

#SoAatHome | Industry Insider – How we talk about reading translations

Wednesday 15 April 2026

1

00:00:00,000--> 00:00:02,935

Welcome, everybody,
to today's event,

2

00:00:02,959--> 00:00:06,595

Industry Insider – How we
talk about reading translations.

3

00:00:06,619--> 00:00:08,908

My name's Nichola Smalley.

4

00:00:08,932--> 00:00:12,061

I've translated over twenty books
from Swedish and Norwegian,

5

00:00:12,085--> 00:00:15,229

many of which have won or
been nominated for awards.

6

00:00:15,253--> 00:00:19,745

I've been a member of the Translators
Association committee since 2023

7

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00:00:19,770--> 00:00:24,091

and I'm also an English PEN

Translation Advisory Co-Chair

8

00:00:24,115--> 00:00:28,261

and the chair of SELTA, the Swedish-English

Literary Translators Association.

9

00:00:28,285--> 00:00:32,546

I have a PhD in the use of slang in

contemporary Swedish and English literature

10

00:00:32,570--> 00:00:35,290

and I've spent several

years working in publishing.

11

00:00:35,314--> 00:00:37,376

For my audio description,

12

00:00:37,400--> 00:00:40,384

a white woman with

medium length brown hair.

13

00:00:40,408--> 00:00:42,959

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I'm wearing a navy
blue shirt. I've got a...

14

00:00:42,983--> 00:00:47,031

it's a moderately healthy plant
behind me, and some books

15

00:00:47,055--> 00:00:48,268

on my other side.

16

00:00:48,292--> 00:00:50,597

And a couple of little
pictures framed on the wall.

17

00:00:50,622--> 00:00:52,388

Um...

18

00:00:52,412--> 00:00:55,828

This event is part of
the SoA's #SoAatHome

19

00:00:55,852--> 00:00:58,148

Spring/Summer 2026 programme

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20

00:00:58,172--> 00:01:02,508

and is in conjunction with the
SoA's Translators Association,

21

00:01:02,532--> 00:01:03,868

the TA.

22

00:01:07,895--> 00:01:10,908

This #SoAatHome
event is free to all,

23

00:01:10,932--> 00:01:12,188

but if you can afford to,

24

00:01:12,212--> 00:01:15,788

please consider donating to the
Society of Authors Access Fund,

25

00:01:15,812--> 00:01:17,548

which provides grants to authors

26

00:01:17,572--> 00:01:20,468

so that travel subsistence,

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childcare costs and access needs

27

00:01:20,492--> 00:01:22,468

aren't barriers to
authors taking part in

28

00:01:22,492--> 00:01:24,988

events, residencies
and retreats.

29

00:01:25,012--> 00:01:30,000

We suggest a
minimum donation of £5.

30

00:01:30,000--> 00:01:34,428

You can help the Society
of Authors Access Fund

31

00:01:34,452--> 00:01:36,788

by making a purchase
on our virtual bookstore

32

00:01:36,812--> 00:01:39,028

on Bookshop.org,

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where you can find books

33

00:01:39,052--> 00:01:42,143

by writers taking part in the

SoA's events programme.

34

00:01:43,316--> 00:01:47,108

The session will last for

an hour and 30 minutes,

35

00:01:47,132--> 00:01:49,548

including a 20-minute

Q&A at the end,

36

00:01:49,572--> 00:01:51,148

and there'll be a

5-minute comfort break

37

00:01:51,172--> 00:01:52,788

just before the Q&A.

38

00:01:52,812--> 00:01:54,388

Um...

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39

00:01:54,412--> 00:01:59,348

Please do turn on the closed captions option if you'd like live subtitles.

40

00:01:59,372--> 00:02:04,588

The recording of the event will be available on the SoA's website for members,

41

00:02:04,612--> 00:02:07,148

which can be accessed by logging on to the members area

42

00:02:07,172--> 00:02:09,550

and going to the SoA's resources page.

43

00:02:09,574--> 00:02:10,574

And for non-members,

44

00:02:10,598--> 00:02:14,574

the recording will be available via the SoA's Vimeo channel.

45

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00:02:14,574--> 00:02:16,708

In the Q&A,

46

00:02:16,732--> 00:02:19,148

or for the Q&A, if you
have any questions,

47

00:02:19,172--> 00:02:21,388

please do post
them in the Q&A box,

48

00:02:21,412--> 00:02:24,428

and you can post them
anonymously if you prefer.

49

00:02:24,452--> 00:02:29,028

But you can also put general
comments in the chat box.

50

00:02:29,052--> 00:02:33,170

I would now like you like to
introduce you all to today's panel,

51

00:02:33,195--> 00:02:38,588

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Nilanjana S Roy, Gary

Perry and Dan Venn.

52

00:02:38,612--> 00:02:42,183

Nila Roy is the
author of three novels,

53

00:02:42,208--> 00:02:45,148

including Black River, and is
the editor of three anthologies,

54

00:02:45,172--> 00:02:46,988

including Our Freedoms.

55

00:02:47,012--> 00:02:49,188

Her column on books
and the reading life

56

00:02:49,212--> 00:02:53,028

has run in the in the Financial Times since
2016.

57

00:02:53,052--> 00:02:54,574

She lives in Delhi

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with her husband.

58

00:02:54,574--> 00:02:58,148

They're the joint property
of four demanding cats.

59

00:02:58,172--> 00:03:01,108

Gary Perry is a
bookseller at Waterstones

60

00:03:01,132--> 00:03:03,574

and marketing executive
at And Other Stories.

61

00:03:03,574--> 00:03:05,268

For 13 years,

62

00:03:05,292--> 00:03:08,348

he was part of the fiction team
at Foyle's Charing Cross Road.

63

00:03:08,372--> 00:03:12,108

He has judged the Peirene
Stevens Translation Prize

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64

00:03:12,132--> 00:03:16,574

and the Harvill Secker

Young Translators Prize.

65

00:03:16,574--> 00:03:21,574

Dan Venn joined the English PEN

Translated Fiction Book Club in 2016

66

00:03:21,574--> 00:03:26,028

and took on organizing

responsibilities in 2018,

67

00:03:26,052--> 00:03:28,588

when they changed their name to

London Reads the World book club.

68

00:03:28,612--> 00:03:30,988

They read all types of

books and translations

69

00:03:31,012--> 00:03:32,898

at their monthly online meetups.

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70

00:03:32,922--> 00:03:34,188

In real life,

71

00:03:34,212--> 00:03:37,574

Dan works on big
infrastructure projects.

72

00:03:37,574--> 00:03:39,668

Welcome, everybody.

73

00:03:39,692--> 00:03:40,988

Um...

74

00:03:41,012--> 00:03:45,068

I would like to start
today's discussion

75

00:03:45,092--> 00:03:47,705

by asking you all

76

00:03:47,729--> 00:03:50,574

if you could give me a...

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77

00:03:50,574--> 00:03:53,468

a brief overview to

78

00:03:53,492--> 00:03:55,868

your relationship to
reading translations.

79

00:03:55,892--> 00:04:00,068

Maybe tell us what first led you to
seek out literature and translation.

80

00:04:01,581--> 00:04:03,340

-Okay, shall I...

Shall I come in first?

81

00:04:03,365--> 00:04:04,388

-Please. Please.

82

00:04:04,412--> 00:04:05,908

-Hello, everybody. I'm Gary.

83

00:04:05,932--> 00:04:09,028

And, for purposes of audio

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description, I'm a white man

84

00:04:09,052--> 00:04:12,428

with grey hair, red beard,

85

00:04:12,452--> 00:04:15,508

and I've got some

lovely plants behind me.

86

00:04:15,532--> 00:04:18,574

So I came to translation

87

00:04:18,574--> 00:04:20,108

[exhales sharply]

88

00:04:20,132--> 00:04:23,788

through opportunism, I think,

if I'm being honest. [laughs]

89

00:04:23,812--> 00:04:26,108

When I started at

Foyle's Bookshop

90

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00:04:26,132--> 00:04:29,548

that would be 15 years ago now,

91

00:04:29,572--> 00:04:33,505

I was at the Charing Cross

Road branch as a temp.

92

00:04:33,529--> 00:04:37,788

I just graduated and gone

straight into book selling.

93

00:04:37,812--> 00:04:39,163

Um...

94

00:04:39,188--> 00:04:43,068

And I remember the head of my

department at the time saying to me,

95

00:04:43,092--> 00:04:44,574

you need to find a niche

96

00:04:44,574--> 00:04:45,828

in order to stay.

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97

00:04:45,852--> 00:04:51,588

And at that time, translated fiction was very much a niche.

98

00:04:51,612--> 00:04:54,268

It didn't have a dedicated space at Foyles,

99

00:04:54,292--> 00:04:56,508

it wasn't something that we,

100

00:04:56,532--> 00:04:57,532

um...

101

00:04:57,556--> 00:04:59,574

actively promoted.

102

00:04:59,574--> 00:05:03,665

So I took that under my... under my wing, um,

103

00:05:03,689--> 00:05:06,668

and from there became

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involved with translations

104

00:05:06,692--> 00:05:10,068

and building the

translation offering at Foyles.

105

00:05:10,092--> 00:05:12,628

I was very lucky that my...

106

00:05:12,652--> 00:05:16,574

the beginning of my

bookselling career coincided with

107

00:05:16,574--> 00:05:20,228

the... the founding of publishers like

And Other Stories, who I now work for,

108

00:05:20,252--> 00:05:22,628

and also Peirene Press.

109

00:05:22,652--> 00:05:25,788

So I was in the right

place at the right time,

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110

00:05:25,812--> 00:05:29,545

in terms of having lots of
publishers and writers and translators

111

00:05:29,569--> 00:05:32,868

to work with, um, and
it's grown since there.

112

00:05:35,574--> 00:05:37,574

-How about you, Dan?

113

00:05:37,574--> 00:05:39,935

Uh, yep, so I'm Dan Venn.

114

00:05:39,959--> 00:05:42,228

And, again for audio
description, I'm a white male

115

00:05:42,252--> 00:05:45,268

with a moustache and a
slightly receded hairline.

116

00:05:45,292--> 00:05:47,068

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I have no plants behind me,

117

00:05:47,092--> 00:05:48,588

but I do have some books.

118

00:05:48,612--> 00:05:50,908

So kind of half of Nicola.

119

00:05:50,932--> 00:05:52,468

Um...

120

00:05:53,574--> 00:05:56,228

I, uh, I came to translated

fiction as a reader.

121

00:05:56,252--> 00:05:59,428

So I have, um...

122

00:05:59,452--> 00:06:02,588

Yeah, I've been reading books

in translation for over 20 years

123

00:06:02,612--> 00:06:04,108

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since I left university.

124

00:06:04,132--> 00:06:07,028

The usual types, people

like Elena Ferrante,

125

00:06:07,052--> 00:06:08,588

Han Kang, um...

126

00:06:08,612--> 00:06:11,908

Garcia Marquez, Roberto

Bolaño, all those sort of people,

127

00:06:11,932--> 00:06:15,388

and I was looking for

people to talk to about them

128

00:06:15,412--> 00:06:18,091

because it's not always

the most interesting pub chat

129

00:06:18,115--> 00:06:20,108

if people haven't

already read the books.

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130

00:06:20,132--> 00:06:24,948

And via And Other Stories,
actually, so there's a bit of a link there,

131

00:06:24,972--> 00:06:27,948

they had on the bottom
of their mailing list

132

00:06:27,972--> 00:06:29,828

um, a...

133

00:06:29,852--> 00:06:32,574

an email address for the
English PEN Book Club.

134

00:06:32,574--> 00:06:34,689

I signed up and I had
to wait for a little bit.

135

00:06:34,713--> 00:06:37,148

I think it was, like, 3 months
before they got back to me.

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136

00:06:37,172--> 00:06:40,228

Um, but they got back to
me and I joined in late 2016,

137

00:06:40,252--> 00:06:42,574

so just after Brexit.

138

00:06:42,574--> 00:06:45,040

Um, and uh...

139

00:06:45,065--> 00:06:47,665

we start... I started reading and
never... never really looked back.

140

00:06:47,689--> 00:06:49,468

As I say, I took over
a little bit later on,

141

00:06:49,492--> 00:06:52,508

when we moved into the, um...

142

00:06:52,532--> 00:06:54,908

kind of online world as well.

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143

00:06:54,932--> 00:06:57,508

We've now got translators
who are part of our book club

144

00:06:57,532--> 00:06:59,308

and we talk regularly
to translators.

145

00:06:59,332--> 00:07:01,268

We've talked to
Nicola about her books,

146

00:07:01,292--> 00:07:04,858

um, on the course, and just this
Monday, we had David DeGusta,

147

00:07:04,882--> 00:07:07,308

who translated Oromay,
so we've... we've been,

148

00:07:07,332--> 00:07:09,788

um, quite an active group.

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149

00:07:09,812--> 00:07:11,728

We've got about 10
people who regularly turn up,

150

00:07:11,752--> 00:07:15,068

but that's how I kind
of got into it. Um...

151

00:07:15,092--> 00:07:17,108

Moving on to Nila.

152

00:07:18,150--> 00:07:19,508

Thank you.

153

00:07:19,532--> 00:07:20,908

Hi, I'm Nila.

154

00:07:20,932--> 00:07:23,548

And for the purposes
of audio description,

155

00:07:23,572--> 00:07:26,948

I'm an Indian woman with olive

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coloured skin, temperamental hair,

156

00:07:26,972--> 00:07:28,908

and um...

157

00:07:28,932--> 00:07:31,018

Yeah, it is temperamental.

It does its own thing.

158

00:07:31,042--> 00:07:33,288

You'll find that out during
the course of this. [laughs]

159

00:07:33,312--> 00:07:34,945

And behind me,

160

00:07:34,969--> 00:07:37,788

there's a shot from one of my
favourite places to go and work.

161

00:07:37,812--> 00:07:40,965

It's an 11th-- 12th
century monument

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162

00:07:40,989--> 00:07:43,868

called Sunder Nursery,
which is close to my house.

163

00:07:44,383--> 00:07:47,108

Um, I think I kind of
grew up in translation,

164

00:07:47,132--> 00:07:49,708

which is one of the
pleasures of living in India.

165

00:07:49,732--> 00:07:54,268

And, you know, a country with so
many languages ringing in your ears.

166

00:07:54,292--> 00:07:56,628

So it was very natural
for us as children

167

00:07:56,652--> 00:07:59,308

to move between Bengali
and English and Hindi,

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168

00:07:59,332--> 00:08:00,788

sometimes simultaneously,

169

00:08:00,812--> 00:08:02,574

literally in the

same conversation

170

00:08:02,574--> 00:08:05,108

or the same

paragraph, practically.

171

00:08:05,132--> 00:08:07,348

And then, as an adult,

172

00:08:07,372--> 00:08:12,468

I had the great good luck of

being asked to write a column

173

00:08:12,492--> 00:08:14,108

on translated fiction

174

00:08:14,132--> 00:08:15,588

for the Business Standard,

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175

00:08:15,612--> 00:08:18,574

a business paper

in New Delhi in India,

176

00:08:18,574--> 00:08:22,548

just at the point of time at which
translations were breaking out.

177

00:08:22,572--> 00:08:25,908

You know, instead of

being seen as second hand,

178

00:08:25,932--> 00:08:28,268

somehow less than the original,

179

00:08:28,292--> 00:08:31,748

there was a appreciation

of the kind of craft and skill

180

00:08:31,772--> 00:08:34,574

the translators

bring to the table.

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181

00:08:34,574--> 00:08:37,308

And I think it was a
joy to start reading

182

00:08:37,332--> 00:08:39,828

in languages around the country.

183

00:08:39,852--> 00:08:43,388

Then again, as a
publisher, which I was briefly,

184

00:08:43,412--> 00:08:46,950

and then as a columnist
for the Financial Times,

185

00:08:46,974--> 00:08:50,228

I think this is the first year that
I haven't actually been able to

186

00:08:50,252--> 00:08:51,805

write about translations

187

00:08:51,830--> 00:08:54,258

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because it would be

a conflict of interest

188

00:08:54,282--> 00:08:55,908

with the reading I've been doing

189

00:08:55,932--> 00:08:58,908

as part of the jury for the
International Booker Prize.

190

00:08:58,932--> 00:09:02,188

But, usually, almost all
our columns on translation

191

00:09:02,212--> 00:09:04,228

get a lot of
response for readers.

192

00:09:04,252--> 00:09:06,708

You sense that there's
an appetite out there,

193

00:09:06,732--> 00:09:09,574

and that there's an appetite

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from younger readers as well.

194

00:09:09,574--> 00:09:11,068

And then finally, as a writer,

195

00:09:11,092--> 00:09:13,388

I hope you'll get

to talk about this,

196

00:09:13,412--> 00:09:16,988

but I feel so indebted

to my own translators

197

00:09:17,012--> 00:09:18,948

in India and across the world.

198

00:09:18,972--> 00:09:21,908

They do far more than

just translate your words.

199

00:09:21,932--> 00:09:24,028

You know, they

advocate for your books.

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200

00:09:24,052--> 00:09:26,256

They rewrite them

201

00:09:26,281--> 00:09:29,228

without having sat there with
you when you're imagining it,

202

00:09:29,252--> 00:09:32,148

which to me is just, like,
the ultimate magic trick.

203

00:09:32,172--> 00:09:35,188

I'll shut up now and
let Nicky take over,

204

00:09:35,212--> 00:09:36,574

but thank you.

205

00:09:36,574--> 00:09:39,988

-I think it's really
interesting to have

206

00:09:40,012--> 00:09:42,748

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3 people who have
really quite different...

207

00:09:42,772--> 00:09:43,971

Um...

208

00:09:43,996--> 00:09:46,228

different motivations, I guess.

209

00:09:46,252--> 00:09:50,948

Or, like, different... different directions
that you've come to translation from.

210

00:09:50,972--> 00:09:52,951

Um...

211

00:09:52,975--> 00:09:56,108

So I'd like to ask
you if you make...

212

00:09:56,132--> 00:10:00,428

in your minds, or in the way
you talk about translation,

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213

00:10:00,452--> 00:10:02,831

a distinction between
between, um...

214

00:10:02,855--> 00:10:05,218

between books,

215

00:10:05,242--> 00:10:09,228

whether you're talking about
translated or original language writing.

216

00:10:09,252--> 00:10:13,574

I... I thought it was interesting,
Gary, that you said that when

217

00:10:13,574--> 00:10:15,868

you first started at Foyles,

218

00:10:15,892--> 00:10:20,574

there was no translated
fiction section per se,

219

00:10:20,574--> 00:10:24,690

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and I think there's been

a kind of debate, um...

220

00:10:24,715--> 00:10:27,671

over several years about

221

00:10:27,695--> 00:10:30,103

translation as a genre,

222

00:10:30,127--> 00:10:32,605

or like translated

literature as genre.

223

00:10:32,629--> 00:10:34,574

Um...

224

00:10:34,574--> 00:10:36,478

Do you...?

225

00:10:36,502--> 00:10:37,805

How does that...

226

00:10:37,829--> 00:10:39,913

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How does that chime for you?

227

00:10:39,937--> 00:10:41,348

Um...

228

00:10:42,235--> 00:10:44,548

And that's a question

for all of you, really.

229

00:10:44,572--> 00:10:45,585

You know, do you...

230

00:10:45,609--> 00:10:47,028

do you make a distinction

231

00:10:47,052--> 00:10:49,789

when you're... when

you're thinking about...

232

00:10:51,574--> 00:10:53,113

about literature?

233

00:10:53,307--> 00:10:54,329

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-Mm-hmm.

234

00:10:54,353--> 00:10:56,548

It's a debate that's

still still ongoing,

235

00:10:56,572--> 00:10:59,371

particularly at Foyles

and Waterstones,

236

00:10:59,395--> 00:11:01,645

how we... how we

talk about translation,

237

00:11:01,669--> 00:11:05,068

whether you do have

a separate display,

238

00:11:05,092--> 00:11:07,228

whether you view it

as a genre in itself.

