

EVENT TITLE: Crossing Languages: From First Draft to Publication

Event Description: This multi-genre panel focuses on strategies for international authors or their translators seeking to publish a translation of the work in English, as well as for international authors living in the US seeking to publish the work in their native country. From Greek memoir to Armenian fiction to Mexican poetry, the panelists will address the challenges faced by authors or by literary translators in spanning cultural differences and in bringing the manuscript to US readers.

EVENT CATEGORY: Panel Discussion: Translation

Event Organizer: Susan Ayres. Sponsored by ALTA (American Literary Translators Association)

Event Moderator:

Susan Ayres: a poet and translator, Susan Ayres has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She teaches at Texas A&M Law School and holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her poems and translations of fiction and poems from the Spanish have appeared in numerous journals. Her translation of Elsa Cross's *Nadir* is forthcoming.

Event Participants:

Areg Azatyan: an Armenian writer-filmmaker, Areg Azatyan is currently based in California. He is an author of six fiction books published by leading publishing houses in Armenia. He received a President's prize for the Best Writer of the Year (2004) as well as

several other international and national awards. As a filmmaker he has participated in Berlinale, Toronto, Cannes, Rotterdam.

Sophia Kouidou-Giles: Sophia Kouidou-Giles writes poetry, fiction and nonfiction. Her work, original and translated texts, has been published in literary journals and anthologies. She has translated theatrical monologues and short stories, and published her memoir, *Sophia's Return: Uncovering My Mother's Past*, in both Greek and English. Her novella, *An Unexpected Ally*, based on Greek mythology, is forthcoming in 2023.

Opening remarks and housekeeping announcements.

Good afternoon, and welcome to “Crossing Languages: From First Draft to Publication.”

Before we get started, a couple administrative notices. AWP asks that we make the following announcements:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, (identify moderator), 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.

Thank you all for being here. We know this is an uncertain time with many health and safety concerns, so we appreciate your presence in spending the next 75 minutes together.

This panel came together through introductions by Christina Deptula, a literary publicist. We are grateful to Christina, and also to ALTA, which sponsored this panel. ALTA is a wonderful organization for translators, and I highly recommend the inspiring conference ALTA holds each year.

Edith Grossman states that translation “expands and deepens our world, our consciousness, in countless, indescribable ways.” We agree, and it is our hope today that this discussion will offer advice for those seeking to publish a translation of a work in English, or for international authors living in the US seeking to publish a work in their native country.

To briefly introduce our panelists, **Areg Azatyan** has written six books of fiction published in Armenia, Eastern Europe, Russia, France, and soon in the USA and UK. He has received national and international awards for his work. Areg is also a filmmaker currently based in Los Angeles. **Sophia Kouidou-Giles** has translated and published theatrical monologues and has written and published a memoir in both Greek and English. She lives in Seattle, USA, and Thessaloniki, Greece. I am **Susan Ayres**, and have published original poetry along with translations of poetry and fiction from the Spanish. My work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. I live and teach in Fort Worth.

Now, to get started, if each panelist could briefly give an overview of your experience in seeking to publish your work, we will then turn to a list of questions for discussion, and then leave some time for audience questions and comments.

Participant Initial Remarks:

Areg Azatyan

I'm going to talk about writing *The Flying African*, *During the Lull*, and *The Romanticists*, along with my publishing experience in Armenia and post-Soviet countries. This includes several weird obstacles and difficulties that usually do not occur in other countries, such as the limits to finding an agent, or making a contract with the publisher, or obtaining governmental support even to be published privately. I'll compare publishing in these foreign countries with publishing in the US.

Also, I'll spend a few minutes to talk about the motivations that pushed me to write about Africa even though I am not African. And if time allows, I would like to talk about translation and some parallels between writing the film script, *The Romanticists*, which was based on my novel and developed into a feature film at the Berlinale Film Festival (IFF). It made its world premier at the Goteborg IFF, Sweden.

Sophia Kouidou-Giles

I have translated theatrical monologues by Karina Ioannidou and short stories by Maria Psoma-Petridou, subsequently published in US journals, but today I will primarily speak from my perspective as an author who translated her memoir, *Sophia's Return*, and saw it published first in Greece and then in the US. I will walk us through the typical and ever challenging steps of publishing in each country. This will be a compare-and-contrast of my particular path as it unfolded over the past four years.

The steps included the usual ones of: query, search for agent and publishing house, submission protocols, offer and contract, manuscript edits and content adaptations, proof, publicity, and launch. This experience has marked future collaborations and the rewarding sense of

bridging two cultures. The novella, based on Greek mythology, will first be published in the US. I am in the process of translating it in Greek.

Susan Ayres

I will talk about my work translating first poetry and then fiction from Spanish to English, and also about the challenges in publishing and bringing the translations to a US audience. I began translating the Mexican poet Elsa Cross as part of my MFA work about six years ago. I translated her collection of poetry, *Nadir*, and think I have a publisher for that. I am now translating another collection of Cross's poetry, a book of ekphrastic poems called *Inflexions*—and will be looking for a publisher this summer.

In addition to poetry, I have translated two stories by younger Peruvian authors—one by Dany Salvatierra and another by Romina Paredes. I am currently working on a third story by Tadeo Palacios. These stories are part of a Latin American Translation series published by Keith Morris, editor of *The South Carolina Review*. Earlier this year, Dany Salvatierra and I talked about the project in an interview by zoom, which is available on the journal's website.

Moderator Questions:

1. How did you identify a publisher or a source work or translator?
2. Was it important for the original work to have been a success in the native country before it was translated in English?
3. What challenges did you face in translation or publication?
4. If you could share one piece of advice, what would it be?