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Article abstract

Using the poetry anthology *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for Those Seeking Refuge* (Five Leaves Publications, 2015) and Journeys in Translation as case studies, this paper illustrates how literary translation can work as *a form of recreation* and as *social and pedagogical activism*. Over the decades, many poetry anthologies focusing on migration have been published around the world. What is new about *Over Land, Over Sea* is that, unlike similar anthologies, it has been followed by Journeys in Translation, an ongoing, volunteer-driven translation initiative that can be replicated in other contexts. The initiative brings together people from many different countries and backgrounds who are translating the anthology into other languages.

Literary Translation as a Form of Social and Pedagogical Activism

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Abstract
Using the poetry anthology *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for Those Seeking Refuge* (Five Leaves Publications, 2015) and Journeys in Translation as case studies, this paper illustrates how literary translation can work as *a form of recreation* and as *social and pedagogical activism*. Over the decades, many poetry anthologies focusing on migration have been published around the world. What is new about *Over Land, Over Sea* is that, unlike similar anthologies, it has been followed by Journeys in Translation, an ongoing, volunteer-driven translation initiative that can be replicated in other contexts. The initiative brings together people from many different countries and backgrounds who are translating the anthology into other languages.
Keywords: poetry, literary translation, social activism, pedagogical activism, migration

Résumé
En utilisant l'anthologie de poésie *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for those Seeking Refuge* [*Sur terre, sur mer : poèmes pour ceux qui cherchent refuge*] (Five Leaves Publications, 2015) et Journeys in Translation [Voyages en traductions] comme études de cas, cet article illustre comment la traduction littéraire peut servir à la fois de *loisir* et d'*activisme social et pédagogique*. Au fil des décennies, de nombreuses anthologies de poésie portant sur la migration ont été publiées dans le monde. La nouveauté d'*Over Land, Over Sea* réside dans le fait que, contrairement à des anthologies similaires, il a été suivi par Journeys in Translation, une initiative de traduction continue dirigée par des bénévoles qui peut être reproduite dans différents contextes. L'initiative rassemble des

personnes de nombreux pays et horizons différents qui traduisent l'anthologie dans d'autres langues.
Mots-clés: poésie, traduction littéraire, activisme social, activisme pédagogique, migration

Introduction

To illustrate how poetry and translation can work as forms of recreation and as social and pedagogical activism, we offer as case studies the poetry anthology *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for Those Seeking Refuge* (Five Leaves Publications, 2015) and Journeys in Translation, an international, volunteer-driven project that encourages the translation of poems from the anthology into other languages. Edited by Kathleen Bell, Siobhan Logan, and Emma Lee, *Over Land, Over Sea* came about because poets in the United Kingdom wanted to intervene in and reframe dominant, mainstream discourses on migration that were taking place in Europe and, at the same time, raise funds for groups that support people on the move (migrants) and those seeking refuge (refugees).

Over the years, many poetry anthologies on migration have been published in countries around the world. In the UK, literary projects initiated in response to Europe's so-called migration crisis include *Refugees Welcome: Poems in a Time of Crisis* (Eyewear Publishing, 2015), edited by Oliver Jones, and Marie Lightman's *Writers for Calais Refugees* blog, set up on 30 August 2015 to raise awareness on the plight of those seeking refuge (Lee, 2018, p. 86). What is new about *Over Land, Over Sea* is that it was followed by Journeys in Translation, an ongoing project that builds on the aims and objectives of the anthology by hosting formal and informal workshops and discussions on poetry, migration, and translation.

The East Midlands region of the United Kingdom, where *Over Land, Over Sea* and Journeys in Translation emerged, has some of the most ethnically diverse towns and cities in the UK, all shaped by overlapping histories of migration. Researchers have found that people who live in ethnically and culturally diverse places tend to be more tolerant than those who live in ones that are homogeneous. For example, Duru *et al.* looked into the attitudes towards diversity of British nationals and Turkish and Romanian migrants living in the UK. The researchers found that "having strong diverse networks, sense of belonging in the neighbourhood, city as well as the region

contributes to positive attitudes towards diversity" (2016, p. 678). Furthermore,

> being a member of an association oriented towards other countries or cultures plays an important role in a positive perception of the contribution of other cultures to the society. The importance of being *engaged* within a culturally diverse network is supported by the qualitative findings. This may explain why belonging to a region (strongly correlated with belonging to a city) is statistically significant as it would embody people's close network and create a sense of cosmopolitan belonging. (*ibid.*, p. 689; italics in original)

These findings are consistent with what we have found through Journeys in Translation where, at a community level, the people (refugees and migrants) who some mainstream politicians and influential sections of the media frame as threatening and undesirable are seen not as problems but as someone's classmate, friend, relative, or neighbour (Hacsek, 2022, n.p.). Poetry, translation, and events such as those that take place as part of Journeys in Translation create space in which the importance of these types of individual, familial, and community relations are foregrounded. This focus can help individuals and communities resist the turn in mainstream political discourses in the UK where politicians are putting in place measures—like the much-criticized deal between the UK and Rwanda—through which the UK seeks to shirk and pass on its refugee protection obligations to other countries.

