲤鱼翻进坑中，  
 水源源不断，井做成了。  
 我有幸生在一个真诚可以感物的国家，  
 我的泪于是滴在井沿上。  
 人啊，你一无所有，连井水都是红鲤鱼所赠，  
 你们都忘了，这故事也无人再讲述。

在这里，我祈求的安宁不过是护佑一位农夫牵着他的  
 老牛回家的暮色，  
 我祈求的智慧如同他手中悠然晃荡的牛绳，  
 我的泪要滴在这根牛绳上，  
 因为在秋天的时候我总是被一种神秘的恩情环绕，  
 这恩情世代相传，从未中断，  
 我生活在一个懂得连井水都是上苍恩赐的国家。

## Secret Gratitude

They didn't find water, but slept faithfully beside the hole.  
 In their dreams, a red carp rolls into the pit,  
 water springs out, and the well is finished.  
 I'm fortunate to be born in a country where sincerity inspires.  
 My tears drop on the well's edge.  
 O people, you have nothing, even the well water is the red carp's gift.  
 You've all forgotten, because that story is no longer told.

Here, the peace I pray for is the dusk  
 in which a farmer leads his old ox home,  
 the wisdom I pray for swings easily like the rope in his hand.

My tears long to drip down this rope,  
 since in autumn I'm always surrounded by a secret gratitude  
 that's passed down unbroken from one generation to the next.  
 I live in a country that could understand even well water is heaven's gift.

神奇的事情

—杨键

人世间最神奇的事情乃是这些荒寒贫瘠的泥土，  
 转眼被塑成观世音菩萨的慈颜，  
 在大殿里被供奉，被朝拜，  
 在病痛者，困苦者，虔诚者的梦里出现。  
 昨天，它还是平凡的泥土，  
 坎坷、灰暗，在耕耘者的脚下。

### **Mysterious Thing**

The mystery of blank and barren dirt—  
 in an instant, shaped into the kind face of Guan Yin,  
 worshipped in grand halls, bowed to,  
 appearing in the dreams of the sick, the poor, the pious.  
 Yesterday, it was just plain dirt,  
 rough and gray, under the fieldhand's feet.

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 translation in *Long River: Poems by Yang Jian*

### **Mauricio Espinoza**

**‘Another country every so often’:  
 Exile and Decolonial Identity in the Poetry of Alejandra Solórzano**

Mauricio Espinoza

## University of Cincinnati

Philosophy professor and poet Alejandra Solórzano (1980) was born in exile in Costa Rica, where her Guatemalan parents had fled because of their involvement with the leftist rebel movement during this country's bloody civil war (1960-1996). Displacement and *desarraigo* (which roughly translates to English as "unrootedness") have been part of her experience since the time of her birth, as the family moved to several countries during Solórzano's childhood and she did not set foot in Guatemala until the age of 14.

Even though she had never lived in her homeland, Solórzano sees this new voyage as a reencounter: "Para mí esto significa en realidad un regreso porque todo este camino, esta itinerancia, estaba relacionada con la historia de Guatemala."<sup>1</sup> This "return" is not necessarily to the homeland as a geographical territory, but rather a return to a history and culture intimately tied to the poet's identity as a Guatemalan woman displaced by violence. Reconnecting with Guatemala's strong Indigenous legacy, Solórzano engages through her poetry in a healing ritual that is at the same time a reclaiming of her ancestry: "Sanar este mal hermoso, / AMARILLO / del maíz de mi carne,<sup>2</sup> / de mi tristeza / de mi memoria."<sup>3</sup>

In translating Solórzano's poetry, I view exile and displacement as phenomena that are much sociopolitical as they are cultural and linguistic. Because Solórzano was born in exile, her early relationship with her homeland is one of absence. This absence is often represented by images of silence and emptiness, both of which denote something that is missing or lacking from the poet's childhood and adolescence. In this regard, Solórzano's work is an itinerant and border-crossing experience that seldom stops—always traversing geographies, histories, cultural legacies, and the open wounds of the civil war. Translation adds another migratory layer to a poetry that's already marked by liminality and movement across borders.