239

00:11:07,252--> 00:11:08,574

Um...

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240

00:11:08,574--> 00:11:12,588

And my views have gone back
and forth on that over time too.

241

00:11:12,612--> 00:11:14,828

I would say that,

242

00:11:14,852--> 00:11:18,333

wearing my bookseller hat.,

243

00:11:18,358--> 00:11:21,388

it really varies how I
talk about translation,

244

00:11:21,412--> 00:11:22,783

and whether I do.

245

00:11:22,808--> 00:11:24,448

This is because when
you're selling books,

246

00:11:24,472--> 00:11:27,068

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you are having many
conversations throughout the day,

247

00:11:27,092--> 00:11:29,788

and many different
registers, different tones.

248

00:11:29,812--> 00:11:32,028

So it can really, really vary,

249

00:11:32,053--> 00:11:33,625

um...

250

00:11:33,649--> 00:11:36,388

where you're from maybe
not talking about it at all

251

00:11:36,412--> 00:11:41,068

to it being the centre of the conversation
you're having with the... the customer.

252

00:11:41,092--> 00:11:42,628

Um...

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253

00:11:42,652--> 00:11:46,828

Overall, over the 13
years I was at Foyles,

254

00:11:46,852--> 00:11:49,908

we moved toward from having...

255

00:11:50,283--> 00:11:52,050

Um...

256

00:11:52,074--> 00:11:54,548

I mean, most of the work
we did with translation

257

00:11:54,572--> 00:11:58,411

came through staff picks, actually
through the little recommendation cards

258

00:11:58,435--> 00:12:02,148

that you see in your... your
Waterstones and in your bookshops.

259

00:12:02,172--> 00:12:05,388

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And we did it through that,
not in separate sections.

260

00:12:05,412--> 00:12:09,705

We didn't segregate those from
English... English language originals.

261

00:12:09,730--> 00:12:11,148

Um...

262

00:12:11,172--> 00:12:13,468

But we did highlight

263

00:12:13,492--> 00:12:16,308

the translator

264

00:12:16,332--> 00:12:18,828

on those recommendation cards.

265

00:12:18,852--> 00:12:24,002

Initially, both the translator
and the source language

266

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00:12:24,027--> 00:12:27,731

as a way of directing those
readers who are coming in

267

00:12:27,756--> 00:12:30,183

with a specific interest in translation,

268

00:12:30,208--> 00:12:34,948

or in particular literatures,
particular languages,

269

00:12:34,972--> 00:12:37,948

but certainly
within book selling,

270

00:12:37,972--> 00:12:40,148

those discussions
around translation

271

00:12:40,172--> 00:12:42,628

and whether we talk
about it in a different way

272

00:12:42,652--> 00:12:44,891

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do vary. I think

it's slightly different,

273

00:12:44,915--> 00:12:46,668

and maybe we'll come

on to this when talking

274

00:12:46,692--> 00:12:48,468

on social media

275

00:12:48,492--> 00:12:50,988

or when posting,

whether as a bookshop or

276

00:12:51,012--> 00:12:53,348

in my And Other

Stories capacity.

277

00:12:53,372--> 00:12:55,574

Um, but certainly

on the shop floor,

278

00:12:55,574--> 00:12:58,068

it really varies,

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there's no easy answer

279

00:12:58,092--> 00:13:00,348

as a bookseller to give there.

280

00:13:00,372--> 00:13:02,858

I do think conversations
about translation itself

281

00:13:02,882--> 00:13:05,105

have increased on
the shop floor, though.

282

00:13:07,549--> 00:13:10,782

-That's interesting
that there's been...

283

00:13:10,806--> 00:13:13,868

that there's been a change.

284

00:13:13,892--> 00:13:17,668

And that, so do you say-- Do you
feel that readers are kind of more

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285

00:13:17,692--> 00:13:21,016

familiar with....

286

00:13:21,041--> 00:13:23,908

with the kind of...

287

00:13:23,932--> 00:13:26,388

I don't know, with how to talk about translations, I guess.

288

00:13:26,412--> 00:13:29,228

-I do, I do, and I think that has been driven by

289

00:13:29,252--> 00:13:32,745

social media, by BookTok and...

290

00:13:32,770--> 00:13:36,138

the International Booker as well, their presence on social media.

291

00:13:36,162--> 00:13:38,508

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I think there is an increase in confidence amongst readers

292

00:13:38,532--> 00:13:42,268

to talk about it and come in and ask for it as well,

293

00:13:42,292--> 00:13:45,468

and to want to talk about it with a bookseller.

294

00:13:45,492--> 00:13:47,748

Um, I think that is a growing number of people.

295

00:13:47,772--> 00:13:49,908

I still don't think it's a mass number.

296

00:13:49,932--> 00:13:51,958

I think the majority of people who are

297

00:13:51,983--> 00:13:54,668

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walking into a bookshop

probably aren't thinking about

298

00:13:54,692--> 00:13:56,548

translation specifically.

299

00:13:56,572--> 00:13:57,938

Um...

300

00:13:57,962--> 00:14:00,491

Of course, I worked at Foyles

301

00:14:00,515--> 00:14:02,948

where we did gain a

reputation for translation,

302

00:14:02,972--> 00:14:05,908

so we did have customers

coming in specifically for that.

303

00:14:05,932--> 00:14:07,028

I think the Booker

304

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00:14:07,052--> 00:14:09,388

has had a profound influence on

305

00:14:09,412--> 00:14:12,868

customers going into a
bookshop and asking for

306

00:14:12,892--> 00:14:14,805

new works in translation.

307

00:14:14,830--> 00:14:17,868

Again, I don't know the
numbers there, but I would

308

00:14:17,892--> 00:14:19,748

think it's a growing number,

309

00:14:19,772--> 00:14:21,938

but not a huge
number at the moment.

310

00:14:23,098--> 00:14:25,708

-Would you say that there's
been a change for you, Dan,

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311

00:14:25,732--> 00:14:30,676

in the way that people in
the book club talk about it?

312

00:14:31,283--> 00:14:34,838

Over the years, over the years that
you've been involved in the book club.

313

00:14:34,863--> 00:14:37,428

-Oh, definitely, I'll definitely
put myself in that...

314

00:14:37,452--> 00:14:38,868

in that bracket as well.

315

00:14:38,892--> 00:14:41,908

I've learned a lot from
being in the book club.

316

00:14:41,932--> 00:14:43,508

I think at the beginning of the...

317

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00:14:43,532--> 00:14:46,508

of when I was there, there was a
lot of more editors and publishers

318

00:14:46,532--> 00:14:48,708

involved in the book club,
and as we kind of moved away

319

00:14:48,732--> 00:14:51,028

from being connected to English
PEN, becoming more online,

320

00:14:51,052--> 00:14:53,348

we've actually moved towards
more translators and readers,

321

00:14:53,372--> 00:14:55,985

which has kind of
brought different angles...

322

00:14:56,009--> 00:14:57,068

angles to it.

323

00:14:57,092--> 00:14:59,548

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Um, and I think, as well, I
think going back to the point

324

00:14:59,572--> 00:15:02,492

about it becoming a genre, I think
I'm a little bit uncomfortable about it

325

00:15:02,516--> 00:15:04,606

being a genre. I don't
really think of it as a genre.

326

00:15:04,630--> 00:15:08,268

I think it's more kind of a way of
arresting, maybe, unconscious bias

327

00:15:08,292--> 00:15:10,948

or kind of a way of arresting the
way that the publishing industry,

328

00:15:10,972--> 00:15:12,574

in the UK particularly,

329

00:15:12,574--> 00:15:14,908

publishes and

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pushes books on you,

330

00:15:14,932--> 00:15:16,323

which you don't

really understand...

331

00:15:16,348--> 00:15:19,268

don't always understand or know

aren't written in the original, so...

332

00:15:19,292--> 00:15:23,188

So I think there's an

element there which is, um...

333

00:15:24,475--> 00:15:27,188

And it's interesting when we

pick books for the book club.

334

00:15:27,212--> 00:15:29,868

When we leave the category vague

335

00:15:29,892--> 00:15:33,148

and we just put it... we do

a nomination every month,

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336

00:15:33,172--> 00:15:35,348

people nominate books
that they would like to read,

337

00:15:35,372--> 00:15:36,388

and then we do a vote.

338

00:15:36,412--> 00:15:39,257

It's all very democratic,
everyone gets a chance.

339

00:15:39,282--> 00:15:41,922

If we have six books, we put six
books on, or two books, two books,

340

00:15:41,946--> 00:15:42,946

and everyone votes.

341

00:15:42,970--> 00:15:44,600

But if we leave it
without a category,

342

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00:15:44,625--> 00:15:48,428

and this is within a category of it
can't be a book written in English,

343

00:15:48,452--> 00:15:50,574

you end up having

344

00:15:50,574--> 00:15:52,228

uh, male writers,

345

00:15:52,252--> 00:15:54,468

people have written from
European languages, generally,

346

00:15:54,492--> 00:15:57,828

and often in the
classic... in the canon.

347

00:15:57,852--> 00:16:01,818

As one of our... as one of
our readers says, it's like,

348

00:16:01,842--> 00:16:04,588

it's all getting a little bit

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sausage-festy around here.

349

00:16:04,612--> 00:16:06,723

And as soon as... as soon as
the sausage word comes up,

350

00:16:06,748--> 00:16:09,348

we know we have to do something,
kind of, to address that balance.

351

00:16:09,372--> 00:16:11,068

So we try and put some
categories around it

352

00:16:11,092--> 00:16:13,428

because I think, naturally,
people kind of tend towards,

353

00:16:13,452--> 00:16:15,948

and it's often because they're
books that people have heard of

354

00:16:15,972--> 00:16:18,692

or they're writers people are

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interested in, but the way that they're

355

00:16:18,716--> 00:16:22,348

often... not consciously

sold, but unconsciously sold,

356

00:16:22,372--> 00:16:25,118

you end up getting very

similar amount of people. And I

357

00:16:25,142--> 00:16:28,428

think as [inaudible] fiction was dead,

and the book club was born really,

358

00:16:28,452--> 00:16:30,468

to kind of address that,

that we wanted to kind of

359

00:16:30,492--> 00:16:34,574

focus not on English

writing, we wanted to read

360

00:16:34,574--> 00:16:36,708

from some other places,

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361

00:16:36,732--> 00:16:38,748

understand other points of view.

362

00:16:38,772--> 00:16:40,508

And I said in my introduction,

363

00:16:40,532--> 00:16:43,588

um, I joined just after Brexit

364

00:16:43,612--> 00:16:45,628

and obviously there was a

365

00:16:45,652--> 00:16:49,948

proliferation of new independents

coming out of Fitzcarraldo.

366

00:16:49,972--> 00:16:52,028

I think they started off

the back of Brexit as well,

367

00:16:52,052--> 00:16:55,468

with Olga Tokarczuk kind of being a

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kind of major writer for them from Poland,

368

00:16:55,492--> 00:16:58,271

writing from France as

well to kind of just kind of...

369

00:16:58,295--> 00:17:00,095

I think that that was

a bit of an inspiration,

370

00:17:00,119--> 00:17:02,879

because I think everyone had been

heightened in that period in the UK

371

00:17:02,903--> 00:17:05,788

of talking about Europe

and talking about England

372

00:17:05,812--> 00:17:08,348

as a little place versus

kind of the wider world.

373

00:17:08,372--> 00:17:11,948

And I think that, um, translated

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fiction was a way maybe a little bit of

374

00:17:11,972--> 00:17:15,708

engaging with that, but And Other

Stories, Peirene Press, and others

375

00:17:15,732--> 00:17:18,058

all came around at the same

time, so I think the book club

376

00:17:18,083--> 00:17:21,548

was able to kind of

draw on quite a rich

377

00:17:21,572--> 00:17:24,988

body of work to work

from, of contemporary stuff

378

00:17:25,012--> 00:17:26,708

as well as more kind of

379

00:17:26,732--> 00:17:29,668

well-established writers

like Garcia Marquez

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380

00:17:29,692--> 00:17:31,950

or someone like W. G. Sebald.

381

00:17:32,574--> 00:17:35,508

-I'm really

interested, Nina, in...

382

00:17:35,532--> 00:17:39,228

I mean, obviously we've got

2, like, UK perspectives here,

383

00:17:39,252--> 00:17:42,026

and I wonder if if you in India

384

00:17:42,050--> 00:17:45,574

feel that they're given the...

385

00:17:45,574--> 00:17:48,828

like the linguistic context

of India, like, what...?

386

00:17:48,852--> 00:17:50,868

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What does that mean for...

387

00:17:50,892--> 00:17:53,868

for people's thinking
about translation

388

00:17:53,892--> 00:17:56,574

and that distinction between

389

00:17:56,574--> 00:18:00,574

translation and "original",
in inverted commas.

390

00:18:00,574--> 00:18:02,748

Well, that's such a
wonderful question,

391

00:18:02,772--> 00:18:05,428

because there's been
a change over time.

392

00:18:05,452--> 00:18:09,628

You know, when... Can I take you
back a little a few decades, you know.

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393

00:18:09,652--> 00:18:13,948

When I grew up as a teenager,
I was a really naive reader.

394

00:18:13,972--> 00:18:15,708

I took it for granted that

395

00:18:15,732--> 00:18:17,428

books would come in translation

396

00:18:17,452--> 00:18:19,574

or come in with the originals.

397

00:18:19,574--> 00:18:22,868

You know, you didn't
really make that distinction.

398

00:18:22,892--> 00:18:25,108

We were reading
Soviet literature,

399

00:18:25,132--> 00:18:27,868

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we were reading a lot
of European literature

400

00:18:27,892--> 00:18:30,708

from Garcia Marquez onwards.

401

00:18:30,732--> 00:18:34,574

We were also reading
books imported from the UK.

402

00:18:34,574--> 00:18:37,588

And then we were reading
across our own languages.

403

00:18:37,612--> 00:18:38,788

You see?

404

00:18:38,812--> 00:18:40,868

So at that point
of time, I think we

405

00:18:40,892--> 00:18:44,628

instinctively knew what
a good translation was,

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406

00:18:44,652--> 00:18:47,108

uh, and felt it,

407

00:18:47,132--> 00:18:49,148

but we wouldn't have

paid that much attention

408

00:18:49,172--> 00:18:51,191

to the translator themselves.

409

00:18:51,216--> 00:18:53,428

Over time, what's happened is

410

00:18:53,452--> 00:18:56,748

as it's become understood

that translation is a craft,

411

00:18:56,772--> 00:18:58,748

you know, just as much as

412

00:18:58,772--> 00:19:01,905

let's say musicians

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interpretation of a rug.

413

00:19:01,929--> 00:19:03,548

It's very individual

414

00:19:03,572--> 00:19:07,574

and no two translators are ever
going to translate a book the same way.

415

00:19:07,574--> 00:19:09,348

There's been a renaissance.

416

00:19:09,372--> 00:19:11,628

You know, there's
translators like Daisy Rockwell,

417

00:19:11,652--> 00:19:14,148

Arunava Sinha, Deepa Bhashti,

418

00:19:14,172--> 00:19:16,948

who are really
demystifying the profession

419

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00:19:16,972--> 00:19:19,588

and getting us to see
how extraordinary it is.

420

00:19:19,612--> 00:19:21,068

So I think as a reader,

421

00:19:21,092--> 00:19:23,574

I also look out for book prizes.

422

00:19:23,574--> 00:19:25,668

The International Booker Prize

423

00:19:25,692--> 00:19:27,908

matters a lot to
us sitting in India,

424

00:19:27,932--> 00:19:29,668

because every year

425

00:19:29,692--> 00:19:32,548

we get the news from
the rest of the world about...

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426

00:19:32,572--> 00:19:35,108

You know, to me, I
think the longlist used to

427

00:19:35,132--> 00:19:36,668

really be exciting,

428

00:19:36,692--> 00:19:38,574

almost as much
as the shortlists.

429

00:19:38,574--> 00:19:40,908

And for our own prizes as well,

430

00:19:40,932--> 00:19:44,188

I love it when prizes,
literary prizes here,

431

00:19:44,212--> 00:19:46,548

have a separate
award for translators

432

00:19:46,572--> 00:19:48,668

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because, you know,

that's when you start to see

433

00:19:48,692--> 00:19:51,308

one of the biggest

debates we have in India

434

00:19:51,332--> 00:19:53,574

is about the dominance

of certain languages.

435

00:19:53,574--> 00:19:57,828

You know, so Hindi,

Bengali, Tamil, Gujarati,

436

00:19:57,852--> 00:20:00,411

these would kind of

tower over the rest.

437

00:20:00,435--> 00:20:03,908

It is absolutely wonderful

to see translators,

438

00:20:03,932--> 00:20:06,908

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you know, in less

dominant parts of India

439

00:20:06,932--> 00:20:11,588

from Kashmiri to a lot of

the, you know, Manipuri,

440

00:20:11,612--> 00:20:14,628

a lot of other languages

and dialects out here

441

00:20:14,652--> 00:20:16,574

when they come

into the limelight.

442

00:20:16,574--> 00:20:19,948

That feels really special.

That feels like we're celebrating

443

00:20:19,972--> 00:20:21,692

our diversity.

444

00:20:22,549--> 00:20:24,549

I'm sorry if that

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sounds a bit soppy,

445

00:20:24,574--> 00:20:26,828

but it's such a big

subject, isn't it?

446

00:20:26,852--> 00:20:28,308

-It is. It's a huge subject,

447

00:20:28,332--> 00:20:30,388

and especially

when you have that...

448

00:20:30,412--> 00:20:33,311

the kind of complexity

of the multilingualism

449

00:20:33,335--> 00:20:35,574

of that area.

450

00:20:35,574--> 00:20:37,788

Do you...

451

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00:20:37,812--> 00:20:40,868

I mean, I know that so
you, you mentioned that you,

452

00:20:40,892--> 00:20:43,548

you know, you grew
up speaking, or...

453

00:20:43,572--> 00:20:46,948

speaking or having contact with
a number of different languages.

454

00:20:46,972--> 00:20:48,574

Um...

455

00:20:48,574--> 00:20:52,068

I know Gary, also
you speak Portuguese,

456

00:20:52,092--> 00:20:53,868

or you read... you
read Portuguese.

457

00:20:53,892--> 00:20:58,388

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And I don't know... I don't know about you, Dan. Do you speak any other languages?

458

00:20:59,652--> 00:21:00,652

-Not really, no.

459

00:21:00,676--> 00:21:03,308

-Okay. But do...

460

00:21:03,332--> 00:21:04,468

Do...

461

00:21:04,492--> 00:21:08,988

Does having a kind of like an ability to read in different languages,

462

00:21:09,012--> 00:21:12,574

do you think that that is something that has...

463

00:21:12,574--> 00:21:15,668

that affects the way you talk about translations,

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464

00:21:15,692--> 00:21:18,828

either from those

languages or in general?

465

00:21:18,852--> 00:21:20,230

Um...

466

00:21:20,255--> 00:21:22,293

And does it give you different,

467

00:21:22,317--> 00:21:24,228

like, access to

a different aspect

468

00:21:24,252--> 00:21:26,574

of the... of the translation?

469

00:21:26,574--> 00:21:29,028

I guess

470

00:21:29,052--> 00:21:32,268

that's for either of you,

Nila and Gary, it seems.

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471

00:21:32,292--> 00:21:33,574

Dan, you've...

472

00:21:33,574--> 00:21:34,908

Your multilingualism has...

473

00:21:34,932--> 00:21:35,932

[laughs]

474

00:21:35,956--> 00:21:38,574

disqualified you from

this particular question.

475

00:21:38,574--> 00:21:40,708

-No, but I see...

476

00:21:40,732--> 00:21:41,732

-Sorry.

477

00:21:41,756--> 00:21:43,788

-Please, please, Gary, go ahead.

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478

00:21:43,812--> 00:21:45,468

-It's a good... It's
a good question.

