

CALL FOR PAPERS

Life Writing in Translation Conference

King's College London | Centre for Life-Writing Research | 27 May 2020

It's more that when it comes to writing and reading translations the question of what is wholly normal or truly plausible, of what was really said or written, gets suspended, slightly. The translator asks me to agree to its suspension. To suspend, or to suspend even further, my disbelief. /.../ Which is to say: before we're even in the position to critique or worry over the decisions made by the translator, some provisional agreement has already been made. We have accepted the book in English. We have accepted that the book is now written in what appears to be English.
(Kate Briggs, *This Little Art*)

The **Centre for Life-Writing Research** is a pioneering group producing some of the most innovative work in the field. Established in 2007, and now part of the Arts & Humanities Research Institute, it enables experts and students to share, research and exchange ideas with a wider audience.

We work on all sorts of topics and periods covering a wide range of genres – biography, autobiography, autofiction, diaries and letters, memoirs, digital life writing including social media, blogs, audio and video, the visual arts (especially portraiture), poetry, and medical narratives. What connects us is an interest in the theory, history and practice of life writing.

Conference language: English

Suggested formats:

- **Individual paper** (15 minutes slot, abstract max. 300 words)
- **Dialogue/Interview** (30 minutes slot, 2 participants, abstract max. 300 words)
- **Panel** (60 minutes slot, 3 participants including chair, abstract max. 600 words)
- **Round Table** (45 minutes slot, 3/4 participants, abstract max. 600 words)
- **Creative/Reflective Submission** (15 minutes slot, fiction and non-fiction, proposal max. 300 words)

Deadline for proposals:

23 December 2019

Notification of acceptance:

27 January 2020

Please send your proposals via email to pia.prezelj@kcl.ac.uk

As a one-day conference, Life Writing in Translation proposes to address such topics as:

- **Stylistic approaches to translating life writing: using style to translate mind, foregrounding, ambiguous translation, belle infidèle, the implied translator**

A reader of translation will receive a sort of split message coming from two different addressers, both original although in two different senses: one originating from the author which is elaborated and mediated by the translator, and one (the language of the translation itself) originating directly from the translator. (Schiavi 1996)

- **Translating as re-writing: reconstructing the author's image and lived experience, the translator's impact, re-translation**

In the case of translated autobiography, subtle variations of style may give rise to significant shifts in point of view that constructs a different persona of the autobiographer. (Xu Yun 2017)

- **Cross-cultural translation of life writing: translator as the producer of relations – is the I international?**

*We receive these books newly made by the hands of translators, and the small contracts that those hands make, between translator and writer; reader and translator; language and language, culture and culture, experience and experience are, as Edith Grossman puts it, as vital to our continued reading and writing, to the vitality of our language, our cultures and experiences as the books themselves. (Kate Briggs, *This Little Art*)*

- **Becoming one: the translator's melding with the author and its curious consequences**

*Like the ghostwriter, the translator must slip on a second skin. Sometimes this transition is gentle, unobtrusive, without violence. But sometimes the settling in is abrupt, loud, and even disagreeable. For me, "plunge deep" tactics that go beyond the mechanics of translation help: coaxing out references to reconstruct the author's cultural touchstones (books, film, music); reading passages aloud, first in the original and then in translation, until hoarseness sets in; animating the author's story through my senses, using my nose, my ears, my eyes, and my fingers; devouring every clue to imprint the range of the author's voice (humor; anger; grief; detachment) on my translation. (Lara Vergnaud, *The Paris Review*)*

- **The translator-reader contract: the role of the 'active' reader**

*I think of Renee Gladman, poet, novelist and translator, asking her interviewer in an interview: "When you're reading translations, don't you sometimes feel the racing heartbeat of the translator trying to get shit right?" /.../ And the question is: Well, do you? Do I? Reading translations, is this the kind heat that you – or indeed I – want to feel? Or no, not really, not at all? (Kate Briggs, *This Little Art*)*

- **Publishing perspectives: how publishers and booksellers tackle life writing in translation – the 'three percent problem'**

We welcome academics, translators, poets, writers, booksellers and publishers and invite proposals for individual papers, dialogues/interviews, panels, round tables and creative or reflective submissions.