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<sup>1</sup> "To me this really means a return because this entire road, this itinerance was related to Guatemala's history," qtd. in Guzmán Sierra Guzmán Sierra, Silvia Elena. "Un acercamiento sensible al estudio de las migraciones en la poesía de Alejandra Solórzano Castillo," *Revista Latinoamericana de Derechos Humanos*, vol. 30, issue 2, 2019, pp. 101-119, 111.

<sup>2</sup> As told in the *Popol Vuh*, the Mayas believe humans were made from corn or maize.

<sup>3</sup> "To heal this beautiful, / YELLOW / sickness in the maize of my flesh, / of my sadness /of my memory," from *Todo esto sucederá siempre*, Ediciones Espiral, 2017, 70.

Finally, the relationship between exile and return in Solórzano's poetry is represented by the forging of a hybrid, gender-focused, Indigenous-centered decolonial identity. In returning to her ancestral homeland both physically and through her writing, Solórzano invokes the figure of Malitzín (the enslaved, migrant Indigenous woman who served as interpreter to Hernán Cortés during the conquest of the Aztec empire), with whom she finds a strong identification. Solórzano with the woman infamously regarded as a traitor in Mexican history in search of a common Mesoamerican root, attempting to rescue and establish a sorority of women of color forced into exile by warring factions in patriarchal societies—and forced, also, to forget “their own names.” Another point of connection between the two women (and between Solórzano's work as a writer and mine as her translator) is the power of language: Solórzano as the poet who reaches into a past that's still painfully alive and Malintzin as the learned, influential, polyglot interpreter who speaks to her and her generation even after 500 years of unending violence and oppression.

### **Alejandra Solórzano: 4 Poem(a)s**

**Unpublished translations by ©Mauricio Espinoza**

#### **Sin título**

Debajo del silencio  
la ecuación de la historia que debe  
inventarse en cada viaje.  
Un país a cada tanto. El alma sobre el  
cuaderno.

Put a guerra.

Cierro los ojos dos segundos.

(Mi madre y yo cenamos en silencio. Lanzo  
una piedra para medir el fondo de un plato  
de porcelana. Tengo 12 años).

El corazón  
sabe  
flotar.

**Untitled**

Underneath silence  
 is the equation of history that must be  
 reinvented with each voyage.  
 Another country every so often. Soul hovering  
 over notebook pages.

Fucking war.

I close my eyes for two seconds.

(Mother and I dine in silence. I cast  
 a stone to measure the bottom  
 of a porcelain plate. I'm twelve).

The heart  
 knows  
 how to float.

**Espectro**

*Porque la vida es breve y tú también*

*estás sedienta.  
 Adrienne Rich.*

Para Kōan

Por las tardes  
 un fantasma,  
 la silueta de un pájaro pequeño  
 inmóvil  
 visita a la gata.

Tras la ventana

el arcano señala con su pico un signo  
que ella deberá descifrar.

Ambos se comunican  
a través de una cortina que respira con  
dificultad sin saber confundida,  
cuál de los dos es el espectro.  
Desde la mesa  
observo el acto.  
Desconozco su lenguaje  
la severidad compartida del silencio entre  
ave y gata.

Lejos  
el río tararea una canción  
más borrosa cada vez  
y me desplomo con ojos vendados,  
trato de aferrarme  
a unas notas absurdas, disonantes.

Me derriban,  
Temo a los presentimientos que los gatos  
guardan.

Si ella no descifra el signo  
quizá sea arrastrada como yo  
hacia donde todo  
es desmembrado  
y entregado sin prisa  
al olvido.

**Specter**

*because life is short and you too  
are thirsty.  
Adrienne Rich.*

For Kōan

During the afternoon  
a ghost,  
a small bird's motionless

silhouette  
visits my cat.

On the other side of the window  
the arcane bird's beak points at a sign  
that she must decipher.

They communicate  
through a confused curtain that breathes  
laboriously without knowing  
which of the two is the specter.  
From the table  
I observe the act.  
I'm unaware of their language  
of the shared severity of silence between  
bird and cat.

Far away  
the river hums a song  
that fades by the second  
and I collapse with blindfolded eyes,  
trying to hold on to  
some absurd, dissonant notes.