479

00:21:45,492--> 00:21:47,388

I mean, I came to

480

00:21:47,412--> 00:21:49,708

learn Portuguese through

481

00:21:49,732--> 00:21:51,868

the work I do with translation

482

00:21:51,892--> 00:21:53,988

and promoting
translated literature.

483

00:21:54,012--> 00:21:55,574

Before that,

484

00:21:55,574--> 00:21:57,748

languages were not present

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485

00:21:57,772--> 00:21:59,748

when I was... when

I was growing up.

486

00:21:59,772--> 00:22:03,108

It wasn't something

I'd studied at university.

487

00:22:03,132--> 00:22:06,331

So I do have my

work with translation

488

00:22:06,355--> 00:22:08,388

in bookshops and

within publishing

489

00:22:08,412--> 00:22:11,828

to thank for now having

the Portuguese language

490

00:22:11,852--> 00:22:13,198

and being able to read in it,

491

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00:22:13,223--> 00:22:15,988

which gives me an

immense amount of pleasure.

492

00:22:16,012--> 00:22:17,788

Um...

493

00:22:17,812--> 00:22:20,871

Does knowing Portuguese

494

00:22:20,895--> 00:22:24,508

affect how I read either

translations from Portuguese or

495

00:22:24,532--> 00:22:26,337

other languages?

496

00:22:26,361--> 00:22:28,054

I actually don't think it does.

497

00:22:28,078--> 00:22:30,121

I don't think...

498

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00:22:30,145--> 00:22:32,725

Obviously, I can read
something in Portuguese,

499

00:22:32,749--> 00:22:34,574

then read a translation and

500

00:22:34,574--> 00:22:38,548

I think like anybody would think, oh,
I might do this a little bit differently.

501

00:22:38,572--> 00:22:42,788

But in terms of my ability
to talk about the translation

502

00:22:42,812--> 00:22:45,548

and to advocate for a
book and its translator,

503

00:22:45,572--> 00:22:47,708

I don't think knowledge of

504

00:22:47,732--> 00:22:51,250

another language

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has changed that

505

00:22:51,275--> 00:22:54,068

or really helped

that all that much.

506

00:22:54,092--> 00:22:56,868

It's given me a lot of pleasure.

507

00:22:56,892--> 00:22:59,828

Um, but in terms of

508

00:22:59,852--> 00:23:02,574

how I speak to

customers when I'm

509

00:23:02,574--> 00:23:05,268

in the bookshop

about about translation,

510

00:23:05,292--> 00:23:07,508

it hasn't altered that

from how it was before.

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511

00:23:07,532--> 00:23:09,948

I guess, because I'm
still more interested in how

512

00:23:09,972--> 00:23:13,268

other translators, and
maybe we'll come on to this,

513

00:23:13,292--> 00:23:16,108

but how how other translators
talk about the books they...

514

00:23:16,132--> 00:23:19,574

they translate rather
than my own ability

515

00:23:19,574--> 00:23:22,678

to read a book in
another language

516

00:23:22,702--> 00:23:25,104

and, in my head, translate it.

517

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00:23:27,757--> 00:23:29,748

I think for me over time,

518

00:23:29,772--> 00:23:32,228

the ability to read

in Bengali and Hindi

519

00:23:32,252--> 00:23:34,028

has become a greater comfort,

520

00:23:34,052--> 00:23:36,388

because so much

of my professional life

521

00:23:36,412--> 00:23:37,908

or my writing life

522

00:23:37,932--> 00:23:39,938

has now been lived in English.

523

00:23:39,962--> 00:23:43,108

And it's complicated

for all of us,

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524

00:23:43,132--> 00:23:45,324

I think, who are multilingual.

525

00:23:45,349--> 00:23:48,148

We always have to

face... We face a choice.

526

00:23:48,172--> 00:23:50,148

English, 20 years ago,

527

00:23:50,172--> 00:23:53,828

was the language that

became a home for all these

528

00:23:53,852--> 00:23:55,868

messy set ups, you know.

529

00:23:55,892--> 00:23:59,268

I was Bengali, but I

didn't live in Bengal.

530

00:23:59,292--> 00:24:01,725

I lived in a Hindi-speaking

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city, but my...

531

00:24:01,749--> 00:24:03,902

I wasn't a natural

Hindi speaker.

532

00:24:03,927--> 00:24:06,428

And Oriya, which was

my father's language,

533

00:24:06,452--> 00:24:08,028

was the one that receded

534

00:24:08,052--> 00:24:11,468

as we moved further and

further away from his home state.

535

00:24:11,492--> 00:24:13,148

But it left a...

536

00:24:13,172--> 00:24:16,588

It left a residue of love

behind, if that makes sense,

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537

00:24:16,612--> 00:24:19,224

you know, a feeling of coming home.

538

00:24:19,249--> 00:24:22,588

So as a writer, you make
your home in English.

539

00:24:22,612--> 00:24:26,525

It brings together all of these
contradictions and dissonances.

540

00:24:26,549--> 00:24:28,828

And I think that's
been very valuable.

541

00:24:28,852--> 00:24:31,574

And Bengali and Hindi
now is my comfort reading.

542

00:24:31,574--> 00:24:34,708

You know, in between reading
for the International Booker Prize,

543

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00:24:34,732--> 00:24:36,228

whenever I wanted to rest,

544

00:24:36,252--> 00:24:37,708

I wouldn't go to English.

545

00:24:37,732--> 00:24:40,228

I'd come home to

one of these two.

546

00:24:40,252--> 00:24:42,788

It does make me a little

more confident about

547

00:24:42,812--> 00:24:45,748

talking about translations

from these languages,

548

00:24:45,772--> 00:24:48,451

even if, you know,

you're more able to marvel

549

00:24:48,475--> 00:24:51,115

at what the translator

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does, particularly with

550

00:24:51,140--> 00:24:52,588

tricky flavours

551

00:24:52,612--> 00:24:57,371

of Bengali or Hindi, or very
difficult cultural contexts.

552

00:24:57,395--> 00:25:01,108

And when you see them
trapeze artisting their way over,

553

00:25:01,132--> 00:25:04,111

what you would have seen as a potential
pitfall if you'd been translating,

554

00:25:04,135--> 00:25:06,574

you can't help but want to applaud.

555

00:25:06,574--> 00:25:09,388

I don't have the same thing
when it comes to other languages,

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556

00:25:09,412--> 00:25:12,028

but because I know

what it takes in these two,

557

00:25:12,052--> 00:25:14,068

when I read from a

European language

558

00:25:14,092--> 00:25:15,348

or an African language,

559

00:25:15,372--> 00:25:17,574

or, you know,

Japanese or Korean,

560

00:25:17,574--> 00:25:19,788

I can kind of imagine

561

00:25:19,812--> 00:25:23,508

how difficult or how complex or

how enjoyable that might have been,

562

00:25:23,532--> 00:25:25,292

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even if I don't know for sure.

563

00:25:25,316--> 00:25:27,748

So it's confidence building,

564

00:25:27,772--> 00:25:30,588

not having access to other
languages just opens up,

565

00:25:30,612--> 00:25:32,668

I think, the same
kind of curiosity

566

00:25:32,692--> 00:25:33,948

that Dan would have.

567

00:25:33,972--> 00:25:35,800

Or, you know, anyone who's not

568

00:25:35,824--> 00:25:37,902

multilingual, we all share that.

569

00:25:37,927--> 00:25:38,948

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-Mm-hmm.

570

00:25:38,972--> 00:25:41,388

I was gonna say that
sounds like a good segue into

571

00:25:41,412--> 00:25:42,851

me getting into
this conversation.

572

00:25:42,875--> 00:25:44,908

But I completely agree

573

00:25:44,932--> 00:25:47,988

that as I've been
involved in the club

574

00:25:48,012--> 00:25:50,788

and talking to other people, and
particularly talking to translators

575

00:25:50,812--> 00:25:52,988

about how they approach problems

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576

00:25:53,012--> 00:25:56,148

and how they approach accents,

577

00:25:56,172--> 00:25:59,388

or the way that they

try and bring the context

578

00:25:59,412--> 00:26:01,908

for a very difficult piece

579

00:26:01,932--> 00:26:05,468

of particular, kind of, specific

cultural, kind of, reference,

580

00:26:05,492--> 00:26:07,308

but try and weave it into the...

581

00:26:07,332--> 00:26:09,388

into the text so that the

English language reader

582

00:26:09,412--> 00:26:10,574

might not see it,

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583

00:26:10,574--> 00:26:12,736

but still give enough context
to make everything work

584

00:26:12,761--> 00:26:14,851

without having to resort
to something like footnotes.

585

00:26:14,876--> 00:26:16,346

Or maybe the use of footnotes

586

00:26:16,371--> 00:26:19,531

and why they would use footnotes, and
why the publisher decided to use footnotes

587

00:26:19,555--> 00:26:21,388

and not use that
sort of technique.

588

00:26:21,412--> 00:26:24,508

I've started to kind of build up a
bit of a tool set about, kind of, yeah,

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589

00:26:24,532--> 00:26:26,788

the way that translators
go about their...

590

00:26:26,812--> 00:26:28,378

about their craft, and...

591

00:26:28,403--> 00:26:30,020

As I say, there's lots of...

592

00:26:30,044--> 00:26:31,938

The same way that
this is a big topic,

593

00:26:31,962--> 00:26:35,908

it's also kind of equally myriad ways
of the way that translators prefer to do

594

00:26:35,932--> 00:26:37,735

do what they do.

595

00:26:38,275--> 00:26:41,574

Which just makes it always

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a valid conversation to have.

596

00:26:41,574--> 00:26:43,868

-Yeah, I think...

597

00:26:45,269--> 00:26:48,068

It's really interesting to me

598

00:26:48,092--> 00:26:51,188

thinking about

599

00:26:51,212--> 00:26:55,011

the way that... the way that

context, kind of cultural context

600

00:26:55,035--> 00:26:56,551

is communicated,

601

00:26:56,575--> 00:27:00,574

because often as

a reader, especially

602

00:27:00,574--> 00:27:02,628

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of something, you know, of

603

00:27:02,652--> 00:27:05,971

literature from a country that
you may never have been to,

604

00:27:05,995--> 00:27:09,388

maybe you've read things
about it, but you really have no...

605

00:27:09,412--> 00:27:10,788

Uh...

606

00:27:10,812--> 00:27:13,308

You know, you've never
stood in a particular place

607

00:27:13,332--> 00:27:15,068

and looked at a
particular scene,

608

00:27:15,092--> 00:27:17,348

or, you know, you've
never, like, heard

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609

00:27:17,372--> 00:27:21,508

the sounds of a particular
street or something, and...

610

00:27:21,532--> 00:27:23,548

those things might be

611

00:27:23,572--> 00:27:26,135

so, um...

612

00:27:27,574--> 00:27:30,308

So kind of obvious to...

613

00:27:30,332--> 00:27:31,948

So kind of
self-evident, I guess,

614

00:27:31,972--> 00:27:33,228

to a...

615

00:27:33,252--> 00:27:35,748

to the... to an author

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who has written

616

00:27:35,772--> 00:27:39,066

about it in the

language of that country.

617

00:27:39,091--> 00:27:42,508

Or even it might be just so

much part of the language,

618

00:27:42,532--> 00:27:44,574

those particular,

619

00:27:44,574--> 00:27:48,068

you know, the particular cultural

phenomena or the particular...

620

00:27:48,092--> 00:27:53,388

scenes, or, you know,

the way that a certain...

621

00:27:53,412--> 00:27:57,628

a certain geographical location

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622

00:27:57,652--> 00:27:59,548

can come to be, you know,

623

00:27:59,572--> 00:28:01,548

to be used as a

kind of shorthand

624

00:28:01,572--> 00:28:05,574

for a whole... a whole

kind of milieu, almost.

625

00:28:05,574--> 00:28:08,148

The importance of...

626

00:28:08,172--> 00:28:09,988

Um...

627

00:28:10,012--> 00:28:14,308

The translator's skill in trying

to kind of break that down,

628

00:28:14,332--> 00:28:16,308

break those, break the...

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629

00:28:16,332--> 00:28:21,040

break that down so that it
becomes legible to the... to the...

630

00:28:21,065--> 00:28:23,428

to the reader without,

631

00:28:23,452--> 00:28:26,548

you know, making it
really obvious and kind of

632

00:28:26,572--> 00:28:29,988

waving a great big flag saying,
look, I'm doing a clever thing.

633

00:28:30,012--> 00:28:31,268

Um...

634

00:28:32,574--> 00:28:36,708

It's... Yeah, it's a.. it's
a real skill, and it's...

635

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00:28:36,732--> 00:28:38,148

something that

636

00:28:38,172--> 00:28:42,748

feels kind of quite

important to be able to...

637

00:28:42,772--> 00:28:46,908

to capture when talking

about it, but it's unclear.

638

00:28:46,932--> 00:28:49,948

It's not always that easy to to

find a good way to talk about it.

639

00:28:49,972--> 00:28:51,078

Um...

640

00:28:51,103--> 00:28:53,628

I don't know where I'm going

with this. Anyway, whatever.

641

00:28:53,652--> 00:28:55,028

Um...

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642

00:28:56,041--> 00:28:59,548

So when when you're
talking about translations, then,

643

00:29:01,549--> 00:29:03,508

to what extent do you talk about

644

00:29:03,532--> 00:29:04,908

a translation,

645

00:29:04,932--> 00:29:06,708

the translation as translation,

646

00:29:06,732--> 00:29:08,398

rather than as a text?

647

00:29:08,422--> 00:29:10,548

You know, how much
do you break it down?

648

00:29:10,572--> 00:29:13,188

So I'm thinking now,

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Nila, for instance, of your...

649

00:29:13,212--> 00:29:16,548

of your criticism,

you know, do you...

650

00:29:16,572--> 00:29:18,549

do you feel qualified to make

651

00:29:18,574--> 00:29:21,908

kind of technical criticisms?

652

00:29:22,796--> 00:29:25,628

I mean, you've you've talked a

little bit about this already, I guess,

653

00:29:25,652--> 00:29:27,548

in talking about how

654

00:29:27,572--> 00:29:30,308

your knowledge of

Bengali and Hindi

655

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00:29:30,332--> 00:29:33,574

has, like, enabled
you to read certain,

656

00:29:33,574--> 00:29:37,468

you know, to read translations
of those and see what the...

657

00:29:37,492--> 00:29:39,868

what the translator has done.

658

00:29:39,892--> 00:29:44,574

But maybe even before, um...

659

00:29:44,574--> 00:29:47,148

before you were...

660

00:29:47,172--> 00:29:49,788

When you're writing,

661

00:29:49,812--> 00:29:52,868

you know, pre being on the
International Booker panel,

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662

00:29:52,892--> 00:29:54,708

when you're
writing about things,

663

00:29:54,732--> 00:29:56,574

how did you approach

664

00:29:56,574--> 00:30:00,828

making those kinds of critiques?

665

00:30:01,976--> 00:30:04,348

Was it something that...

666

00:30:04,372--> 00:30:06,144

that seemed difficult to you?

667

00:30:06,168--> 00:30:09,268

Or or did it just feel
like part of the natural

668

00:30:09,292--> 00:30:12,908

process of writing, of
writing about a translation?

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669

00:30:14,026--> 00:30:16,988

Oh, I used to be so
scared of this, you know.

670

00:30:17,012--> 00:30:21,308

I used to be terrified that because
I didn't know the source language

671

00:30:21,332--> 00:30:24,350

or the language that
you were translating from,

672

00:30:24,375--> 00:30:28,388

that I was somehow disqualified
from talking about translation at all.

673

00:30:28,412--> 00:30:30,668

And I must say that,
you know, in parentheses,

674

00:30:30,692--> 00:30:33,148

this year of reading with the
International Booker Prize,

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675

00:30:33,172--> 00:30:34,831

at the start of our reading,

676

00:30:34,855--> 00:30:37,428

and I don't think I'm breaking
any rules by sharing this,

677

00:30:37,452--> 00:30:39,908

every time the question
of translation came up,

678

00:30:39,932--> 00:30:41,862

we would turn to
the one translator

679

00:30:41,887--> 00:30:43,348

on the panel, Sophie Hughes,

680

00:30:43,372--> 00:30:45,348

who is an absolute
genius anyway.

681

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00:30:45,372--> 00:30:47,628

But I think as time went by,

682

00:30:47,652--> 00:30:50,996

we also grew a little more
confident in our ability.

683

00:30:51,021--> 00:30:55,108

At some level, as readers, you
interact with the translation anyway.

684

00:30:55,132--> 00:30:58,708

And I'm digressing a bit, but
Nicola, when you were speaking,

685

00:30:58,732--> 00:31:01,908

I was just thinking of the
summer and rain problem.

686

00:31:01,932--> 00:31:04,468

You know, reading early on,

687

00:31:04,492--> 00:31:07,388

every time you came

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across a reference to people

688

00:31:07,412--> 00:31:10,468

from the Northern Hemisphere

saying summer's around the corner,

689

00:31:10,492--> 00:31:12,370

it's going to be

wonderful, you were like...

690

00:31:12,395--> 00:31:13,748

I do not get this at all,

691

00:31:13,772--> 00:31:16,988

because summer is

41 plus degrees and

692

00:31:17,012--> 00:31:18,388

we could have boiled.

693

00:31:18,412--> 00:31:19,948

[laughs] You know, all of that.

694

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00:31:19,972--> 00:31:22,628

And likewise, you know,
the rain was always dreary

695

00:31:22,652--> 00:31:24,748

in a certain kind
of English novel.

696

00:31:24,772--> 00:31:27,574

And out here, the
monsoons are the seasons of

697

00:31:27,574--> 00:31:31,098

romance, and you, you know,
move out with flowers in your hands

698

00:31:31,122--> 00:31:33,138

and you dance with
the peacocks, etcetera.

699

00:31:33,162--> 00:31:35,508

I mean, I'm aware that
I'm over putting it a little bit,

700

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00:31:35,532--> 00:31:37,308

but basically, you
know, that is part of the

701

00:31:37,332--> 00:31:39,234

translator's role.

702

00:31:39,259--> 00:31:41,820

As time when by,
though, I think I became...

703

00:31:41,844--> 00:31:44,068

I hope not overconfident,

704

00:31:44,092--> 00:31:46,628

but when you read a book twice,

705

00:31:46,652--> 00:31:48,868

you read it first
for the book itself,

706

00:31:48,892--> 00:31:50,908

and the second
time, if you read it

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707

00:31:50,932--> 00:31:53,708

paying attention to
the multiple choices

708

00:31:53,732--> 00:31:55,708

that come into
that little mosaic

709

00:31:55,732--> 00:31:57,794

of, you know,
decisions and research,

710

00:31:57,819--> 00:31:59,588

and then creative leaps.

711

00:31:59,612--> 00:32:01,348

You know, translation is a...

712

00:32:01,372--> 00:32:05,574

translation is an
act of deep creativity.

713

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00:32:05,574--> 00:32:08,468

To me, the reason
that it seems like magic

714

00:32:08,492--> 00:32:10,028

is because as a writer,

715

00:32:10,052--> 00:32:11,916

I know what it takes to

716

00:32:11,941--> 00:32:15,028

come out with your chapters,
your scenes, your characters.

717

00:32:15,052--> 00:32:17,308

For somebody else
to write your book

718

00:32:17,332--> 00:32:19,908

and convey it into
another language

719

00:32:19,932--> 00:32:22,748

without having spent those

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months and years with you,

720

00:32:22,772--> 00:32:25,574

but intuitively

understanding your book,

721

00:32:25,574--> 00:32:26,922

that is powerful.

722

00:32:26,946--> 00:32:29,837

And you can both sense and see

723

00:32:29,861--> 00:32:32,028

when a translation is...

724

00:32:32,052--> 00:32:35,108

when a translator is out

of step with the author,

725

00:32:35,132--> 00:32:36,930

and when it sings.

726

00:32:36,955--> 00:32:40,348

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And I think I had
an illustration of this.