Notwithstanding the ambivalence, mixed messages, and, in some cases, hostility that some politicians express towards linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity, at a national level, the country's diversity can be seen in how English, the country's *de facto* language spoken by 98% of the population, cohabits with a number of minority languages. These include Scots and Welsh, spoken by approximately 2.6% and 1.7% of the population, respectively, and languages like Polish (1% of the population), Punjabi (0.5%), Urdu (0.5%), Bengali (0.4%), Gujarati (0.4%), and Arabic (0.3%) (Office for National Statistics, 2013, n.p.), spoken by people who have settled in the UK. In Leicester, where the idea of both projects originated, it is estimated that between 89 and 130 languages and dialects are spoken (Anon., 2021, n.p.). Leicester is also the first plural city in the UK in that no one ethnic group forms more than 51% of the city's population (Anon., 2012, n.p.). It

is also the first city in which the majority of residents identify as non-white British (Patel, 2021, n.p.).

Journeys in Translation taps into the linguistic diversity in countries like the UK and Romania and encourages people to bring themselves and the languages they carry or move in, to the task of translating *Over Land, Over Sea*. The project also cultivates intercultural networks at a grassroots level in a range of countries. Through Journeys in Translation, and through the efforts of people including many who do not ordinarily see themselves as translators, the poems are migrating into other cultures, including some that are often perceived more as sites people migrate from than as destinations. The Romanian translation, for example, is promoted in schools and universities in Bucharest, in cultural and literary translation settings, and among local NGOs, encouraging citizens and residents alike to take a closer look at the reasons why people move and what this means to them at personal, familial, community, and national levels and in terms of how they think, speak, and write about migration.

In this paper, we take an interdisciplinary, mixed methods approach that combines ethnography and participatory action research. Hammersley and Atkinson define ethnography as involving

> the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artifacts—in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry. (2007 [1983], p. 3)

Loewenson *et al*. define participatory action research as aiming to "understand and improve the world by changing it. It transforms the role of those who usually 'participate' as subjects of research. Instead those directly affected become active researchers and agents who collectively act, produce change and create new knowledge" (2014, p. 12).

As part of our approach, we draw on our individual and collaborative work in fields that include translation, journalism, and book publishing, and in community and academic settings in Romania and the United Kingdom in order to answer the following questions: How do *Over Land, Over Sea* and Journeys in Translation seek to resist, subvert, and change the representations of migrants and refugees imposed by dominant discourses circulating in the media

and in official state policies? How do the projects create spaces for counternarratives to what is most commonly heard in mainstream media? How do the Romanian translations reframe previous forms of cultural resistance? How does Journeys in Translation address the relationship between poetry and activism?

Conceptual and Methodological Frameworks

We agree with Rebecca Ruth Gould (2021) when she says: "Translation is not just a kind of specialised profession of a few people in society. Every person who is literate is a translator. Every writer is a translator. Because there is so much to translate, it is so necessary to be multilingual. So, translation is part of everyday life" (University of Birmingham, min. 33). We build on this observation and, through our case studies demonstrate how translation can be both a *form of recreation* and a form of *social and pedagogical activism*.

Our conceptualization of translation as a *form of recreation* is informed by the National Framework for Recreation in Canada which defines *recreation* as "experience that results from freely chosen participation in […] pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing" (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015, p. 8). The Framework further defines recreational experiences as including:

> physical activity and sport, and […] artistic, cultural, social and intellectual activities. Spiritual wellbeing may be enhanced through connecting with nature, helping others through volunteering, engaging in artistic expression and other forms of recreational experiences. […] People participate in recreational activities for fun, enjoyment, fitness and health, social interaction, creative expression, a desire to connect with nature, relaxation, and to enhance their quality of life. Most people also understand and support the beneficial role that recreation plays in community development. (*ibid.*)

Most, if not all elements of this definition, can be seen in Journeys in Translation. For example, bilinguals, multilinguals, and language learners freely choose to take part in the project. The project is artistic, cultural, social, and intellectual and can be done by people in most age groups either working alone or in pairs or groups. The translations can be done indoors or outdoors and are fun and enjoyable. The project can enhance participants' well-being and quality of life because it places value on and encourages them to use the languages they carry. Furthermore, and as will be demonstrated below, the project can support social interaction and community relations.