They knock me down,  
and I fear the premonitions that cats  
hide.

If she does not decipher the sign  
she may be dragged just like me  
to the place where everything  
is dismembered  
and slowly surrendered  
to oblivion.

### **Sobre un puñado de ceniza**

Frágil animal que baila en rito.  
Soy.

En una mano sostengo el corazón  
con la otra

una vela negra

una vela roja

una vela blanca

Sanar este mal hermoso,

AMARILLO

del maíz de mi carne,

de mi tristeza

de mi memoria.

### **Over a fistful of ash**

A fragile animal that dances in ritual.

I am.

In one hand I hold my heart

in the other

a black candle

a red candle

a white candle

To heal this beautiful,

YELLOW

sickness in the maize of my flesh,

of my sadness

of my memory.

**Sin título**

*En efecto una mujer que vive sola  
Sin un escudo historiado  
Sin una historia de niños  
No es madre ni mujer  
Sino un nombre híbrido que viene  
Impreso al pie de tu página.*

*Alda Merini*

Palmearán la espalda de Rivera  
Por girar tu rostro en el lienzo.

Tu rostro  
moneda  
limpia, pequeña  
de una sola cara

Sin secreto,  
deseada y antigua.

Tu rostro, capullo de doble valor.  
Alguien ató a tus pies una sombra  
que no te pertenece  
una falsa hermana  
igual que el color azul  
que sale a gritos por los ojos de tu niño.

Presiento que la noche va a lapidarte Malitzín

Alguien lanzará tu rostro  
a una fuente que arde  
para pedir la conquista

No era por los dioses ni los indios

Querían tus mil lenguas y no conformes el  
corazón de chirimía.

A vos y a tu sombra cetrina. Y así como antes,  
abro en este tiempo las manos y pregunto:

¿Sabrá la noche lo que habrán de preguntarte?  
¿Sabrá algo sobre ti esa pira de libros? Algo,  
sí. Algo...un primer recuerdo.

La destrucción y la flor cempaxúchitl en una  
misma mañana.

## Untitled

*In fact a woman who lives alone  
Without a historied shield  
Without a history of children  
She's not a mother nor a woman  
But a hybrid name that is  
Printed in the footnotes of your page.*

*Alda Merini*

They will pat Rivera on the back  
for having turned your face on the canvas.

Your face  
clean, tiny,  
one-sided  
coin.

Without secrets,  
ancestral and desired.

Your face, a cocoon of double worth.

Somebody attached to your feet a shadow  
 that doesn't belong to you  
 a fake sister  
 fake as the color blue  
 that screams out of your son's eyes.

I sense that the night is going to stone you Malintzin

Someone will throw your face  
 into a flaming fountain  
 and call for conquest  
 It wasn't about the gods or the Indians

They wanted your thousand tongues and, still greedy,  
 your heart of *chirimía*.  
 They wanted you and your sickly shadow. And just like before,  
 today I open my hands and ask:

Does the night know what they will ask you?  
 Does this pyre of books know anything about you? Anything,  
 yes. Something... a first memory.

Destruction and the *cempasúchil* flower  
 in the same morning.

### **Jennifer Rathbun**

- As a translator, some of my best friends are dictionaries, so naturally, I consulted one of my favorites (Merriam-Webster) for a working definition:  
     the state or a period of forced absence from one's country or home or  
     the state or a period of voluntary absence from one's country or home
- Many Latin American masterpieces have been written in exile and Latin America has a long and rich history of poetry written in exile from founding father José Martí, to canonical authors such as Pablo Neruda, to contemporary poets like Colombian Carlos Aguasaco
- In his book *The Bow and the Lyre* in his analysis of language, of words and their meaning in poetry, Octavio Paz states that “La situación de exilio...da a (las) palabras una tensión y un valor particulares.” In other words, exile lends itself to poetic creation