727

00:32:40,372--> 00:32:44,348

I wrote a couple of books of fantasy
books about cats some time back,

728

00:32:44,372--> 00:32:47,338

and then they were
translated and retranslated

729

00:32:47,362--> 00:32:48,962

in several countries,

730

00:32:48,986--> 00:32:52,308

and every single translator
brought something different to it.

731

00:32:52,332--> 00:32:54,467

You know, in one, the cats were heroic.

732

00:32:54,492--> 00:32:57,028

In another, the
cats were comical.

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733

00:32:57,052--> 00:33:00,028

And my wonderful
translators in Italian,

734

00:33:00,052--> 00:33:03,708

Annamaria Biavasco
and Valentina Guani,

735

00:33:03,732--> 00:33:06,468

they took the
title, *The Wildings*,

736

00:33:06,492--> 00:33:09,574

and they went for the metaphor at
the heart of it, and it's now the cat...

737

00:33:09,574--> 00:33:11,868

The Cats with the Amber Heart.

738

00:33:11,892--> 00:33:15,948

You know, which captures
something that was in the text,

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739

00:33:15,972--> 00:33:17,561

but that they saw
and brought out.

740

00:33:17,585--> 00:33:21,193

So I see it as a
collaborative exercise.

741

00:33:21,218--> 00:33:23,233

And from that perspective,

742

00:33:23,257--> 00:33:26,115

I think if I stay humble as
a reader and a reviewer

743

00:33:26,140--> 00:33:28,188

and just come to the translation

744

00:33:28,212--> 00:33:29,908

with a kind of openness

745

00:33:29,932--> 00:33:31,388

and say, you know,

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746

00:33:31,412--> 00:33:33,312

how did this feel for me?

747

00:33:33,337--> 00:33:34,548

Uh...

748

00:33:34,572--> 00:33:36,108

Was I totally in love with it

749

00:33:36,132--> 00:33:38,628

the way I've been with

Edith Grossman's translations

750

00:33:38,652--> 00:33:40,171

that just wake

you up completely,

751

00:33:40,195--> 00:33:43,068

or your translations,

or Jennifer Croft's?

752

00:33:43,092--> 00:33:47,628

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You know, there are favourite translators
that you have as much as you have authors.

753

00:33:47,652--> 00:33:50,085

I will read anything
by Arunava Sinha,

754

00:33:50,109--> 00:33:52,320

because I know that
he brings a certain love

755

00:33:52,345--> 00:33:54,015

to whatever he does.

756

00:33:54,039--> 00:33:55,574

You see what I mean?

757

00:33:55,574--> 00:33:57,574

Sorry, I'm taking up too much time.

758

00:33:57,574--> 00:33:59,234

-No, you're absolutely
not. This is great.

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759

00:33:59,259--> 00:34:01,548

I mean, I think this question of

760

00:34:01,572--> 00:34:03,574

whether you have...

761

00:34:03,574--> 00:34:07,068

You know, I'm really

interested in the idea of

762

00:34:07,092--> 00:34:09,428

translator style

763

00:34:09,452--> 00:34:12,148

and the extent to which

764

00:34:12,172--> 00:34:14,864

a translator might

765

00:34:15,369--> 00:34:17,908

bring something of themselves

766

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00:34:17,932--> 00:34:20,508

to different books
that they translate.

767

00:34:20,532--> 00:34:22,190

So you will be able to...

768

00:34:22,214--> 00:34:24,549

You know, you
could read 3 different

769

00:34:24,574--> 00:34:27,228

authors all translated
by the same...

770

00:34:27,252--> 00:34:31,148

the same translator, and...
and there will be some

771

00:34:31,172--> 00:34:32,388

quintessential,

772

00:34:32,412--> 00:34:34,574

something quintessential about

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773

00:34:34,574--> 00:34:37,148

each of them that,

774

00:34:37,172--> 00:34:41,828

ideally, while not obscuring
the original author's styles,

775

00:34:41,852--> 00:34:43,508

you know, I'm not talking about

776

00:34:43,532--> 00:34:46,789

translators kind
of railroading over...

777

00:34:47,549--> 00:34:49,828

over the author's
style, but just

778

00:34:49,852--> 00:34:51,948

that they have a...

779

00:34:53,559--> 00:34:55,788

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There's something
distinctive, basically.

780

00:34:55,813--> 00:35:01,260

And I'm always... I'm never sure
whether that's because certain translators

781

00:35:01,285--> 00:35:06,129

are drawn to working to
working with a particular kind of..

782

00:35:06,154--> 00:35:08,148

on a particular kind of text.

783

00:35:08,172--> 00:35:11,668

I mean, you know, often we don't get
to choose what we translate. We just

784

00:35:11,692--> 00:35:14,188

are asked to
translate something.

785

00:35:14,212--> 00:35:16,628

Been lucky...

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786

00:35:16,652--> 00:35:18,553

You know, like the
lucky ones among us

787

00:35:18,577--> 00:35:20,979

are able to choose the
books that we translate.

788

00:35:21,004--> 00:35:22,628

But...

789

00:35:22,652--> 00:35:24,788

You know..

790

00:35:24,812--> 00:35:27,108

Are there... Okay,
Dan, for instance,

791

00:35:27,132--> 00:35:29,468

in the book club,

792

00:35:29,492--> 00:35:33,428

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Have you read different books by

793

00:35:33,452--> 00:35:37,268

different authors that were
translated by the same translator,

794

00:35:37,292--> 00:35:40,028

and has it... have
there been kind of tells,

795

00:35:40,052--> 00:35:43,038

I guess, that the same
translator was working on them?

796

00:35:43,062--> 00:35:46,868

Or Gary, maybe, is that something
that you've, uh, that you've seen

797

00:35:46,892--> 00:35:48,945

in your reading, or...?

798

00:35:48,970--> 00:35:50,588

We definitely have.

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799

00:35:50,612--> 00:35:53,748

It's kind of not always...

always together.

800

00:35:53,772--> 00:35:57,068

So picking up

on how's difficult,

801

00:35:57,092--> 00:35:58,785

but we recently read, um...

802

00:35:58,809--> 00:36:01,285

We by Yevgeny

Zamyatin from the Russian,

803

00:36:01,309--> 00:36:05,828

which has recently

retranslated by Bela Shayevich,

804

00:36:05,852--> 00:36:09,988

who also translated Secondhand

Time by Svetlana Alexievich,

805

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00:36:10,012--> 00:36:12,508

and her take on

806

00:36:12,532--> 00:36:15,574

this kind of

dystopian novel was

807

00:36:15,574--> 00:36:17,504

quite different to the previous,

808

00:36:17,529--> 00:36:20,532

and it was interesting. But I think

some of us in the book club went one way

809

00:36:20,557--> 00:36:23,324

and some of us went another way

in terms of which translator we chose,

810

00:36:23,349--> 00:36:25,268

and our impressions

of the book were

811

00:36:25,292--> 00:36:29,123

obviously similar, because

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it's a similar sort of, um, uh...

812

00:36:29,148--> 00:36:30,508

subject matter, but

813

00:36:30,532--> 00:36:33,508

different in terms of the way
that they were approached

814

00:36:33,532--> 00:36:35,951

and the way that the language
was almost slightly colder,

815

00:36:35,975--> 00:36:39,308

one was a little bit more kind of
flamboyant, and which... which one...

816

00:36:39,332--> 00:36:42,268

which one reflected
the subject matter better.

817

00:36:42,292--> 00:36:45,748

Um, so we've seen that. We've also
had the Darkness at Noon recently,

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818

00:36:45,772--> 00:36:50,268

and that's, again, something
that a retranslation of,

819

00:36:50,292--> 00:36:52,908

uh, recently by Philip Boehm,

820

00:36:52,932--> 00:36:55,450

um, uh, of a translation of...

821

00:36:55,475--> 00:36:58,628

by Daphne Hardy. Daphne Hardy
was not a professional translator.

822

00:36:58,652--> 00:37:01,574

She was the, um, partner

823

00:37:01,574--> 00:37:03,348

of Koestler, who wrote the book.

824

00:37:03,372--> 00:37:05,708

And he kind of

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helped her translate it.

825

00:37:05,732--> 00:37:08,591

And again, it was... it's

interesting for us to see that the...

826

00:37:08,615--> 00:37:11,228

I think a lot of people

preferred the first translation,

827

00:37:11,252--> 00:37:12,811

because it had more,

kind of, warmth...

828

00:37:12,836--> 00:37:14,868

Well, not warmth, because

it's not a warm book,

829

00:37:14,892--> 00:37:17,047

but it kind of had

more... had more to it.

830

00:37:17,072--> 00:37:19,988

The second... the second one was

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a bit more... It just felt a bit more...

831

00:37:20,012--> 00:37:21,628

maybe a bit more professional.

832

00:37:21,652--> 00:37:24,388

And as such, you

lost a little bit of that.

833

00:37:24,412--> 00:37:27,671

Um, and thinking, again,

just reading around translation,

834

00:37:27,695--> 00:37:31,428

there's always the constant

thing about the big Russian texts,

835

00:37:31,452--> 00:37:34,574

and Constance Garnett...

836

00:37:34,599--> 00:37:38,525

Again, kind of an amateur translator, or

probably not by the time she translated

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837

00:37:38,549--> 00:37:41,748

her seventh massive

novel, but, like, she, uh, she...

838

00:37:41,772--> 00:37:43,348

She was, um...

839

00:37:43,372--> 00:37:45,668

Her... her language is of

the 19th century, isn't it?

840

00:37:45,692--> 00:37:48,148

19th century England,

841

00:37:48,172--> 00:37:52,028

which, in a lot of people's

minds, is the language of

842

00:37:52,052--> 00:37:56,188

Tolstoy and Dostoevsky,

even if it wasn't supposedly

843

00:37:56,212--> 00:37:59,228

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the most accurate of translations,
that's the language that

844

00:37:59,252--> 00:38:01,231

people think of when
they think of those books,

845

00:38:01,256--> 00:38:04,348

so there's kind of that. Whereas
the more modern texts from Russia,

846

00:38:04,372--> 00:38:08,325

like, is it, uh, Richard
Pevear and Volokhonsky?

847

00:38:08,350--> 00:38:09,373

-Yeah, yeah...

848

00:38:09,398--> 00:38:11,125

It's not... when you
read their translations,

849

00:38:11,149--> 00:38:12,748

they're, again,

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they're a bit more,

850

00:38:12,772--> 00:38:15,108

I don't know, bureaucratic,

or kind of a bit more...

851

00:38:15,132--> 00:38:17,185

just a bit more professional.

852

00:38:17,210--> 00:38:18,210

Um...

853

00:38:18,234--> 00:38:20,148

-I've actually been listening to

854

00:38:20,172--> 00:38:22,988

the audiobook of War

and Peace recently.

855

00:38:23,012--> 00:38:25,188

I was like, my

wrists are too floppy

856

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00:38:25,212--> 00:38:27,508

to hold the book, so I need to...

857

00:38:27,532--> 00:38:30,647

I'm never going to get around to
this unless I listen to the audiobook.

858

00:38:30,672--> 00:38:33,988

And on my local library
audiobook service,

859

00:38:34,012--> 00:38:35,574

the only one available was...

860

00:38:35,574--> 00:38:39,148

that was unabridged was
the Constance Garnett version

861

00:38:39,172--> 00:38:42,028

and I was a bit like,
oh, you know, do I...

862

00:38:42,052--> 00:38:43,228

do I want to...

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863

00:38:43,252--> 00:38:46,716

do I want to do that or do I want a more modern one that, you know, has...

864

00:38:47,574--> 00:38:49,028

I... I don't...

865

00:38:49,052--> 00:38:52,308

It's not that the more modern one has been approved over the Constance,

866

00:38:52,332--> 00:38:54,574

because I know that there is still a debate about it.

867

00:38:54,574--> 00:38:58,616

But anyway, it was...

it was immaterial,

868

00:38:58,641--> 00:39:01,098

because that was the only one that was available, and I don't...

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869

00:39:01,123--> 00:39:02,988

I don't want to go
to audible anyway.

870

00:39:03,012--> 00:39:04,628

Blah, blah, blah.

871

00:39:04,652--> 00:39:06,788

It's just so joyful.

872

00:39:06,812--> 00:39:09,708

It's really enjoyable, and, uh...

873

00:39:09,732--> 00:39:12,574

and yes,

874

00:39:12,574--> 00:39:14,708

as you say, like, that is...

875

00:39:14,732--> 00:39:18,075

It feels like...

876

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00:39:19,010--> 00:39:22,188

feels like Tolstoy.

877

00:39:22,212--> 00:39:25,548

But is that just

because I've only read...

878

00:39:25,572--> 00:39:27,378

You know, I've

read Anna Karenina.

879

00:39:27,402--> 00:39:30,468

Also, I think in Constance

Garnett's translation,

880

00:39:30,492--> 00:39:31,948

I'm actually not

sure about that.

881

00:39:31,972--> 00:39:34,828

But, you know, it... it feels...

882

00:39:37,690--> 00:39:39,778

-There's a feeling to it.

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-There's the swagger to it.

883

00:39:39,803--> 00:39:41,468

And... and...

884

00:39:41,492--> 00:39:43,508

That is... Yeah.

885

00:39:43,532--> 00:39:45,628

-Just before Gary comes in,

886

00:39:45,652--> 00:39:48,428

the most recent one

that's been interesting to me

887

00:39:48,452--> 00:39:50,308

was Mathias Énard,

888

00:39:50,332--> 00:39:53,188

who is one of my

favourite writers.

889

00:39:53,212--> 00:39:57,028

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And, obviously, he had a very
kind of good regular translator

890

00:39:57,052--> 00:39:59,574

in Charlotte Mandell, who
does a brilliant job and

891

00:39:59,574--> 00:40:02,308

has done a brilliant job of so
many of his books, but then last year,

892

00:40:02,332--> 00:40:04,868

Fitzcarraldo, possibly because
they need to get another book out

893

00:40:04,892--> 00:40:07,756

as soon as they can,
because he sells well, I assume.

894

00:40:07,781--> 00:40:08,788

I don't know.

895

00:40:08,812--> 00:40:13,868

They asked Frank Wynne to

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do the, uh, the one before last.

896

00:40:13,892--> 00:40:16,574

And it's a different feel.

897

00:40:16,574--> 00:40:20,495

But also because Frank Wynn's one of those people who's kind of very popular.

898

00:40:20,520--> 00:40:23,063

I think he probably does get to select the books that he writes,

899

00:40:23,088--> 00:40:24,586

so there's a little bit of a, kind of,

900

00:40:24,610--> 00:40:26,465

if Frank Wayne probably got a seal of approval,

901

00:40:26,490--> 00:40:29,628

it's probably... you're probably in for a decent...

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902

00:40:29,652--> 00:40:33,574

a decent ride, but it
was a different feeling

903

00:40:33,574--> 00:40:36,348

reading his novel, his
translation of Énard,

904

00:40:36,372--> 00:40:38,188

who's kind of very got
his own kind of style,

905

00:40:38,212--> 00:40:41,543

uh, to the one with
Charlotte... Charlotte Mandell.

906

00:40:42,574--> 00:40:43,908

Not good or bad, I don't think,

907

00:40:43,932--> 00:40:45,756

but it's just an
interesting difference,

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908

00:40:45,781--> 00:40:47,865

and Frank Wynne would probably be one of those people

909

00:40:47,890--> 00:40:49,678

that you kind of sometimes look at and think,

910

00:40:49,702--> 00:40:52,388

if he's translated it, I'll... I'll give it a go.

911

00:40:52,412--> 00:40:56,828

And possibly does have a bit of an imprint of his own style in there,

912

00:40:56,852--> 00:40:58,588

as well, because they're quite different,

913

00:40:58,612--> 00:41:00,542

the books he writes, but there's always a feeling

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914

00:41:00,566--> 00:41:01,990

you get when you
come out of them.

915

00:41:02,903--> 00:41:05,388

-Yeah, I think what Dan
says is really important

916

00:41:05,412--> 00:41:08,028

in that it's not a
value judgment

917

00:41:08,052--> 00:41:10,828

that we're making when
we're saying that translations

918

00:41:10,852--> 00:41:12,188

have different textures,

919

00:41:12,212--> 00:41:15,628

or a translator can bring a
different texture to a book.

920

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00:41:15,652--> 00:41:17,948

And I do think this
is something that

921

00:41:17,972--> 00:41:19,946

readers are alive to, in a way,

922

00:41:19,970--> 00:41:23,574

even though within a
bookshop you're not often asked

923

00:41:23,574--> 00:41:26,908

about contemporary
translation, let's say.

924

00:41:26,932--> 00:41:28,651

Well, what I do find interesting

925

00:41:28,675--> 00:41:31,948

is we are regularly asked
about translations of classics.

926

00:41:31,972--> 00:41:34,205

Which is the Dostoevsky

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I should be reading?

927

00:41:34,229--> 00:41:36,908

Which is the... which translation
of Crime and Punishment

928

00:41:36,932--> 00:41:39,171

should I... should I read?

929

00:41:39,195--> 00:41:41,250

Which translation of
Proust should I read?

930

00:41:41,275--> 00:41:43,108

I think this

931

00:41:43,132--> 00:41:46,308

initially brings a lot of fear to
the booksell, the bookseller feels...

932

00:41:46,332--> 00:41:49,348

feels a lot of fear about
making that... that judgment,

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933

00:41:49,372--> 00:41:53,268

and I certainly, at the beginning
of my bookselling career,

934

00:41:53,292--> 00:41:55,148

would feel a lot of fear about

935

00:41:55,172--> 00:41:56,574

making that...

936

00:41:56,574--> 00:41:58,708

that recommendation,

937

00:41:58,732--> 00:42:02,574

um, until I got
over the idea that,

938

00:42:02,574--> 00:42:04,486

if I'm selecting
one over the other,

939

00:42:04,510--> 00:42:07,148

I'm not saying the other

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translation is a bad one.

940

00:42:07,172--> 00:42:09,308

You know, it's not a

binary, a good/bad binary,

941

00:42:09,332--> 00:42:12,548

which is, I think, when in bookshops

we're asked about it, we think

942

00:42:12,572--> 00:42:14,628

is what we're being

expected to give.

943

00:42:14,652--> 00:42:17,574

But the reality, I think,

is quite... quite different.

944

00:42:17,574--> 00:42:19,228

Um...

945

00:42:19,252--> 00:42:21,908

And a translation can

have a different texture.

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946

00:42:21,932--> 00:42:23,828

I mean, I'm a big translation--

947

00:42:23,852--> 00:42:26,948

A big fan of the early translations of Proust rather than

948

00:42:26,972--> 00:42:29,188

the later stuff from Lydia Davis.

949

00:42:29,212--> 00:42:31,988

And that again just comes to texture

950

00:42:32,012--> 00:42:34,588

and a certain fustiness that I like about...

951

00:42:34,612--> 00:42:38,028

about the Scott and Kilmartin translations.

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952

00:42:38,052--> 00:42:39,574

Um...

953

00:42:39,574--> 00:42:41,908

And readers are willing to...

954

00:42:41,932--> 00:42:43,708

to listen to that...

955

00:42:43,732--> 00:42:45,910

that kind of information.

956

00:42:45,934--> 00:42:47,148

Um...

957

00:42:47,172--> 00:42:49,548

And I mean, this

kind of goes back to

958

00:42:49,572--> 00:42:52,068

what we were

saying earlier. I think

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959

00:42:52,092--> 00:42:54,668

I've certainly got a
lot more confident

960

00:42:54,692--> 00:42:58,574

of being able to say, this is
what I enjoy about a translation.

961

00:42:58,574--> 00:43:00,005

Um...

962

00:43:00,029--> 00:43:03,428

And I don't think I
would be able to say

963

00:43:03,452--> 00:43:05,574

this translation is terrible

964

00:43:05,574--> 00:43:08,868

or this translation is
the perfect translation,

965

00:43:08,892--> 00:43:10,548

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which is, of course,
an impossibility,

966

00:43:10,572--> 00:43:12,948

but better able to
talk about textures.

967

00:43:12,972--> 00:43:16,708

And there are
translators who I do follow.