- Tomás Segovia, Mexican translator, author and poet of Spanish origin states in an interview that "El exilio no es un tema, es una condición"
- Juan Gelman: "En el exilio, la patria es la lengua"
- Exile permeates the poetry of Colombian author Carlos Aguasaco both thematically and structurally. Aguasaco has lived in exile for more than twenty years. The collection *Cardinal in My Window With a Mask on its Beak* opens with a piece detailing the account of immigrants who die crossing the desert to enter this country and closes with a reflection on the time lost longing to return to home. In *Cardinal...* the themes of exile naturally combine with the themes of immigration and the experiences of immigrants
- Structurally: the poems are fragmented, broken, into columns that can be read horizontally or vertically - there is a loss of center/a loss of home
- Thematically - "Cardinal in My Window with a Mask on Its Beak takes readers on a journey through poetic portraits, exploring the lives of passionate social justice advocates and historical migrants such as Ota Benga, Sarah Baartman, Isidro Marcelino Orbés, César Vallejo, and Gertrude Stein, among others. Raw and unapologetic, the poems in this bilingual collection ask readers to question their role in today's society. The verses press the reader to examine what it means to have social justice in our globalized world, as Aguasaco confronts how society treats the Other—be that the immigrant, the Indigenous person, or anyone who embodies Otherness."

US Poet Laureate Emeritus Juan Felipe Herrera states "Let us salute Carlos Aguasaco's *Cardinal* and the flight it takes, the incredible figures that appear through the windows, streets and the time-space crossings it breaks. To date, there is no book of such dimensions and condor expanse—from the Nezahualcoyotl, Mexica Prince of Texcoco, Mexico in the 1400's who sings of a singular moment where life is a fragment of beauty and celebration to an abrupt tangle with Nicanor Parra. We become the Papagayo, poet-parrot with headdress on an enormous head, we become the jester and the clown, the condor and the ragged disfigured clanking sad shadow of memory, exile and revolution."

(<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/cardinal-in-my-window-with-a-mask-on-its-beak>)

Texts of my bilingual reading:

Come from *Cardinal in My Window With a Mask on its Beak* by Carlos Aguasaco, translated by Jennifer Rathbun. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2022.

## **Russell Scott Valentino**

For this gathering, I will gesture towards the thoughts elaborated in a previous essay (link available on request), especially on the instability of the source, which becomes more “stable” though no more imagined when it is viewed through the prism of translation; and the nostalgia of translators for that time before they were split by the act of inhabiting another culture over time. As if translators were the same in one culture and at one point in their lives, as they are in another! We are barely the same when we move from one social role to the next in a single culture. It’s a bit overly ambitious to assume we might maintain even greater identity when moving across different ones, taking up different verbal and meaning making systems, socializing with different friends, using different gestures, tones of voice, experiencing a different pace of life itself. Why would we assume a work would mean the same thing to us there and here, even if we could somehow make it the same thing in both cultures? The instability of the source points to the instability of us, and if there is nostalgia for some lost source in this scenario, it might just as well be for our own past selves as for some supposed original text. Using this insight as a basic starting point, I want to focus on Miljenko Jergović’s approach to the question of exile in *Kin* (Archipelago Books, 2021) and my own engagement with that aspect of the text through translation.

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Kada sam u ljeto 1993. napuštao Sarajevo, koje je tada bilo pod opsadom tenkova i topova zločinaca Mladića i Karadžića, a napuštao sam ga u transportnome avionu američke vojske koji je letio za Split i prevezio humanitarnu pomoć i novinare, domaće i strane, imao sam na umu to kako, možda, odlazim zauvijek. Samo sam spašavao živu glavu, ništa više od toga. Majka i otac, svaki za sebe, jer su odavno razvedeni, ostali su u gradu. Padalo mi je na pamet da ih, možda, više nikada neću vidjeti. Ali svejedno, nakon sedamnaest mjeseci rata i opsade, ja sam spašavao svoj život. Činio sam ono što moj stariji ujak nije mogao. Bježao sam iz svoga rata

When, in the summer of 1993, I was leaving Sarajevo, which was under siege by the tanks and artillery of the war criminals Mladić and Karadžić (I was on an American military transport on loan to the UN that had flown in humanitarian aid and journalists from Split). I thought that this could be goodbye forever. I was saving my own skin, that was all. My mother and father were both staying in the city. It occurred to me I might never see them again. All the same, after seventeen months of war and siege, I was saving myself. I was doing what my elder uncle had been unable to do. I was escaping from my war.

I knew I was going to Zagreb, to Croatia. But even though it is the land of my language, even though I am a Croat, I was leaving as Opapa Karlo would have left for Germany – I didn't know that then. In saving my neck I didn't consider that "other people" lived in Croatia, and I would be a foreigner, as Opapa had been. His Germanness was defined by his daily encounters, by the bizarre ceremonies of the weekly family meals, by his arrogant attitude toward the Croatian fascists when they wanted to search his house. My Croatianness was Bosnian, and more than that it was *kuferaš* Bosnian. This was what they had called the people who moved to Bosnia from various parts of the empire under Franz Joseph. With their cultures and languages in tow, they had created their own extra-national identity whose cultural bedrock was stronger than their ethnic affiliation. In my case, or rather, in the case of my family, this meant we were Bosnian Croats whose identities were marked by the Slovene, German, Italian, and rare other nations of the former monarchy. If there had been no Austro-Hungarian empire,

I would never have been born, the parents of my grandparents would have never met . . . In this sense my birth was, from before the beginning, a political project. Finding myself in Croatia, in the land of "other people," I understood that I could live my entire life there, that I could be happy, but I would never be one of them. When I pronounced the word we, it would usually be a false we, the sort of we a person might feel a little ashamed of. And so I would more often use the pronouns I and they. I would mostly say things about myself that people didn't want to hear, or that they themselves would never say, lest they stand out. The moment you begin to separate yourself from the crowd, difference gives rise to antipathy.

When I arrived in Croatia, it was a very ethnically homogeneous country, where 90 percent of the people were ethnic Croats and Catholic, the majority of whom were uncommonly hostile to those who belonged to any sort of minority. This hostility was at the basis of the state's ideology, but it was also defined by the fact that the country was experiencing a prolonged war and a third of its territory was occupied. The former Yugoslav National Army played the role of occupier, while that of the domestic traitors was played by the country's Serb minority. At the same time, the small number of Croatian Muslims had also ended up as enemies, and it was then, in the summer of 1993, that Croatian forces launched their attack on Muslim territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Beyond national affiliations, atheists were also considered enemies of society, because they reminded the citizens of the preceding forty years of communist rule and probably of their own hypocrisy when it came to faith in God. When it was considered the social norm, the vast majority of people didn't believe, but now that times had changed the same majority was all of a sudden flocking to church.

In fact, it seemed people took pleasure in all these animosities and antagonisms. This too was nothing new: there is no sensation as overwhelming and fulfilling as hatred, and nothing other than hatred can go so quickly from being a private to a public emotion, one shared across a society. In the 1990s, during the presidency of Franjo Tuđman, Croatia truly became a land of hatred. This hatred was for the most part directed inward, toward aspects of the country's own society and, in turn, its own culture, history, identities, languages . . . In Croatia even words were hated if they did not sound Croatian enough. But sound could sometimes be deceptive, and objects of hatred could fall into short supply, so people also took pleasure in directing hate toward things that had nothing to do with minorities.

A person can find countless excuses at such moments to be a part of the crowd. Especially if he's just come from a besieged city, on his own, without material assistance, as a boarder, an intellectual proletarian. Sarajevo was after all under siege by the very people who were then most vehemently hated in Croatia. So what was there to prevent a person from taking part in this hatred, from becoming socialized and moving from refugee to accepted member of the community? If we forget that hatred presupposes considerable intellectual and spiritual effort, then it becomes very hard to find a reason why someone arriving from Sarajevo in 1993 would oppose the prevailing mood of the city he had just stepped into.

My great-grandfather, as a Swabian German from the Banat residing in Sarajevo, spoke a variety of Croatian filled with words derived from Turkish, which was characteristic of the speech of Bosnian Muslims. He concealed his Serbian neighbors from the Ustaše not primarily because he was a good and unselfish man, but because they were an important part of his own world. He probably didn't even understand what it would have meant to be a German in a place where there weren't any Serbs, or Croats, Bosnians, Muslims, Jews . . . From his perspective, and mine, in multi-ethnic countries every form of hatred is just another form of hatred. This was why my Croatianness was so substantially different from that of the people I found myself surrounded by upon my arrival in Zagreb, and even from that of my friends and acquaintances. For while those people rejected hatred for intellectual and moral reasons, or simply as a fact of good breeding, I rejected it because it was a threat to who I was. Though I was a Croat, it threatened the Serb and the Bosniak inside me.