968

00:43:16,732--> 00:43:18,268

Julia Sanches is one,

969

00:43:18,292--> 00:43:20,068

Frank Wynne another,

970

00:43:20,092--> 00:43:22,574

you know, and I
follow them because I

971

00:43:22,574--> 00:43:25,228

trust the authors that on
the whole they're picking,

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972

00:43:25,252--> 00:43:29,068

but also I do think they
bring a certain texture.

973

00:43:29,092--> 00:43:31,548

It's really hard and it's
hard to speak about it

974

00:43:31,572--> 00:43:33,988

in ways that don't
seem kind of soppy,

975

00:43:34,012--> 00:43:37,108

because I think there is
a kind of, like, magic to it

976

00:43:37,132--> 00:43:38,911

that Julia does bring...

977

00:43:38,936--> 00:43:41,468

bring a bit of herself
to the translation.

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978

00:43:41,492--> 00:43:44,308

And I think that's a good
thing, though, because we...

979

00:43:44,332--> 00:43:46,868

this object, the book
has come through hands,

980

00:43:46,892--> 00:43:49,428

whether it be the hands and
minds of the author, translator,

981

00:43:49,452--> 00:43:52,988

and we want to feel those textures.
I want to feel that impression.

982

00:43:53,012--> 00:43:54,366

Um...

983

00:43:54,390--> 00:43:55,941

And...

984

00:43:57,331--> 00:43:59,308

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So I've always...

I've always kind of...

985

00:43:59,332--> 00:44:01,259

hated the debate

about, oh, should a...

986

00:44:01,283--> 00:44:04,428

Is a good translation one

where the translator is invisible?

987

00:44:04,452--> 00:44:08,148

I mean, it's... it's

too simplistic a

988

00:44:08,172--> 00:44:10,680

kind of debate for me, I think.

989

00:44:11,574--> 00:44:14,970

And also not how

people read, generally.

990

00:44:15,956--> 00:44:18,628

-I think we've got to be careful

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about it as well, haven't we?

991

00:44:18,652--> 00:44:22,451

So, I find we try and, I

say, diversify our book,

992

00:44:22,475--> 00:44:24,468

um, books that we

read with the book club.

993

00:44:24,492--> 00:44:27,028

And say, I talked about those

categories that we try and put in

994

00:44:27,052--> 00:44:28,574

to try and make sure that we

995

00:44:28,574--> 00:44:30,268

don't just read from the same...

996

00:44:30,292--> 00:44:33,148

the same people, but

then the further away from

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997

00:44:33,172--> 00:44:35,574

European languages you get,

998

00:44:35,574--> 00:44:39,574

the more the power imbalance

about who's translating into English,

999

00:44:39,574--> 00:44:41,308

why they're

translating into English,

1000

00:44:41,332--> 00:44:43,628

why this book was picked

to be translated into English.

1001

00:44:43,652--> 00:44:45,708

And all those kind

of... those kind of wider

1002

00:44:45,732--> 00:44:48,748

political elements come into it.

1003

00:44:48,772--> 00:44:50,574

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And, um...

1004

00:44:50,574--> 00:44:54,308

Yeah, it's something that
you'd have to engage with,

1005

00:44:54,332--> 00:44:58,268

particularly as a book club, which kind
of is trying to be as open as possible.

1006

00:44:58,292--> 00:45:00,138

We don't want
to be just reading

1007

00:45:00,163--> 00:45:01,788

white middle class,

1008

00:45:01,812--> 00:45:04,228

like, European-American
translators

1009

00:45:04,252--> 00:45:05,668

translating from

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1010

00:45:05,692--> 00:45:08,348

India or African
countries, or wherever,

1011

00:45:08,372--> 00:45:10,988

which tends to be the
case, which is not great.

1012

00:45:11,012--> 00:45:14,468

There are certain publishers like Tilted
Axis that are trying to kind of

1013

00:45:14,492--> 00:45:15,764

reverse that

1014

00:45:15,789--> 00:45:17,085

a little bit, um...

1015

00:45:17,109--> 00:45:20,548

But I think just being
aware of the power dynamics

1016

00:45:20,572--> 00:45:22,828

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within translation when

we're talking about it

1017

00:45:22,852--> 00:45:24,988

as well is very, very important.

1018

00:45:25,012--> 00:45:27,908

I think the really

kind of engaging

1019

00:45:27,932--> 00:45:29,948

and, like, thought-provoking

1020

00:45:29,972--> 00:45:32,551

set of essays, the Violent

Phenomena set of essays

1021

00:45:32,575--> 00:45:34,508

that Tilted Axis

published a few years ago

1022

00:45:34,532--> 00:45:37,125

echoed quite a lot of

some of the conversation.

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1023

00:45:37,149--> 00:45:39,574

Sometimes we had conversations
with people where we got quite

1024

00:45:39,574--> 00:45:41,148

emotive...

1025

00:45:41,172--> 00:45:43,031

It became quite
emotive in the book club

1026

00:45:43,055--> 00:45:45,588

because people started to call
out some of the political kind of

1027

00:45:45,612--> 00:45:48,428

undercurrents to it, and people
felt that some parts of the book club

1028

00:45:48,452--> 00:45:51,023

felt a little bit
caught out by it.

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1029

00:45:51,048--> 00:45:52,651

Maybe you hadn't
thought about it before,

1030

00:45:52,676--> 00:45:55,868

made them question certain
things, their position on things,

1031

00:45:55,892--> 00:45:58,428

and I think I definitely felt
very uncomfortable reading

1032

00:45:58,452--> 00:45:59,574

a lot of those essays.

1033

00:45:59,574--> 00:46:02,228

Um, because it kind
of held up a little bit.

1034

00:46:02,252--> 00:46:03,948

We call our club
London Reads the World,

1035

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00:46:03,972--> 00:46:06,508

and there's essays in
there talking about, uh,

1036

00:46:06,532--> 00:46:09,574

English people
reading, uh, as a, kind of

1037

00:46:09,574--> 00:46:13,911

form of tourism and
and colonialization,

1038

00:46:13,935--> 00:46:17,028

which is kind of definitely made
me feel incredibly uncomfortable,

1039

00:46:17,052--> 00:46:18,211

made me think about

1040

00:46:18,235--> 00:46:19,805

having
to think about it a bit more.

1041

00:46:19,829--> 00:46:20,911

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Um...

1042

00:46:22,574--> 00:46:25,300

-Do I have time to
jump in on that, or?

1043

00:46:25,325--> 00:46:26,467

-Absolutely. Yeah.

1044

00:46:26,492--> 00:46:27,908

-Okay, so...

1045

00:46:27,932--> 00:46:31,948

I mean, I was listening with such
interest because it's a huge debate

1046

00:46:31,972--> 00:46:34,708

and a huge source of
frustration for us in India,

1047

00:46:34,732--> 00:46:37,228

that most of the
Western publishing world

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1048

00:46:37,252--> 00:46:39,428

picks up only on those of us

1049

00:46:39,452--> 00:46:40,748

writers who write in English.

1050

00:46:40,772--> 00:46:44,170

And I can see, you know, why
that is. I mean, it's easy, all of that.

1051

00:46:44,195--> 00:46:48,348

But I come from a country
that has 122 major languages

1052

00:46:48,372--> 00:46:51,468

and the frustration is on the
behalf of readers. You know,

1053

00:46:51,492--> 00:46:53,588

this is not a rant
against publishers,

1054

00:46:53,612--> 00:46:55,268

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but you...

1055

00:46:55,292--> 00:46:58,068

you feel that the world
is missing out on some of

1056

00:46:58,092--> 00:47:01,574

the most vibrant, some
of the most deep writing

1057

00:47:01,574--> 00:47:03,451

that comes out of India,

1058

00:47:03,475--> 00:47:06,388

that only a very
few become visible.

1059

00:47:06,412--> 00:47:08,988

The politics of translations
are always there,

1060

00:47:09,012--> 00:47:10,868

even when we were
reading for the Booker.

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1061

00:47:10,892--> 00:47:13,572

You know, at one level, it's dazzling.

1062

00:47:13,596--> 00:47:15,548

It's the kind of experience that...

1063

00:47:15,572--> 00:47:18,068

I think it's not a jury should do it.

1064

00:47:18,092--> 00:47:20,574

I think everybody should just sit down

1065

00:47:20,574--> 00:47:23,948

and have a year of reading books and translation, just to

1066

00:47:23,972--> 00:47:26,251

experience that kind of variety.

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1067

00:47:26,275--> 00:47:31,428

We had 128 books from, I think, 33 or 38 languages.

1068

00:47:31,452--> 00:47:33,574

You know, and you really hear

1069

00:47:33,574--> 00:47:37,148

the world singing in your ears in a way that's not possible

1070

00:47:37,172--> 00:47:39,268

with just English stories,

1071

00:47:39,292--> 00:47:42,574

but you also see the areas where the lights are switched off.

1072

00:47:42,574--> 00:47:46,788

You know, you see the regions where there are fewer translations, or where

1073

00:47:46,812--> 00:47:49,588

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it's obviously a struggle

to find translations that are,

1074

00:47:49,612--> 00:47:53,588

you know, that have been

picked up by publishing.

1075

00:47:53,612--> 00:47:56,988

So I think, you know, everything

that we're seeing at this moment

1076

00:47:57,012--> 00:47:58,574

for all the translators

1077

00:47:58,574--> 00:48:01,418

are being celebrated

as they should.

1078

00:48:01,442--> 00:48:04,628

And I love it that it's the

individuality of translators

1079

00:48:04,652--> 00:48:06,908

that are being celebrated, the voice.

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1080

00:48:06,932--> 00:48:10,945

You know, that unmistakable
handwriting that everyone brings to it.

1081

00:48:10,970--> 00:48:16,868

But we also are looking at the geopolitics
of translation more and more, you know.

1082

00:48:16,892--> 00:48:20,468

And as AI comes up, I
just look at that, and I think

1083

00:48:20,492--> 00:48:24,788

you will never, you know,
understand what it is to have translators

1084

00:48:24,812--> 00:48:27,574

being part of the community
if you're not there yourself.

1085

00:48:27,574--> 00:48:31,388

I mean, Dan, you mentioned
Olga Tokarczuk earlier on,

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1086

00:48:31,412--> 00:48:34,588

and I was just thinking of that
story that Jennifer Croft told

1087

00:48:34,612--> 00:48:38,068

about it took her 10
years of tireless trying,

1088

00:48:38,092--> 00:48:39,588

you know, to get flights,

1089

00:48:39,612--> 00:48:42,351

to be seen
by an agent or a publisher.

1090

00:48:42,375--> 00:48:43,931

10 years, you know.

1091

00:48:43,955--> 00:48:46,178

And likewise, the
only reason that

1092

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00:48:46,202--> 00:48:49,388

someone like me is published
in France, where I know nobody,

1093

00:48:49,412--> 00:48:51,748

I know none of the
publishing establishment,

1094

00:48:51,772--> 00:48:53,233

is thanks to Benoit,

1095

00:48:53,257--> 00:48:56,828

who is my translator
and who did the agents

1096

00:48:56,852--> 00:48:59,574

or the editor's work
of introductions.

1097

00:48:59,574--> 00:49:03,268

You know, so I... I don't
see a replacement for that

1098

00:49:03,292--> 00:49:05,961

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in any kind of AI translation.

1099

00:49:05,985--> 00:49:07,988

You can't really take
the human act of it,

1100

00:49:08,012--> 00:49:10,574

either the voice or the

1101

00:49:10,574--> 00:49:13,988

impossible generosity
of the community, really.

1102

00:49:14,012--> 00:49:17,303

Um, you can't
remove those so easily.

1103

00:49:18,123--> 00:49:20,228

-Yeah, I mean, I think
that's a really good point.

1104

00:49:20,252--> 00:49:24,308

And... and the roles that
translators have, not just as,

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1105

00:49:24,332--> 00:49:25,674

you know, kind of...

1106

00:49:27,060--> 00:49:30,468

magicians of text, or, you know,

1107

00:49:30,492--> 00:49:34,428

people putting the building

blocks of one language

1108

00:49:34,452--> 00:49:36,548

into the building

blocks of another.

1109

00:49:36,572--> 00:49:40,788

But the... the kind of

advocacy work and the...

1110

00:49:40,812--> 00:49:44,498

uh, like, you know,

often tirelessly for years

1111

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00:49:44,522--> 00:49:46,668

working for something

they really believe in

1112

00:49:46,692--> 00:49:48,588

for no pay at that point

1113

00:49:48,612--> 00:49:51,574

is really...

1114

00:49:51,574--> 00:49:54,428

I guess something that, um...

1115

00:49:54,452--> 00:49:58,628

when... when when

the translator is left

1116

00:49:58,652--> 00:50:02,574

out of discussions

about a translated work,

1117

00:50:02,574--> 00:50:04,329

all of that...

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1118

00:50:04,353--> 00:50:06,828

all of that kind of
becomes invisible.

1119

00:50:06,852--> 00:50:08,410

And...

1120

00:50:09,199--> 00:50:12,828

different translators, you
know, have very different, uh...

1121

00:50:12,852--> 00:50:15,108

very different conditions
that they're working in.

1122

00:50:15,132--> 00:50:17,628

You know, I'm very lucky
as someone who translates

1123

00:50:17,652--> 00:50:20,257

from the languages
that I do that,

1124

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00:50:20,282--> 00:50:25,268

actually, the advocacy work that I
am required to do is relatively little

1125

00:50:25,292--> 00:50:27,498

because they're very

1126

00:50:27,522--> 00:50:33,108

strong and well-connected
networks of agents

1127

00:50:33,132--> 00:50:35,865

in the languages that
I work in and a lot of,

1128

00:50:35,890--> 00:50:37,068

you know,

1129

00:50:37,092--> 00:50:40,348

a lot of the work that I
do is producing samples

1130

00:50:40,372--> 00:50:42,428

which are then...

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then form the basis

1131

00:50:42,452--> 00:50:44,876

of an agent's marketing.

1132

00:50:45,574--> 00:50:47,878

Or not marketing, but you
know their... their, kind of,

1133

00:50:47,903--> 00:50:50,428

sales package to publishers.

1134

00:50:50,452--> 00:50:52,418

So, but, you know,

1135

00:50:52,442--> 00:50:54,229

someone working

1136

00:50:54,254--> 00:50:56,148

from a language where...

1137

00:50:56,172--> 00:51:00,068

where that kind of

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infrastructure doesn't exist,

1138

00:51:00,092--> 00:51:01,668

um...

1139

00:51:01,692--> 00:51:04,708

their labour in

1140

00:51:04,732--> 00:51:07,574

not only finding

1141

00:51:07,574--> 00:51:10,388

and, um...

1142

00:51:10,412--> 00:51:12,628

you know, kind of

identifying works

1143

00:51:12,652--> 00:51:16,308

that could work in another...

in another literary content,

1144

00:51:16,332--> 00:51:18,742

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in another kind of literary
and linguistic context,

1145

00:51:18,767--> 00:51:20,788

but also,

1146

00:51:20,812--> 00:51:25,548

you know, their sensitivity in
finding the right publishers and kind of

1147

00:51:25,572--> 00:51:28,900

going out there doing the
promoting, etcetera, etcetera,

1148

00:51:28,925--> 00:51:30,468

um...

1149

00:51:30,492--> 00:51:33,348

is absolutely invaluable,
and it all gets kind of lost

1150

00:51:33,372--> 00:51:38,574

if the... if the translatedness
of a text is kind of...

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1151

00:51:38,574--> 00:51:41,439

is overlooked

1152

00:51:41,463--> 00:51:43,574

when it's talked about.

1153

00:51:43,574--> 00:51:46,668

That said, you know, even when a

1154

00:51:46,692--> 00:51:50,266

translation is talked about

as being a translation,

1155

00:51:50,291--> 00:51:54,988

very few readers will will

have any awareness of that...

1156

00:51:55,012--> 00:51:57,108

of the layers, you know, of...

1157

00:51:57,132--> 00:51:59,629

of work that go into, um...

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1158

00:51:59,653--> 00:52:01,981

that go into a,

1159

00:52:02,006--> 00:52:05,948

you know, a book finding a
home in another language.

1160

00:52:05,972--> 00:52:07,469

And maybe that's
as it should be.

1161

00:52:07,494--> 00:52:10,077

You know the the reader should,

1162

00:52:10,102--> 00:52:13,788

in many ways be
allowed to come to a book

1163

00:52:13,812--> 00:52:17,948

simply in the spirit of enjoyment
and and curiosity and interest.

1164

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00:52:17,972--> 00:52:20,068

You know, there's no reason
that they need to come...

1165

00:52:20,092--> 00:52:22,574

they need to have an
understanding of all that

1166

00:52:22,574--> 00:52:25,948

background or baggage, or
whatever you want to call it.

1167

00:52:25,972--> 00:52:26,994

Um...

1168

00:52:27,019--> 00:52:28,588

But it is still,

1169

00:52:28,612--> 00:52:31,574

I think, an interesting...

1170

00:52:31,574--> 00:52:34,428

an interesting thing to
kind of to bear in mind

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1171

00:52:34,452--> 00:52:36,268

for those of us who are who are

1172

00:52:36,292--> 00:52:39,508

more connected,

I guess, to the...

1173

00:52:39,532--> 00:52:42,574

to the industry, or to what

translators do in one way or another.

1174

00:52:42,574--> 00:52:43,574

[cross-chatter]

1175

00:52:43,574--> 00:52:45,708

-Sorry, Garry, you go. You go.

1176

00:52:45,732--> 00:52:46,788

-You sure?

1177

00:52:46,812--> 00:52:50,628

I was just going to come

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in and say that when...

1178

00:52:50,652--> 00:52:55,548

As a bookseller, you know, I'm
there to share my enthusiasms with

1179

00:52:55,572--> 00:52:57,348

the public, with the reader.

1180

00:52:57,372--> 00:53:01,428

I'm not there to... to
force it upon them or

1181

00:53:01,452--> 00:53:04,308

to demand that they find the
same things interesting in a book

1182

00:53:04,332--> 00:53:05,908

as I do.

1183

00:53:05,932--> 00:53:08,574

So this is to say that

1184

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00:53:08,574--> 00:53:10,548

I will have, you know...

1185

00:53:10,572--> 00:53:13,028

I think you're absolutely
right, Nicky, and a

1186

00:53:13,052--> 00:53:16,668

reader does have a right
to... to just enjoy a book

1187

00:53:16,692--> 00:53:19,948

and to not go into the deep
layers of how it's come to be...

1188

00:53:19,972--> 00:53:21,028

to be in their...

1189

00:53:21,052--> 00:53:24,574

in their hands. I do think a
reader has a right to that, and that

1190

00:53:24,574--> 00:53:26,868

is a very important

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part of how I sell books.

1191

00:53:26,892--> 00:53:28,228

Um...

1192

00:53:28,252--> 00:53:32,508

But if a reader is then

interested in those layers,

1193

00:53:32,532--> 00:53:35,108

you know, I should be there

to answer questions about that

1194

00:53:35,132--> 00:53:37,308

and be able to enthuse about it

1195

00:53:37,332--> 00:53:39,228

and share that passion,

1196

00:53:39,252--> 00:53:40,585

that passion when asked.

1197

00:53:40,609--> 00:53:42,468

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That was all I

wanted to add, but

1198

00:53:42,492--> 00:53:43,574

go on, Dan.

1199

00:53:43,574--> 00:53:47,348

-Yes, I was just gonna move in a slightly different way. It's just that,

1200

00:53:47,372--> 00:53:49,948

it's for me, it's a natural

1201

00:53:49,972--> 00:53:53,188

curiosity at where my... where...

1202

00:53:53,212--> 00:53:56,428

where this thing that I've...

I'm reading comes from.

1203

00:53:56,452--> 00:53:59,148

Maybe I'm a historian

by kind of old...

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1204

00:53:59,172--> 00:54:01,068

back when I was doing undergrad,

1205

00:54:01,092--> 00:54:04,548

so kind of sources and where things
come from is very important to me.

1206

00:54:04,572--> 00:54:07,228

And I think it's very important
in the time that we live in,

1207

00:54:07,252--> 00:54:10,628

particularly with social media and about
kind of where your news comes from,

1208

00:54:10,652--> 00:54:12,748

where your texts come from,

1209

00:54:12,772--> 00:54:14,542

who's written them,
why they've written them,

1210

00:54:14,566--> 00:54:16,788

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what choices were
made to get there.

1211

00:54:16,812--> 00:54:18,588

It's quite an important
conversation,

1212

00:54:18,612--> 00:54:20,388

and I think most
people are quite...

1213

00:54:20,412--> 00:54:21,436

Well...

1214

00:54:21,461--> 00:54:23,988

Arguably, most people
should be more interested in it

1215

00:54:24,012--> 00:54:26,748

because a lot of the stuff that
they get is curated for them.

1216

00:54:26,772--> 00:54:28,828

They should be more

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interested in how it's curated,

1217

00:54:28,852--> 00:54:30,988

but even if they're not,

there's an element there that

1218

00:54:31,012--> 00:54:33,988

just kind of naturally, um...

1219

00:54:34,012--> 00:54:36,188

is there, but then

maybe there's a...

1220

00:54:36,212--> 00:54:39,428

Yeah, maybe that's too much

thinking, maybe there are just too many...

1221

00:54:39,452--> 00:54:40,788

too many thoughts in my head.

1222

00:54:40,812--> 00:54:42,748

Maybe.

1223

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00:54:42,772--> 00:54:45,865

Uh, there was another point I
was going to make, but I'll shut up.

1224

00:54:45,890--> 00:54:46,908

-Um...

1225

00:54:46,932--> 00:54:49,748

No, I think... I think
that's really valid, Dan.

1226

00:54:49,772--> 00:54:51,778

Sorry, Nila, did you
want to say something?

1227

00:54:51,803--> 00:54:53,988

-No, no, I just
wanted to say that

1228

00:54:54,012--> 00:54:57,948

something I came to late, you know,
and as a consequence of being a columnist,

1229

00:54:57,972--> 00:55:00,148

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I might not have done
it normally as a reader

1230

00:55:00,172--> 00:55:03,628

is to start reading a lot more
interviews with translators,

1231

00:55:03,652--> 00:55:05,188

which also started to become,

1232

00:55:05,212--> 00:55:07,070

you know, far more available

1233

00:55:07,095--> 00:55:09,348

maybe about 10 or 15 years ago.

1234

00:55:09,372--> 00:55:14,148

And I think that's something
I'd like to recommend to readers,

1235

00:55:14,172--> 00:55:16,188

booksellers, whoever, you know.

1236

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00:55:16,212--> 00:55:18,588

It's such a source of joy.

1237

00:55:18,612--> 00:55:20,628

And there was a line
from Edith Grossman.

1238

00:55:20,652--> 00:55:22,574

I hope I'm remembering it right.

1239

00:55:22,574--> 00:55:24,908

Translation permits us to

1240

00:55:24,932--> 00:55:28,574

savour the transformation of
the foreign into the familiar.

1241

00:55:28,574--> 00:55:30,828

I stopped at that and I said,

1242

00:55:30,852--> 00:55:32,231

"oh yes", you
know, "this is it."

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1243

00:55:32,255--> 00:55:34,588

This is what I've
been responding to

1244

00:55:34,612--> 00:55:37,051

without knowing that
I was responding to it.

1245

00:55:37,075--> 00:55:40,428

You know, it allows
you to go to a text or...

1246

00:55:40,452--> 00:55:43,148

Not just a culture,
but a language, or...

1247

00:55:43,172--> 00:55:47,628

you know, an entire world, a
universe that isn't your own,

1248

00:55:47,652--> 00:55:50,268

and it brings it back
home to you, you know.

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1249

00:55:50,292--> 00:55:54,877

So it is one of the most
beautiful of human skills.

1250

00:55:54,902--> 00:55:58,908

And I'm just so glad
that we're opening it up

1251

00:55:58,932--> 00:56:01,574

and thinking about
it in different ways.

1252

00:56:01,574--> 00:56:03,028

-I think there's...

1253

00:56:03,052--> 00:56:07,028

This kind of touches on a
question that I had about...

1254

00:56:07,052--> 00:56:09,465

about, like, translators,

1255

00:56:09,489--> 00:56:14,308

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to what extent you read, you seek
out translators talking about their...

1256

00:56:14,332--> 00:56:17,788

their work either
through translators notes

1257

00:56:17,812--> 00:56:19,268

or through interviews.

1258

00:56:19,292--> 00:56:21,588

But I was thinking specifically
about Sophie Hughes,

1259

00:56:21,612--> 00:56:22,828

who you mentioned earlier,

1260

00:56:22,852--> 00:56:26,574

who wrote a fantastic essay

1261

00:56:26,574--> 00:56:28,628

for the New York Times

1262

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00:56:28,652--> 00:56:30,908

a few years ago.

1263

00:56:30,932--> 00:56:32,574

Um...

1264

00:56:32,574--> 00:56:36,908

Where she basically took a...

1265

00:56:36,932--> 00:56:41,468

I think it was a short passage
from a Fernanda Melchor novel,

1266

00:56:41,492--> 00:56:43,574

and she

1267

00:56:43,574--> 00:56:46,388

broke down the process of

1268

00:56:46,412--> 00:56:49,228

going from, you know,
her original translation

1269

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00:56:49,252--> 00:56:52,028

to what she finally

ended up with,

1270

00:56:52,052--> 00:56:54,068

and all the kind of loops and...

1271

00:56:54,092--> 00:56:57,588

and kind of thought patterns

that she took to get there.

1272

00:56:57,612--> 00:57:01,574

And actually, Jen Calleja, who's

another wonderful translator, um...

1273

00:57:01,574--> 00:57:05,308

and writer, translated

from German recently.

1274

00:57:05,332--> 00:57:08,028

Um...

1275

00:57:08,052--> 00:57:11,108

It was just something that

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I saw on her social media,

1276

00:57:11,132--> 00:57:14,788

where she was talking

about a conversation

1277

00:57:14,812--> 00:57:17,276

that she and her editor

1278

00:57:17,301--> 00:57:19,588

had had, I think actually

it's on the Faber blog.

1279

00:57:19,612--> 00:57:22,574

So it's for a book

that she's just had out

1280

00:57:22,574--> 00:57:25,708

and it was a

conversation between her

1281

00:57:25,732--> 00:57:27,668

and the author and the editor,

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1282

00:57:27,692--> 00:57:29,788

and the way that

1283

00:57:29,812--> 00:57:32,988

they dealt with a particular...

1284

00:57:33,012--> 00:57:35,308

you know, particular

line, almost, that had

1285

00:57:35,332--> 00:57:38,708

really caused her problems

when she was working on it,

1286

00:57:38,732--> 00:57:42,348

and it was one of those things that,

as a translator, I can identify with this.

1287

00:57:42,372--> 00:57:46,138

You will wrestle with a particular

line and you think you finally got it.

1288

00:57:46,162--> 00:57:48,188

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And then the first thing
that the editor picks up

1289

00:57:48,212--> 00:57:49,508

is that one line,

1290

00:57:49,532--> 00:57:52,068

because there's just
something about it that,

1291

00:57:52,092--> 00:57:54,574

like, that you just can't...

1292

00:57:54,574--> 00:57:57,468

You know, it just sort
of slips away from you.

1293

00:57:57,492--> 00:57:58,668

Anyway...

1294

00:57:58,692--> 00:58:02,631

It's just, it's
wonderful to hear.

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1295

00:58:02,655--> 00:58:05,030

I mean, maybe, you
know, for me particularly

1296

00:58:05,054--> 00:58:07,428

as someone who thinks
about language all day,

1297

00:58:07,452--> 00:58:08,468

[laughs]

1298

00:58:08,492--> 00:58:10,028

but, like, yeah,

1299

00:58:10,052--> 00:58:12,388

it's just, it's really, um...

1300

00:58:12,412--> 00:58:14,628

It's... It's...

1301

00:58:14,652--> 00:58:19,388

It's fantastic to kind of see to... see
that insight into how language works,

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1302

00:58:19,412--> 00:58:22,268

and how narrative...

how narrative works.

1303

00:58:22,292--> 00:58:24,788

Oh, yes, somebody in the

in the chat has commented

1304

00:58:24,812--> 00:58:27,148

that Jen Calleja's

Fair is a great also.

1305

00:58:27,172--> 00:58:30,656

Second that, if anybody wants to read

about the experience of being a translator.

1306

00:58:30,680--> 00:58:31,930

We have got--

1307

00:58:31,954--> 00:58:32,954

[cross-chatter]

1308

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00:58:32,978--> 00:58:36,268

Sorry, sorry. We've just got...

We've got a minute before we go to...

1309

00:58:36,292--> 00:58:38,548

-Oh, have we?

-Yeah, I know it's gone very quickly.

1310

00:58:38,572--> 00:58:41,188

Before we go to comfort break.

1311

00:58:41,212--> 00:58:43,131

I just want to ask quickly...

1312

00:58:43,155--> 00:58:46,868

I mean, I've got literally about

10 more questions that I could ask,

1313

00:58:46,892--> 00:58:49,468

and some of the, like,

really exciting ones

1314

00:58:49,492--> 00:58:51,574

that I've not managed to get to.

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1315

00:58:51,574--> 00:58:55,588

But, does anybody
have anything that they

1316

00:58:55,612--> 00:58:59,028

want to say wrapping
up just before we go to

1317

00:58:59,052--> 00:59:01,425

comfort break and then
come back for a Q&A?

1318

00:59:02,313--> 00:59:03,313

Any of you...?

1319

00:59:03,338--> 00:59:05,588

-Very quick, just on following
that one is that we, uh...

1320

00:59:05,612--> 00:59:08,828

Danny Hahn, so he's been
a guest at our book club twice

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1321

00:59:08,852--> 00:59:12,065

and the second time was
to talk about his translation of

1322

00:59:12,089--> 00:59:15,610

Diamela Eltit's
fire... the fire book.

1323

00:59:15,635--> 00:59:18,308

I can't remember what it's called
now, and his diary that he wrote

1324

00:59:18,332--> 00:59:19,948

in conjunction
with Catching Fire.

1325

00:59:19,972--> 00:59:22,188

And that was, again, one of
the best book clubs we had

1326

00:59:22,213--> 00:59:24,028

because Danny is very
generous with his time,

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1327

00:59:24,052--> 00:59:27,006

very generous with
the art that he professes.

1328

00:59:27,031--> 00:59:28,987

Very different to some
of the other translators.

1329

00:59:29,012--> 00:59:31,548

But people should
look that up if they're...

1330

00:59:31,572--> 00:59:34,699

if they're also looking
for more information.

1331

00:59:34,724--> 00:59:37,508

-Yeah, and I just wanted to...

1332

00:59:37,532--> 00:59:39,028

to confirm that it's so...

1333

00:59:39,052--> 00:59:40,748

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For me as a bookseller,

1334

00:59:40,772--> 00:59:44,348

but also as somebody who
works in marketing for a publisher,

1335

00:59:44,372--> 00:59:48,548

it is so helpful to have that input
from a translator about their process,

1336

00:59:48,572--> 00:59:50,108

about the context for the book,

1337

00:59:50,132--> 00:59:51,978

why they they like it so much.

1338

00:59:52,003--> 00:59:55,050

It is very, very helpful.

1339

00:59:56,314--> 00:59:57,314

-Yeah.

1340

00:59:57,574--> 01:00:00,708

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-Yeah, I'm fine with going
straight to the questions.

1341

01:00:00,732--> 01:00:03,428

But I was suddenly thinking
of how many cultures have,

1342

01:00:03,452--> 01:00:06,058

you know, a tower of
Babel myth somewhere

1343

01:00:06,082--> 01:00:08,188

in their past, you know. A stage

1344

01:00:08,212--> 01:00:10,668

where you can't really
understand each other.

1345

01:00:10,692--> 01:00:12,748

You're all talking,
you're all speaking.

1346

01:00:12,772--> 01:00:15,210

You have things to share. You

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have things to communicate.

1347

01:00:15,235--> 01:00:17,708

And no way of
understanding each other.

1348

01:00:17,732--> 01:00:20,388

And usually, at that point,
something magical happens,

1349

01:00:20,412--> 01:00:23,148

you know, a little bird steps
in or something of the sort.

1350

01:00:23,173--> 01:00:26,268

And there you are. You
know, I can't imagine...

1351

01:00:26,292--> 01:00:29,948

I can actually imagine what a world
would be like without translation,

1352

01:00:29,972--> 01:00:31,388

and it would be dreadful.

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1353

01:00:31,412--> 01:00:33,668

You know, we would be
talking past each other.

1354

01:00:33,692--> 01:00:36,574

We wouldn't be able
to share what, uh...

1355

01:00:36,574--> 01:00:39,228

we love so much, and
we wouldn't be able to have

1356

01:00:39,252--> 01:00:41,977

heated arguments
over the rest of it.

1357

01:00:42,002--> 01:00:43,068

-Yes.

1358

01:00:43,913--> 01:00:45,508

Um, yes...

1359

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01:00:45,532--> 01:00:49,908

We will take a short
comfort break just for

1360

01:00:49,932--> 01:00:51,628

people in the audience as well.

1361

01:00:51,652--> 01:00:53,388

So join me again in...

1362

01:00:53,413--> 01:00:57,931

Or join us again in 5
minutes at 15:05 UK time,

1363

01:00:57,955--> 01:00:59,028

um...

1364

01:00:59,052--> 01:01:02,668

for questions, thank you.

1365

01:01:10,022--> 01:01:11,588

-You're on mute, Nicky.

1366

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01:01:11,612--> 01:01:14,348

-Uh, yes, yes, I am. Thank you.

1367

01:01:14,372--> 01:01:17,868

There's a couple of nice points
in the chat that I might raise,

1368

01:01:17,892--> 01:01:20,028

even though they're
not in the Q&A.

1369

01:01:20,052--> 01:01:23,388

I was sort of half looking at
the chat during our conversation,

1370

01:01:23,412--> 01:01:26,308

but trying not to get
too distracted by it.

1371

01:01:28,185--> 01:01:29,828

Um...

1372

01:01:31,410--> 01:01:35,308

So shall we start back?

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1373

01:01:35,332--> 01:01:38,788

I just wanted to...

1374

01:01:38,812--> 01:01:40,751

Um...

1375

01:01:40,775--> 01:01:44,028

I guess we can go

through the questions

1376

01:01:44,052--> 01:01:47,588

in the order that

they were asked.

1377

01:01:47,612--> 01:01:51,428

But before we do

that, I just wanted to

1378

01:01:51,452--> 01:01:55,708

mention a couple of

things that I saw in the Q&A.

1379

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01:01:55,732--> 01:01:58,228

Sorry, in the chat,

1380

01:01:58,252--> 01:02:00,508

which were...

1381

01:02:00,532--> 01:02:02,574

I just wanted to highlight them.

1382

01:02:02,574--> 01:02:05,428

I really think that

1383

01:02:05,452--> 01:02:09,548

Samantha Schnee's point about
the different traditions of editing.

1384

01:02:09,572--> 01:02:10,748

Um...

1385

01:02:10,772--> 01:02:13,268

She says, "I think the
different traditions of editing

1386

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01:02:13,292--> 01:02:15,467

which vary greatly

from country to country

1387

01:02:15,491--> 01:02:19,188

on a sliding scale of, let's say,

interventionist to laissez-faire

1388

01:02:19,212--> 01:02:22,708

also play an important role in what

translators from different languages do

1389

01:02:22,732--> 01:02:26,184

and which books end up getting

selected for publication in English."

1390

01:02:26,209--> 01:02:28,788

Um, some, some...

1391

01:02:28,812--> 01:02:32,708

Some literary cultures are very,

1392

01:02:32,732--> 01:02:36,255

you know, are kind of

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immediately adjacent to English

1393

01:02:36,280--> 01:02:38,268

language, literary culture,

1394

01:02:38,292--> 01:02:40,268

whatever, that...

1395

01:02:40,292--> 01:02:41,948

That's a very...

1396

01:02:41,972--> 01:02:45,628

Maybe I'm making assumptions in even saying
that English language literary culture,

1397

01:02:45,652--> 01:02:47,471

because obviously

there are lots of different

1398

01:02:47,496--> 01:02:49,710

literary cultures within English, but

1399

01:02:49,735--> 01:02:52,537

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there are certain ones that...

1400

01:02:52,562--> 01:02:56,574

The English language

publishing industry, perhaps.

1401

01:02:56,574--> 01:03:00,268

Those languages feel more, uh...

1402

01:03:00,292--> 01:03:03,908

That those

literatures feel easier,

1403

01:03:03,932--> 01:03:06,868

easier to translate in some

way, and I think that's...

1404

01:03:06,892--> 01:03:10,348

a really valuable

thing to raise.

1405

01:03:10,372--> 01:03:11,656

Um...

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1406

01:03:12,574--> 01:03:13,843

And...

1407

01:03:13,868--> 01:03:15,165

There's something else as well.

1408

01:03:15,189--> 01:03:17,588

I loved Ruth's

1409

01:03:17,612--> 01:03:19,828

analogy of engineers

and engineering,

1410

01:03:19,852--> 01:03:22,628

where you don't need to

know who designed the bridges

1411

01:03:22,652--> 01:03:24,588

that you use, but...

1412

01:03:24,612--> 01:03:28,388

and it would be interest-- but

it would be interesting to know,

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1413

01:03:28,412--> 01:03:31,588

but it doesn't mean that
you can't use the bridge and...

1414

01:03:31,612--> 01:03:33,574

Uh...

1415

01:03:33,574--> 01:03:34,574

You know...

1416

01:03:34,574--> 01:03:36,388

-That's quite close to
my experience there,

1417

01:03:36,412--> 01:03:38,668

because it's my day job, um...

1418

01:03:38,692--> 01:03:41,108

I think you could talk
about that for a long time,

1419

01:03:41,132--> 01:03:43,732

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because again, it's like, well,
you don't... you don't need to know,

1420

01:03:43,757--> 01:03:46,283

but you definitely need to
know that they've got the right...

1421

01:03:46,308--> 01:03:49,308

skill sets and they've got
the right calculations behind it,

1422

01:03:49,332--> 01:03:51,643

and that's all gone... but then
that goes through, kind of,

1423

01:03:51,668--> 01:03:53,748

bodies that are, kind of, um...

1424

01:03:53,772--> 01:03:57,574

kind of chartership stuff, which
is then aligned to often, kind of,

1425

01:03:57,574--> 01:03:59,445

certain parts of the world.

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1426

01:03:59,470--> 01:04:01,800

So there's a kind of
colonialization element there as well,

1427

01:04:01,825--> 01:04:04,345

but you definitely need to know
that the people who designed it,

1428

01:04:04,369--> 01:04:05,788

had designed it
in the right way.

1429

01:04:05,812--> 01:04:08,268

Um, and then the way
that you're kind of, again,

1430

01:04:08,292--> 01:04:10,588

people who translate fiction,

1431

01:04:10,612--> 01:04:13,478

you hope that they're going to be
translating it from a positive manner.

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1432

01:04:13,503--> 01:04:16,413

I think most people will be, they wouldn't have done it if they wouldn't.

1433

01:04:16,438--> 01:04:18,748

But knowing what choices and what's informed those choices

1434

01:04:18,772--> 01:04:21,574

is an important part of the process, I think.

1435

01:04:21,574--> 01:04:24,228

We could talk about that forever, that's a really good analogy.

1436

01:04:24,252--> 01:04:25,348

-Yeah.

1437

01:04:25,372--> 01:04:29,068

But actually, I mean, it relates to a question here in the Q&A

1438

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01:04:29,092--> 01:04:32,868

where somebody has asked, "are all published translations good translations

1439

01:04:32,892--> 01:04:34,628

and worthy of celebration?"