## Nancy Naomi Carlson

I'd like to talk about "exile" in the context of leaving one's homeland for the promise of a better life—however misguided that view—in the context of the indentured workers (pejoratively labeled "coolies") who were brought to the immigration depot in Port Louis, Mauritius as a cheap source of labor after slavery was abolished, to work the sugar cane fields in Mauritius or sent overseas to the colonies. Many of these workers were tricked into signing a contract after a night of drinking or "coerced" to leave to settle a gambling debt.

Let me introduce you to Khal Torabully, from Mauritius, a critically acclaimed poet, essayist, film director, and semiologist who has made it his life's work to give voice to the hundreds of thousands of indentured worker between the years 1849 – 1923—a group of people that "history has forgotten." (My remarks are drawn from the foreword I wrote for the book I translated by Khal: *Cale d'étoiles: Coolitude (Cargo Hold of Stars: Coolitude)*). These indentured workers were forced to endure horrendous conditions. Many died on terrible sea voyages where they were kept in close quarters with one another in the ship's cargo hold. The title of the book comes from the fact that when these workers, from the ship's cargo hold, looked up, they could see the sky with its stars. Other indentured workers died or endured harsh conditions in the colonies, where they were thrown in jail for the slightest offense, and then were forced into longer periods of indenture. Life was not easy for female workers.

Quoting from the foreword: "Torabully has coined the term "coolitude" from the previously pejorative term "coolie" in a way that resembles Aimé Césaire's coining the term "negritude." However, the poetry of coolitude is clearly dialogical in spirit and develops an inclusive vision of peoples, memories and histories of the colonial rim, and distances itself from any essentialist inspiration. It is open to the humanities and differences that are articulated in a common oceanic song, beyond the *kala pani* (dark seas) taboo. Torabully argues that indentured workers, through their rich intercultural exchanges, developed a new identity and language greater than the sum of their parts—a strong and resilient identity worthy of dignity and pride."

In order to underscore the seriousness of his themes, Khal uses language that is unlike any other—a "poetics of coolitude" or "corallian poetics"—to highlight the cultural diversities and biodiversities of those who found themselves on the same ship heading to the colonies. Indeed, the workers from India were thrown into the same cargo hold, and it didn't matter what caste you were in before. You used the same utensils...ate off the same plates. Khal has created a new French, mixed with Creole, old Scandinavian, old French, mariners' language, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Urdu...and neologisms. The playfulness of his language is in direct contrast with

the deeply serious—even tragic—themes in the book. Even the word “cale” from “Cale d'étoiles” is wordplay for the author’s name, “Khal,” pronounced the same. It was quite challenging to translate, and more than once gave rise to many sleepless nights!

### Pages from a Ship’s Missing Registry

Coolitude to lay the first stone of my memory among all memories, my language among all tongues, my share of the unknown that numerous bodies and numerous stories have lodged over time in my genes and my islands.

I ask myself if I’m part of a race of mixers, just like my forebears who blended spices and scents, silks and golds, pigments of skin and words.

Coolitude, my woozy-coolie, a song of rooting as much as a song of uprooting in an earth composed of other dusts, a much needed encounter where Indians lend their ancient brass to the song of the world.

Here is my song of exile and joy to recount our journeys, our encounters, and our endless métissage: before being reborn, I’m a man in the making.

Here is my love song to the sea and the journey, the odyssey my seafaring people have not yet transcribed.

In a language from the *île of France*, I therefore want to narrate my cargo hold of stars, go back to my ship in a harbor seen on a map. I already know that our song of waves, faithful as an amorous wound, can still sustain the backwash of our wanderings.

As if we were given invisible orders to take the journey to the very heart of human destiny, making it more about rootings than uprootings, community rather than rapine, friendly dockings at sea rather than scuttling and plundering.