1440

01:04:34,652--> 01:04:37,574

I mean, I think we touched on that a little bit

1441

01:04:37,574--> 01:04:39,748

in our discussion of,

1442

01:04:39,772--> 01:04:43,574

you know, the... the kind of...

1443

01:04:43,574--> 01:04:47,668

the good old... the good old Russians and and Prousts and so on,

1444

01:04:47,692--> 01:04:49,574

you know, in these kind of

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1445

01:04:49,574--> 01:04:51,228

discussions of

1446

01:04:51,252--> 01:04:53,708

the fact that different

translations are different.

1447

01:04:53,732--> 01:04:54,828

Um...

1448

01:04:54,852--> 01:04:59,574

But no, I'm sure that there are some

translations that are published that are

1449

01:04:59,574--> 01:05:01,228

very bad.

1450

01:05:01,252--> 01:05:04,388

No, no offense to the people

who've translated them.

1451

01:05:04,412--> 01:05:06,148

They, uh, but you know,

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1452

01:05:06,172--> 01:05:07,683

and also there are...

1453

01:05:07,708--> 01:05:09,315

there are...

1454

01:05:10,222--> 01:05:14,108

There are translations that
maybe weren't very good

1455

01:05:14,132--> 01:05:16,428

when they were
turned into their editors,

1456

01:05:16,452--> 01:05:19,228

and that have had a lot of work
done on them by their editors

1457

01:05:19,252--> 01:05:22,303

to turn them into
books that are...

1458

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01:05:23,574--> 01:05:25,508

uh...

1459

01:05:26,975--> 01:05:29,948

marketable or that are,

1460

01:05:29,972--> 01:05:33,028

you know, that are

deemed to be, um...

1461

01:05:33,052--> 01:05:36,549

good enough to sell.

1462

01:05:36,574--> 01:05:38,268

Or...

1463

01:05:38,292--> 01:05:40,228

And...

1464

01:05:40,252--> 01:05:42,868

But this is, I mean, this

is the thing, you know,

1465

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01:05:42,892--> 01:05:45,605

like, there are... There are
lots of... there are lots of...

1466

01:05:45,630--> 01:05:47,574

There are...

1467

01:05:47,574--> 01:05:49,668

There is a whole...

1468

01:05:51,570--> 01:05:53,574

challenge around

1469

01:05:53,574--> 01:05:58,388

critiquing translation. There
was one very interesting, uh...

1470

01:05:58,412--> 01:06:03,574

Something recently that
I saw where a critic had

1471

01:06:03,574--> 01:06:07,228

taken a translator's
work to task

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1472

01:06:07,252--> 01:06:10,108

quite... quite specifically,

1473

01:06:10,132--> 01:06:13,708

and I thought with

quite well-informed,

1474

01:06:13,732--> 01:06:15,468

um...

1475

01:06:15,492--> 01:06:17,574

perspectives.

1476

01:06:17,574--> 01:06:19,428

Um...

1477

01:06:19,452--> 01:06:22,976

And I haven't read that translation.

1478

01:06:23,001--> 01:06:24,548

I'm not...

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1479

01:06:24,572--> 01:06:27,868

I'm not myself
qualified to to critique it,

1480

01:06:27,892--> 01:06:30,376

because it's from a
language that I don't

1481

01:06:30,401--> 01:06:33,308

speak, but I thought
that the criticism

1482

01:06:34,781--> 01:06:36,668

was really...

1483

01:06:36,692--> 01:06:39,068

interesting

1484

01:06:39,092--> 01:06:41,130

and made me think about...

1485

01:06:42,574--> 01:06:45,388

actually made me think a lot

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about some of my own choices,

1486

01:06:45,412--> 01:06:47,548

about, you know,

1487

01:06:47,572--> 01:06:50,868

my own perspective as a kind of
middle class white English woman.

1488

01:06:52,096--> 01:06:56,108

And the... And, you know, the
education that I have, and the...

1489

01:06:56,132--> 01:06:57,988

the background that I
come from, and so on,

1490

01:06:58,012--> 01:07:00,148

and some of the books
that I've translated,

1491

01:07:00,172--> 01:07:02,574

I would love to...

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1492

01:07:02,574--> 01:07:06,628

I would love to be... I would
love to have somebody who is...

1493

01:07:06,652--> 01:07:10,068

well-informed
about those things,

1494

01:07:10,092--> 01:07:11,588

critique my work.

1495

01:07:11,612--> 01:07:13,508

I would really,
really welcome it,

1496

01:07:13,532--> 01:07:17,668

because I, you know, it's
something that is very difficult to learn

1497

01:07:17,692--> 01:07:19,268

and become better

1498

01:07:19,292--> 01:07:22,236

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unless somebody

is able to hold up a...

1499

01:07:22,261--> 01:07:24,311

a mirror of some

kind to your work,

1500

01:07:24,335--> 01:07:27,574

and tell you, you know,

how you're doing it.

1501

01:07:27,574--> 01:07:29,988

And I guess that's

one thing that...

1502

01:07:30,012--> 01:07:32,574

that we haven't...

that we haven't really

1503

01:07:32,574--> 01:07:36,548

discussed, you know, the kind of,

like, the translator's own experience

1504

01:07:36,572--> 01:07:38,303

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of being critiqued

1505

01:07:38,328--> 01:07:40,588

and being talked about.

1506

01:07:40,612--> 01:07:42,788

Um, and it was

something that I...

1507

01:07:42,812--> 01:07:46,028

that I wanted to, kind of,

that I wanted to bring into it.

1508

01:07:46,052--> 01:07:47,628

I was thinking about...

1509

01:07:47,652--> 01:07:49,228

Um...

1510

01:07:50,574--> 01:07:53,908

A very famous

example recently of a

1511

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01:07:53,932--> 01:07:57,574

translation that has
drawn a lot of criticism...

1512

01:07:57,574--> 01:08:00,548

You know, but...

1513

01:08:00,572--> 01:08:05,108

but which I think personally
is a really brilliant translation,

1514

01:08:05,132--> 01:08:09,574

Deborah Smith's translation of
The Vegetarian, and the way that she

1515

01:08:09,574--> 01:08:13,628

framed the way that she made

1516

01:08:13,652--> 01:08:16,290

that book

1517

01:08:16,315--> 01:08:18,628

fantastically legible and

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1518

01:08:18,652--> 01:08:21,028

appealing to a UK audience.

1519

01:08:21,052--> 01:08:22,628

You know, she

translated it with...

1520

01:08:22,652--> 01:08:26,574

with a... with a UK

audience in mind, and her

1521

01:08:26,574--> 01:08:28,428

editor, Max Porter,

1522

01:08:28,452--> 01:08:29,908

worked closely with her

1523

01:08:29,932--> 01:08:33,108

and she also worked

closely with Han Kang to

1524

01:08:33,132--> 01:08:35,748

produce a text that I

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really felt, you know,

1525

01:08:35,772--> 01:08:38,108

kind of jumped out from the page

1526

01:08:38,132--> 01:08:39,548

and was very alive.

1527

01:08:39,572--> 01:08:40,788

Um...

1528

01:08:40,812--> 01:08:42,508

But then others,

1529

01:08:42,532--> 01:08:45,748

after it became very successful,

1530

01:08:45,772--> 01:08:48,296

had very different

1531

01:08:48,321--> 01:08:50,508

perspectives on it, and...

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1532

01:08:52,230--> 01:08:54,708

to some extent, that's
because of their expertise,

1533

01:08:54,732--> 01:08:56,668

but also, to some extent,

1534

01:08:56,692--> 01:09:00,108

maybe that's because of their
different understanding of what

1535

01:09:00,132--> 01:09:03,348

literature is doing and
what that book was doing.

1536

01:09:03,372--> 01:09:06,348

Um, and it becomes very...

1537

01:09:06,372--> 01:09:08,574

sticky, but also very

1538

01:09:08,574--> 01:09:11,028

kind of interesting to sort

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of delve into

1539

01:09:11,052--> 01:09:12,736

the different...

1540

01:09:14,574--> 01:09:19,028

I guess the ethics

of translation,

1541

01:09:19,052--> 01:09:21,628

the ethics of of criticism,

1542

01:09:21,652--> 01:09:23,308

and so on. Anyway...

1543

01:09:24,085--> 01:09:26,588

-I'd be fascinated... I don't know

1544

01:09:26,612--> 01:09:29,668

Deborah at all, and I'm sure

there are people on this call who do,

1545

01:09:29,692--> 01:09:31,634

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but I wonder if her motivations

1546

01:09:31,658--> 01:09:34,988

around setting up Tilted

Axis in the way that she did

1547

01:09:35,012--> 01:09:38,136

were born out of that criticism.

1548

01:09:38,161--> 01:09:41,508

Um, because it

was quite vitriolic

1549

01:09:41,532--> 01:09:43,388

and I think that it

was quite pointed,

1550

01:09:43,412--> 01:09:45,828

and I think some of it

possibly landed, um,

1551

01:09:45,852--> 01:09:49,108

because it was true, some

of it was probably not so true.

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1552

01:09:49,132--> 01:09:50,548

Um...

1553

01:09:50,572--> 01:09:52,828

But what she then went on to do

1554

01:09:52,852--> 01:09:55,471

with the prize money from
the... from the Booker Prize,

1555

01:09:55,495--> 01:09:58,828

was set up Tilted Axis, which
is kind of almost single-handedly

1556

01:09:58,852--> 01:10:01,805

trying to open up
kind of new languages,

1557

01:10:01,829--> 01:10:04,588

making sure that the kind
of the right... just opening,

1558

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01:10:04,612--> 01:10:07,150

like, the read intersection or
read international kind of thing.

1559

01:10:07,174--> 01:10:08,588

It's a, it's a...

1560

01:10:08,612--> 01:10:10,428

It's a great ethos.

1561

01:10:10,452--> 01:10:13,508

And again, she stepped
away from it, so if you've got

1562

01:10:13,532--> 01:10:16,588

people of colour running it.
It's just, it's a very, kind of...

1563

01:10:16,612--> 01:10:19,443

That came out of that
controversy, I think.

1564

01:10:19,468--> 01:10:21,885

I don't know, but that's

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what I kind of observe from it.

1565

01:10:21,910--> 01:10:25,948

-Yeah, so I mean, as

Charlotte notes in the chat,

1566

01:10:25,972--> 01:10:30,508

she had started

setting up before, but...

1567

01:10:30,532--> 01:10:34,468

but it was definitely,

you know, I mean...

1568

01:10:35,772--> 01:10:37,068

I think...

1569

01:10:37,092--> 01:10:38,308

Uh...

1570

01:10:39,574--> 01:10:43,428

The direction that it took

was probably connected to...

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1571

01:10:43,452--> 01:10:46,692

to the kind of
fallout from that.

1572

01:10:47,574--> 01:10:51,988

But, like, yeah, the fact that she
set it up at all, I think, is a really, um...

1573

01:10:52,012--> 01:10:54,063

Fantastic...

1574

01:10:54,549--> 01:10:56,549

-Definitely, definitely.

1575

01:10:56,574--> 01:10:57,938

-I mean, it's just
fantastic. Yeah.

1576

01:10:57,963--> 01:10:59,980

-The ethics as well,
looking at people in the chat,

1577

01:11:00,005--> 01:11:01,868

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the conversation around
minority languages,

1578

01:11:01,892--> 01:11:03,267

and particularly kind of--

1579

01:11:03,291--> 01:11:08,188

Like, we've done a few
books from Welsh and Gaelic

1580

01:11:08,212--> 01:11:11,574

in the book club, and
they're hard to find, because

1581

01:11:11,574--> 01:11:14,228

I think there's a resistance
to translate into English,

1582

01:11:14,252--> 01:11:17,548

because it's kind of flattening
the language and it's close...

1583

01:11:17,572--> 01:11:21,508

it's close to home, and I

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think the Kenyan writer as well,

1584

01:11:21,532--> 01:11:26,388

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o said, "I'm not gonna...

I'm not gonna write in English any more,

1585

01:11:26,412--> 01:11:27,748

I'm gonna write

1586

01:11:27,772--> 01:11:31,228

my home language", which obviously there's

a big kind of conversation in Africa,

1587

01:11:31,252--> 01:11:32,508

kind of across Africa,

1588

01:11:32,532--> 01:11:35,948

about whether that was the right thing

to do to try and decolonize it, or whether,

1589

01:11:35,972--> 01:11:40,574

as Nila says, the kind of English is

a kind of a bit of where people, kind of

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1590

01:11:40,574--> 01:11:44,388

come back to when there's
multiple, kind of, conflicting

1591

01:11:44,412--> 01:11:49,908

identities, um, rather than
this kind of oppressive, um...

1592

01:11:49,932--> 01:11:51,788

Like, uh...

1593

01:11:51,812--> 01:11:55,108

vehicle of the state,
which an old state building,

1594

01:11:55,132--> 01:11:58,388

which I'm sure definitely
was the case in the UK

1595

01:11:58,412--> 01:11:59,574

and other parts of the world.

1596

01:11:59,574--> 01:12:01,028

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-Yeah.

1597

01:12:01,052--> 01:12:05,748

We are moving very quickly

through our time again.

1598

01:12:05,772--> 01:12:09,483

So I'm just going to

go back to the Q&A's.

1599

01:12:10,289--> 01:12:13,868

Sue Morris says, "I wonder whether

some readers aren't fully aware

1600

01:12:13,892--> 01:12:16,550

that the books they purchase

are actually translations."

1601

01:12:16,574--> 01:12:17,908

Um...

1602

01:12:17,932--> 01:12:19,788

Yeah, what...

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1603

01:12:19,812--> 01:12:21,845

what's your thought?

1604

01:12:21,869--> 01:12:23,948

Gary, I guess you'd be a
good person to answer this.

1605

01:12:23,972--> 01:12:25,188

-Yeah, yeah, I think...

1606

01:12:25,212--> 01:12:28,308

I think the majority of
readers probably don't.

1607

01:12:28,332--> 01:12:30,628

But that's a diminishing number.

1608

01:12:30,652--> 01:12:32,588

An increasing number do.

1609

01:12:32,612--> 01:12:36,325

And I think there's... I mean, it's
too big a discussion to have now,

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1610

01:12:36,349--> 01:12:38,228

but whether that matters,

1611

01:12:38,252--> 01:12:40,036

whether it matters that every

1612

01:12:40,061--> 01:12:42,708

reader is aware that

every book they're buying...

1613

01:12:42,732--> 01:12:44,618

You know, if every

reader... for example,

1614

01:12:44,642--> 01:12:48,148

I think Norwegian Wood is a good

example that everybody who buys that,

1615

01:12:48,172--> 01:12:50,188

and we sell, you

know, in any bookshop,

1616

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01:12:50,212--> 01:12:52,588

you would sell hundreds of
that over the course of the year.

1617

01:12:52,612--> 01:12:54,574

Is it... Does it matter

1618

01:12:54,574--> 01:12:59,028

that probably most of the people
who are buying that book aren't aware

1619

01:12:59,052--> 01:13:00,868

that it's translated,

1620

01:13:00,892--> 01:13:04,428

or rather aren't thinking more
deeply about the translation.

1621

01:13:04,452--> 01:13:05,908

Um...

1622

01:13:05,932--> 01:13:07,971

I...

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1623

01:13:07,995--> 01:13:11,748

My feeling is that probably the majority of people who are picking up,

1624

01:13:11,772--> 01:13:14,148

you know, the translated works that they're seeing on,

1625

01:13:14,172--> 01:13:16,574

let's say, a table in Waterstones,

1626

01:13:16,574--> 01:13:20,574

probably are aware of it being translated in a kind of glancing

1627

01:13:20,574--> 01:13:22,428

way, um,

1628

01:13:22,452--> 01:13:23,655

but not deeply.

1629

01:13:23,679--> 01:13:27,268

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But then the number of people who are thinking about that is increasing.

1630

01:13:27,292--> 01:13:28,858

Um...

1631

01:13:28,882--> 01:13:33,348

But whether it will or should ever get to the point where everybody

1632

01:13:33,372--> 01:13:35,948

who's picking up Norwegian Wood is thinking, oh, this,

1633

01:13:35,972--> 01:13:39,298

you know, this is a work of translation, um...

1634

01:13:39,323--> 01:13:41,668

I think that's a whole other, like, question.

1635

01:13:41,692--> 01:13:44,308

And I mean, the

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bridge analogy is great,

1636

01:13:44,332--> 01:13:47,628

and I think, yeah, people
are picking up, let's say, again,

1637

01:13:47,652--> 01:13:49,792

Norwegian Wood and they're
becoming in translation--

1638

01:13:49,817--> 01:13:52,388

They're becoming interested
in translation, that is fantastic.

1639

01:13:52,412--> 01:13:54,428

Um, but I don't think...

1640

01:13:54,452--> 01:13:56,574

It doesn't bother me

1641

01:13:56,574--> 01:13:59,388

as either as a bookseller

1642

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01:13:59,412--> 01:14:01,628

or somebody who

would like to translate.

1643

01:14:01,652--> 01:14:04,308

It doesn't bother me that not

everybody who's picking up that book

1644

01:14:04,332--> 01:14:06,908

isn't thinking about it

in those... in those terms.

1645

01:14:07,893--> 01:14:09,108

-Funny, though.

1646

01:14:09,132--> 01:14:11,988

Norwegian Wood itself is

a translation.

1647

01:14:12,012--> 01:14:13,548

Like, it's a

translation of, kind of,

1648

01:14:13,572--> 01:14:16,348

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Japanese culture through
this American prism.

1649

01:14:16,372--> 01:14:19,068

So, you've got this kind of
translation on a translation

1650

01:14:19,092--> 01:14:21,068

and all that sort of good stuff.

1651

01:14:21,092--> 01:14:23,668

-Um...

1652

01:14:23,692--> 01:14:26,148

An anonymous attendee says,

1653

01:14:26,172--> 01:14:30,788

"very interesting point about the texture
and different styles of translations.

1654

01:14:30,812--> 01:14:34,628

Does this suggest or do you think
that translation should be considered..."

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1655

01:14:34,652--> 01:14:36,237

Um...

1656

01:14:36,262--> 01:14:39,268

"The quality of translations
should be considered in itself

1657

01:14:39,292--> 01:14:41,360

and not in relation to
the source language?"

1658

01:14:43,574--> 01:14:45,108

Um...

1659

01:14:45,132--> 01:14:49,228

What do you...? Do you have
a feeling about that, anybody?

1660

01:14:51,574--> 01:14:54,628

-Yes, with this debate, you
know, what I was thinking about

1661

01:14:54,652--> 01:14:57,068

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was the shift over time

1662

01:14:57,092--> 01:15:00,108

as star translators

come up in India

1663

01:15:00,132--> 01:15:02,196

and in the rest of the world.

1664

01:15:02,221--> 01:15:03,929

About 25 years ago,

1665

01:15:03,953--> 01:15:07,948

the point of translation...

This is a huge statement, but

1666

01:15:07,972--> 01:15:10,868

a lot of the translations

coming out in India

1667

01:15:10,892--> 01:15:13,385

focused on fidelity as

the big thing, you know,

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1668

01:15:13,409--> 01:15:17,574

the anxiety was, "are you
being faithful to the source text?"

1669

01:15:17,574--> 01:15:22,028

And very few people cared about
whether it was a flat translation

1670

01:15:22,052--> 01:15:24,316

or whether in that, you know,

1671

01:15:24,341--> 01:15:27,588

rather intricate voice
between translator and author.

1672

01:15:27,612--> 01:15:29,108

If they were out of step.

1673

01:15:29,132--> 01:15:32,285

You know, nobody was
commenting on the tone, the style,

1674

01:15:32,309--> 01:15:34,010

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and all of that so much.

1675

01:15:34,035--> 01:15:36,748

And something I've

started to wonder,

1676

01:15:36,772--> 01:15:40,308

partly because not just

of the last year of reading,

1677

01:15:40,332--> 01:15:43,348

but of the last five,

six years of reading

1678

01:15:43,372--> 01:15:45,868

intensely in translation

1679

01:15:45,892--> 01:15:47,388

is, uh...

1680

01:15:47,412--> 01:15:50,348

how far do you want

to go with the translator

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1681

01:15:50,372--> 01:15:53,103

becoming a hugely
creative partner?

1682

01:15:53,128--> 01:15:56,308

You know, doing everything
from not just translating the text

1683

01:15:56,332--> 01:16:00,308

to selecting stories for
a short story collection,

1684

01:16:00,332--> 01:16:03,428

or there's a lot of
invisible, you know, or

1685

01:16:03,452--> 01:16:05,508

changing the structure
of the book sometimes,

1686

01:16:05,532--> 01:16:08,574

you know, just chopping
big paragraphs into two.

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1687

01:16:08,574--> 01:16:12,748

Something as simple as that can actually make a huge difference.

1688

01:16:12,772--> 01:16:15,536

And I'm just going to leave these things at the table

1689

01:16:15,560--> 01:16:18,215

and not say that this is right or this is wrong.

1690

01:16:18,240--> 01:16:19,268

Um...

1691

01:16:19,292--> 01:16:23,811

One of the things I came away with after years of writing the

1692

01:16:23,835--> 01:16:28,574

FT column, which originally I think was called Reading the World,

1693

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01:16:28,574--> 01:16:31,148

it was shocking to me to realize

1694

01:16:31,172--> 01:16:34,948

I'd spend most of my life reading
a lot in translation in India, and

1695

01:16:34,972--> 01:16:37,268

after a while also
trying to read in,

1696

01:16:37,292--> 01:16:39,268

you know, the less
well-known languages.

1697

01:16:39,292--> 01:16:43,028

I apologize, by the way, for the
sound you're hearing from time to time.

1698

01:16:43,052--> 01:16:45,574

That is a cat trying
to break into the room.

1699

01:16:45,574--> 01:16:49,300

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She will not succeed, but she
is vociferous in her complaints.

1700

01:16:49,325--> 01:16:50,348

Um...

1701

01:16:50,372--> 01:16:54,788

But when I joined the FT,
I hadn't read that widely,

1702

01:16:54,812--> 01:16:56,908

you know, in languages outside.

1703

01:16:56,932--> 01:16:59,148

Latin America was
my comfort zone,

1704

01:16:59,172--> 01:17:02,574

some of Europe, a
little bit of Japan, and

1705

01:17:02,574--> 01:17:05,574

I think it was a challenge
to keep up with the reader.

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1706

01:17:05,574--> 01:17:09,028

And the one thing I'm taking
away from this conversation is

1707

01:17:09,052--> 01:17:13,108

a determination to keep
reading in translation.

1708

01:17:13,132--> 01:17:15,668

I don't think we're talking
about one thing at all

1709

01:17:15,692--> 01:17:19,574

when we talk about the translator's
art or translations themselves.

1710

01:17:19,574--> 01:17:22,428

There seem to be so
many different approaches.

1711

01:17:22,452--> 01:17:24,348

Some of those
are culture specific,

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1712

01:17:24,372--> 01:17:27,268

some of those are still
marked by colonialism.

1713

01:17:27,292--> 01:17:29,308

You know, as
everybody's noted out here.

1714

01:17:29,332--> 01:17:32,134

I think we're still working
our way through all of those.

1715

01:17:36,278--> 01:17:40,805

-And... I am going to answer
a question for myself,

1716

01:17:40,829--> 01:17:42,628

which is whether I think

1717

01:17:42,652--> 01:17:45,068

a lot of translators have agents

1718

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01:17:45,092--> 01:17:47,535

to sell the rights of
their chosen works

1719

01:17:47,574--> 01:17:49,908

these days.

1720

01:17:50,630--> 01:17:52,308

Is the author usually
happy with that?

1721

01:17:52,332--> 01:17:53,748

And how do you come by an agent?

1722

01:17:53,772--> 01:17:55,908

So I don't have an agent.

1723

01:17:55,932--> 01:17:58,574

It's not that I...

1724

01:17:58,574--> 01:18:00,508

I...

1725

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01:18:00,532--> 01:18:03,985

I work for authors' agents.

1726

01:18:04,009--> 01:18:06,028

So, um...

1727

01:18:06,052--> 01:18:11,670

Authors in Sweden, Norway have

1728

01:18:11,695--> 01:18:14,868

agents, either

independent agents

1729

01:18:14,892--> 01:18:18,574

or foreign rights departments of..

1730

01:18:18,574--> 01:18:20,588

of their publishers

1731

01:18:20,612--> 01:18:22,908

that sell the rights

to their books,

1732

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01:18:22,932--> 01:18:24,588

the translation

rights to their books,

1733

01:18:24,612--> 01:18:26,388

in other-- to other countries.

1734

01:18:26,412--> 01:18:30,028

And because I work into English,

1735

01:18:30,052--> 01:18:32,828

and because most of the

international publishing community

1736

01:18:32,852--> 01:18:34,336

can read English,

1737

01:18:34,361--> 01:18:39,268

they produce a... they

ask... they commission me

1738

01:18:39,292--> 01:18:42,550

to produce a sample,

which is then used, um...

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1739

01:18:42,574--> 01:18:45,068

But...

1740

01:18:45,092--> 01:18:47,308

some...

1741

01:18:47,332--> 01:18:49,531

some translators do have agents.

1742

01:18:49,555--> 01:18:53,948

Certainly for certain languages

1743

01:18:53,972--> 01:18:57,348

where there's been... there's a
lot of money involved these days,

1744

01:18:57,372--> 01:18:59,531

like from Japanese and Korean,

1745

01:18:59,555--> 01:19:03,708

a lot or several of those
translators have agents.

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1746

01:19:03,732--> 01:19:05,228

Um...

1747

01:19:05,252--> 01:19:09,708

But their...

1748

01:19:10,831--> 01:19:11,908

Mm...

1749

01:19:13,574--> 01:19:15,908

An author-- An agent...

1750

01:19:15,932--> 01:19:18,028

An author would always be

1751

01:19:18,052--> 01:19:20,108

involved in...

1752

01:19:20,132--> 01:19:21,628

Mm...

1753

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01:19:21,652--> 01:19:24,574

Just trying to think

how to put this.

1754

01:19:24,574--> 01:19:26,268

An author's...

1755

01:19:28,692--> 01:19:31,574

I... I don't think there

are any cases in which

1756

01:19:31,574--> 01:19:36,028

a translator would be

appointed to an author's...

1757

01:19:36,052--> 01:19:39,548

a translation of an author's

book against their wishes.

1758

01:19:39,572--> 01:19:40,743

Um...

1759

01:19:40,768--> 01:19:43,468

So, um...

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1760

01:19:43,492--> 01:19:46,965

Yeah, I'm not sure if that... That's not quite what you were asking, I don't think.

1761

01:19:46,989--> 01:19:48,550

But that's... Anyway.

1762

01:19:48,574--> 01:19:50,788

Um...

1763

01:19:50,812--> 01:19:55,948

I think we've kind of answered the question about translators.

1764

01:19:55,972--> 01:19:57,708

There was a question about translators notes

1765

01:19:57,732--> 01:20:00,388

and author's notes and paratextual texts. I think

1766

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01:20:00,412--> 01:20:02,348

we've kind of covered that.

1767

01:20:02,372--> 01:20:05,068

Um, there's a question

1768

01:20:05,092--> 01:20:09,468

that we can take

quickly before we

1769

01:20:09,492--> 01:20:11,436

finish about, um...

1770

01:20:12,750--> 01:20:16,508

about the kind of the

percentage of books,

1771

01:20:16,532--> 01:20:19,108

I guess, that are

translated into...

1772

01:20:19,132--> 01:20:21,428

into English versus

in other countries.

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1773

01:20:21,452--> 01:20:23,308

So the...

1774

01:20:23,332--> 01:20:25,548

the questioner says,

"in my country, Spain,

1775

01:20:25,572--> 01:20:29,574

around 28% are translated

books from other languages.

1776

01:20:29,574--> 01:20:32,230

In the UK, the

translation is a lot lower,

1777

01:20:32,255--> 01:20:33,871

or the percentage

is a lot lower, rather.

1778

01:20:33,896--> 01:20:35,988

Is it the case of educating

the English reader

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1779

01:20:36,012--> 01:20:38,628

to be more open-minded to
other languages and cultures?

1780

01:20:38,652--> 01:20:42,348

Given that the UK is
very multilingual country,

1781

01:20:42,372--> 01:20:44,588

it seems ironic that
readers are less interested

1782

01:20:44,612--> 01:20:46,574

in reading translated novels."

1783

01:20:46,574--> 01:20:47,588

Um...

1784

01:20:47,612--> 01:20:49,148

I mean, I think
that is interesting.

1785

01:20:49,172--> 01:20:50,548

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I would be interested, Beatrice,

1786

01:20:50,572--> 01:20:53,308

to know what percentage of books

1787

01:20:53,332--> 01:20:57,428

translated in Spain are

translated from English

1788

01:20:57,452--> 01:20:59,668

or from other languages,

because certainly

1789

01:20:59,692--> 01:21:02,574

in a lot of the

1790

01:21:02,574--> 01:21:04,588

places that I know,

1791

01:21:04,612--> 01:21:06,963

where I know about the industry,

1792

01:21:06,988--> 01:21:10,348

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a very high percentage of
the books that are translated

1793

01:21:10,372--> 01:21:14,748

into the local language are translated
from English because of the dominance,

1794

01:21:14,772--> 01:21:17,588

the kind of imbalance, I guess,

1795

01:21:17,612--> 01:21:19,868

of English language,

1796

01:21:19,892--> 01:21:21,938

of the English language
publishing world over

1797

01:21:21,962--> 01:21:25,628

over other national...

1798

01:21:25,652--> 01:21:29,736

over other kind of
linguistic contexts

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1799

01:21:29,761--> 01:21:31,068

in publishing.

1800

01:21:31,092--> 01:21:32,908

But that said,

1801

01:21:32,932--> 01:21:34,630

yes, I mean...

1802

01:21:36,563--> 01:21:38,268

I really would love to see

1803

01:21:38,292--> 01:21:40,628

more English readers

1804

01:21:40,652--> 01:21:42,508

reading in other languages.

1805

01:21:42,532--> 01:21:44,588

And I... I think that,

1806

01:21:44,612--> 01:21:49,616

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you know, initiatives like
the International Booker Prize

1807

01:21:49,641--> 01:21:52,468

and hopefully,
you know, a kind of,

1808

01:21:52,492--> 01:21:55,788

younger people reading
more and more in translation,

1809

01:21:55,812--> 01:21:59,896

people not being shamed
for, you know, reading...

1810

01:21:59,921--> 01:22:03,348

reading manga, for
instance, you know, where...

1811

01:22:03,372--> 01:22:07,188

There's like hundreds of
thousands of young people in the UK

1812

01:22:07,212--> 01:22:11,110

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reading manga and

loving it and then...

1813

01:22:11,135--> 01:22:15,428

that not being seen as less

than reading kind of, like,

1814

01:22:15,452--> 01:22:17,468

more traditionally

literary books,

1815

01:22:17,492--> 01:22:19,948

because they are engaging

with another culture

1816

01:22:19,972--> 01:22:24,788

and engaging with a book

that has been translated from...

1817

01:22:24,812--> 01:22:27,548

from Japanese or, you

know, another language.

1818

01:22:27,572--> 01:22:30,251

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I don't know if
anybody else has a

1819

01:22:30,275--> 01:22:32,136

perspective on that?

1820

01:22:33,125--> 01:22:36,788

-I... I would like to come
in with 2 closing points.

1821

01:22:36,812--> 01:22:40,148

One is, I don't know whether
there's any publishers listening in,

1822

01:22:40,172--> 01:22:42,628

but this is just a
plea to publishers

1823

01:22:42,652--> 01:22:45,549

to put translators on
the covers of novels.

1824

01:22:45,574--> 01:22:47,228

I went through this, you know,

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1825

01:22:47,252--> 01:22:50,668

when some of my books, again,
were translated into different languages.

1826

01:22:50,692--> 01:22:53,468

I was startled to find that
there was a little bit of pushback,

1827

01:22:53,492--> 01:22:55,148

a little bit of
resistance to that,

1828

01:22:55,172--> 01:22:56,574

I presume because,

1829

01:22:56,574--> 01:23:00,065

uh, you know, people feel that
the jacket would be too crowded

1830

01:23:00,089--> 01:23:02,791

or that the author must
be given dominance,

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1831

01:23:02,815--> 01:23:04,628

and I don't agree
with that at all.

1832

01:23:04,652--> 01:23:07,868

I feel it's so important
to have books out there,

1833

01:23:07,892--> 01:23:10,005

you know, with the
translator's name out there,

1834

01:23:10,029--> 01:23:14,140

to make that a normal
part of the practice.

1835

01:23:14,165--> 01:23:17,868

And the other part of it is to
say it's been wonderful to see this

1836

01:23:17,892--> 01:23:20,028

repeated across
regions and countries.

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1837

01:23:20,052--> 01:23:22,388

And perhaps Gary

will back me up on

1838

01:23:22,412--> 01:23:24,574

what he's seen in book selling.

1839

01:23:24,574--> 01:23:28,428

But younger

readers are agnostic

1840

01:23:28,452--> 01:23:29,868

where this is concerned.

1841

01:23:29,892--> 01:23:32,308

If they like a good book,

whatever genre it is,

1842

01:23:32,332--> 01:23:35,068

whatever language it

was originally written in,

1843

01:23:35,092--> 01:23:37,228

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they have far less

in the way of barriers

1844

01:23:37,252--> 01:23:39,287

to reading and translation.

1845

01:23:39,312--> 01:23:41,028

And I'm astonished to see that,

1846

01:23:41,052--> 01:23:43,348

you know, how often that repeats across

1847

01:23:43,372--> 01:23:45,268

different reading cultures.

1848

01:23:45,292--> 01:23:46,573

It just seems to be a thing.

1849

01:23:46,597--> 01:23:49,308

If you're under 30, you have

less in the way of resistance,

1850

01:23:49,332--> 01:23:51,063

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and that's just wonderful.

1851

01:23:51,823--> 01:23:53,388

-Yeah, I think that's true.

1852

01:23:53,412--> 01:23:56,628

I mean, we do see more and more young people reading translations

1853

01:23:56,652--> 01:24:00,268

and having less... less

fear of it, but also willingly...

1854

01:24:00,292--> 01:24:03,868

willing to actively engage... engage with it.

1855

01:24:03,892--> 01:24:05,318

Um...

1856

01:24:05,342--> 01:24:08,428

So, to return to

Beatrice's point,

1857

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01:24:08,452--> 01:24:10,948

I don't think necessarily

it's a case of...

1858

01:24:10,972--> 01:24:14,268

of educating the

reader here, but

1859

01:24:14,292--> 01:24:16,868

making sure that we are

putting the books in front of them.

1860

01:24:16,892--> 01:24:19,308

I'm speaking as a

bookseller primarily now,

1861

01:24:19,332--> 01:24:23,030

but making sure that we put

the books there so that they know

1862

01:24:23,054--> 01:24:24,348

that they are there.

1863

01:24:24,372--> 01:24:25,372

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Um...

1864

01:24:25,396--> 01:24:30,468

Rather than trying
to teach the reader.

1865

01:24:30,492--> 01:24:32,308

Um...

1866

01:24:32,332--> 01:24:34,868

You know, again,
I don't view my role

1867

01:24:34,892--> 01:24:38,468

as a bookseller to be
a kind of teaching role.

1868

01:24:38,492--> 01:24:40,508

You know, I'm here to put

1869

01:24:40,532--> 01:24:42,468

good books in front of people

1870

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01:24:42,492--> 01:24:44,510

and I want them to read

as widely as possible.

1871

01:24:44,535--> 01:24:45,545

Um...

1872

01:24:45,569--> 01:24:49,574

And I do think, when it

comes to younger readers,

1873

01:24:49,574--> 01:24:51,188

they are doing that,

1874

01:24:51,212--> 01:24:54,255

and they do get

really excited about

1875

01:24:54,279--> 01:24:55,708

the International Booker.

1876

01:24:55,732--> 01:24:57,788

So... So initiatives

like that, I think,

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1877

01:24:57,812--> 01:25:01,388

can really push the...

push the debate forward and

1878

01:25:01,412--> 01:25:03,068

push the number of works

1879

01:25:03,092--> 01:25:05,491

that we're seeing

in translation

1880

01:25:05,516--> 01:25:06,828

higher as well.

1881

01:25:06,852--> 01:25:08,574

Um...

1882

01:25:08,574--> 01:25:11,108

I'm... I'm just gonna

cut you off there, Gary,

1883

01:25:11,132--> 01:25:13,788

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because I think we need to

1884

01:25:13,812--> 01:25:15,231

finish the conversation here.

1885

01:25:15,255--> 01:25:17,508

But I just want to

1886

01:25:17,532--> 01:25:20,108

say a massive thank

you to all three of you,

1887

01:25:20,132--> 01:25:23,574

Nilanjana S Roy, Gary

Perry, and Dan Venn,

1888

01:25:23,574--> 01:25:24,691

for today's event.

1889

01:25:24,715--> 01:25:27,668

And thank you all in the

audience for joining us today.

1890

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01:25:27,692--> 01:25:31,548

Thank you to Ambre Morvan
for moderating today's event.

1891

01:25:31,572--> 01:25:33,548

If you've enjoyed this event

1892

01:25:33,572--> 01:25:36,228

and aren't yet a member
of the Society of Authors,

1893

01:25:36,252--> 01:25:40,574

please consider joining with
our special #SoAatHome offer

1894

01:25:40,574--> 01:25:43,228

and get 20% off for the
first year of membership.

1895

01:25:43,252--> 01:25:48,404

Use the code SOAATHOME20.

1896

01:25:49,127--> 01:25:53,028

The SoA's next #SoAatHome

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event takes place tomorrow evening

1897

01:25:53,052--> 01:25:54,841

with the SoA in Scotland AGM.

1898

01:25:54,865--> 01:25:56,268

For more info, head to

1899

01:25:56,292--> 01:25:58,828

societyofauthors.org/events

1900

01:25:58,852--> 01:26:01,574

to book or check out

our events programme.

1901

01:26:01,574--> 01:26:03,618

A short, quick reminder.

1902

01:26:03,642--> 01:26:07,268

This #SoAatHome

event is free for all,

1903

01:26:07,292--> 01:26:09,668

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but if you can afford to
please consider donating

1904

01:26:09,692--> 01:26:11,628

to our Society of
Authors Access Fund,

1905

01:26:11,652--> 01:26:15,148

where we suggest a
minimum donation of £5.

1906

01:26:15,172--> 01:26:16,574

You can also

1907

01:26:16,574--> 01:26:18,762

help the Society of
Authors Access Fund

1908

01:26:18,786--> 01:26:21,868

by making a purchase
from our virtual bookstore

1909

01:26:21,892--> 01:26:23,348

on Bookshop.org,

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1910

01:26:23,372--> 01:26:26,348

where you can
find books by writers

1911

01:26:26,372--> 01:26:29,628

taking part in the SoA's
events programme.

1912

01:26:29,652--> 01:26:32,308

Another big thank you to

1913

01:26:32,332--> 01:26:36,028

Nilanjana S Roy, Gary
Perry, and Dan Venn,

1914

01:26:36,052--> 01:26:38,148

and to all of you who've
joined us for today's event.

1915

01:26:38,172--> 01:26:39,628

And let's continue
this conversation

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1916

01:26:39,652--> 01:26:42,574

on social media with
the festival hashtag,

1917

01:26:42,574--> 01:26:46,574

#SoAatHome.

1918

01:26:46,574--> 01:26:50,068

-Thank you so much, Nicola, and
such a pleasure to hear you both.

1919

01:26:50,092--> 01:26:52,498

-Thank you. It's
really fantastic.

1920

01:26:52,522--> 01:26:54,588

-It's been an absolute
pleasure. Thank you so much.

1921

01:26:55,032--> 01:26:57,060

-Thank you very much.