In this new dawn, I steer my cargo hold of stars toward other horizons, hoping for such an encounter, so that my odyssey and my coolie journeys are not forgotten.

And I know that my crew will be among those erasing borders to broaden Humanity’s Homeland.

Enterre-moi vite  
 avant que je ne meure.  
 Tous les oiseaux d'éclair  
 ont longtemps pleuré  
 trop lente la pierre  
 trop fente bruyère  
 dans l'abeille ta brisure.

Sans trop savoir  
 je m'éveillai  
 en cale d'étoiles.  
 Trop dure la mer  
 trop sûre la chair  
 dans l'exil ta suture.

Bury me quick  
 before I die.  
 All the birds of lightning  
 have wept a long while  
 too slow the stone  
 too furrowed the heath  
 in the bee find your cleft.

Without knowing how,  
 I woke up  
 in a cargo hold of stars.  
 Too harsh the ocean  
 too sure the flesh  
 in the exile find your suture.

Le langage m'a coolie  
 pour conception, mot de ma salive  
 coulé pur coulé sale cou lié

L'eau pure ignore les sangs  
 Coulé calé calqué :  
 deviner mes prochains itinéraires  
 est ma vraie moisson d'images de mer.

Language has cooled me  
 for conception, word of my spit:  
 pure cascade mixed cascade casket-bound.

Pure water pays no attention to bloodlines.  
 Cast clasped cloned:  
 guessing at what my next routes will be  
 is my true harvest of maritime dreams.

Space won't give us the chance  
 to depart.

Freedom won't hold us back  
 from renouncing death.

Memory won't hold us back  
 from recalling without grief

that every new start  
 is for us an exile  
 and exile is the only trace we leave.

L'espace ne nous donne pas  
 la possibilité de partir

La liberté ne nous privera pas  
 de renoncer à mourir

La mémoire ne nous privera pas  
 de nous souvenir sans souffrir

que tout commencement  
 est pour nous exil  
 et qu'exil est notre seule trace.

Do you know the tale  
of the lonesome man  
in the East India Trading Company?  
His skin was lit with sparks  
salt pond pores  
on a rainy night.  
To the pearls of spume  
his voice became an almanac  
for seasons of exile.  
Often this man  
returned to the seas  
on the *dalo* of his wound.  
Sometimes along streets  
of lost waves  
he blows out stars  
on his china divans.  
Often long blue rattan  
brands his flesh with algae  
from the horizon's only shipwreck.  
To ignite the dawn  
of crystal cries  
this loner  
sells iron stoves  
in the paved courtyard of lagoons.

for L.S. Senghor

*Coolitude: worker bees of the colonies; you were merchandise, and we, merchandising, or vice versa.*

*Coolitude: because my shores teem with new traces of memory. And if African gestures came to our hands as we cut the cane, the cracking and dancing of fingers remained ours, used to the tabla, often attuned to the ravanne's great cry of hearts adrift.*

*Coolitude: because I am Creole by my rigging, Indian by my mast, European by my spar, Mauritian by my quest and French by my exile. I will always be elsewhere only within myself because I can only imagine my native land. My native lands?*

*In our tongues, we're at the fertile frontier of codes, to hear a word among the exchanges of masters and slaves. Is this why my true mother tongue is poetry? Why my only native land is the Earth?*

*That's why I am ready to quell all border quarrels so all may see our star and share our common heritage: flesh and blood.*

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### **Suggested Questions:**

1. How does your experience working with exiled authors compare with working with authors who've not lived in exile?
2. Does translating "exile" alter your translation process?
3. We're talking about translation and exile. If we shift to translation and nostalgia, does that change things?
4. Do some texts feel more like they've been exiled when they've been translated than others?
5. Are there useful distinctions to be made between kinds of translation (genres, modes) and kinds of translators in this discussion? For instance, do the sorts of associations we've been talking about with regard to exile affect, say, translations of detective fiction differently than they do lyric poetry? Do they affect freelancers working on commission or spec differently than translators with day jobs, i.e., those more likely to choose their own projects from scratch?