This conceptualization is consistent with findings from previous studies that look into the reasons why professionals and non-professionals alike volunteer with or for translation projects. For example, in her paper on what motivates volunteer TEDTalk translators, sociologist Maeve Olohan reveals that volunteer translators are motivated by factors that include the desire to: generate, share, and disseminate content and knowledge; translate information into other languages; improve language and translation skills; support causes; and because translation is intellectually stimulating (2014, pp. 5-6). In addition, some translators see their work as a way to participate in communities, effect social change, and promote "mutual respect between different cultures, people, religions" (*ibid*., p. 12). These are the motives that drive Journeys in Translation.

As such, the project is a form of *social and pedagogical activism* because, through poetry and translation in community and academic settings, it aims to: intervene in and reframe the largely hostile mainstream political and media discourses on migration that are in play in most European countries; encourage participants to reflect on what migration means to them at a personal, familial, and community level; bring individuals and groups together and encourage them to think of ways through which to support people on the move and those seeking refuge; and, through sales of both *Over Land, Over Sea* and its translated editions, fundraise for groups that support people seeking refuge.

Our approach is also informed by a number of current trends in translation theory associated with agency and activism. For example, inspired by Lawrence Venuti's writing on translation as a mode of resistance, theorist Maria Tymoczko proposes a more proactive view of the role of translation in society:

> activists cannot simply oppose or resist social and political constraints: they must also be able to initiate action, change direction, construct new goals, articulate new values, seek new paths […] thinking about translation and activism has moved beyond a focus on binaries in this domain as it has in most other areas of inquiry in translation studies, and thus has moved beyond the focus on resistance. (2010, p. viii)

This perspective corresponds to the aims of Journeys in Translation, which are not only about resistance through culture, but are also about taking action through translation in order to promote tolerance and foster better reception and conditions for refugees and migrants.

In this sense, the events and experiences linked to Journeys in Translation, which we describe in the following sections, are very much in line with Tymoczko's conception of translation as activism.

In their recent handbook of translation and activism, Gould and Tahmasebian propose four paradigms of the translator-activist: witness-bearer, voice-giver, vernacular mediator, and revolutionary (2020, p. 2). Contributors to *Over Land, Over Sea* and Journeys in Translation embody, inhabit, and play all four roles to varying degrees and extents: as academics, educators, students, librarians, writers, publishers, translators, editors, journalists, lawyers, artists, book critics, doctors, therapists, LGBTQ+ activists, social workers, or people who simply care about the world they live in, they come from backgrounds that allow them to be cultural translators. Gould and Tahmasebian identify two characteristics of translational activism:

> In contrast to existing models, we hold that translational activism should be evaluated and appreciated in terms different from accuracy or fidelity to the original. We consider a translation to be activist whenever and however it stirs readers and audiences to action. […] Activist translators reconfigure the text alongside the context in which they write. This points to another important characteristic of activist translation: its timeliness. Translations can only be activist at certain times and within certain social circumstances. (*ibid.*, p. 4)

Over Land, Over Sea and Journeys in Translation share these characteristics of translational activism. In addition to translation in the strictest sense, the project involves, as the next two sections will show, several other forms of intrasemiotic and intersemiotic translation. A response to the so-called migration crisis that came to the fore in Europe in 2015, the poems were subsequently—and continue to be—read and performed at online and in-person events and gatherings concerned with migration and human rights issues. The anthology is thus timely and likely to remain relevant because migration, whether by choice or by necessity, will remain an issue for many years to come.

Our approach further draws on the works of migration scholars who have looked at how terminology used to describe people on the move has changed over time. For example, Rebecca Hamlin (2021) focuses on a multitude of perceptions around the relationship between the terms *refugee* and *migrant* and argues for a nonbinary approach to border crossing and for new understandings

of responsibility towards vulnerable people. From another angle, Moira Inghilleri (2017) explores how translation and migration have shaped each other and discusses the different effects of the presence or absence of translation in a variety of American cultural history contexts. Indeed, as noted above, *Over Land, Over Sea* was initiated as a form of protest against the dehumanizing terminology that many leading mainstream politicians and media outlets were using to describe refugees and migrants. Framed by metaphors for water, insects, and animals and qualified as floods, waves, and tides, swarms or hordes, they were associated with illegality and constructed as threatening, undesirable, and uncontrollable (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Wilmott, 2017). Journeys in Translation extends the activism at the heart of the anthology to new locations, groups, and contexts so as to encourage both empathy towards refugees and migrants and a shift in the language used to describe them.

Finally, turning to pedagogical studies, previous research shows how poetry can be a gateway medium that stimulates exploration, critical thought, discussion, and action around social issues, power relations, oppression, and historical legacies. For example, Rebecca M. Sánchez (2007) explains how music and poetry is used in schools to enable students to gain a deeper understanding of social justice and their relationship with it. David Stovall (2006) explores educators' motivations when teaching poetry for social justice in urban contexts, while Patrick Camangian (2008) considers the impact of spoken-word poetry on students' critical thinking, literacy, and voice in an urban classroom. Editors Ellen G. Levine and Stephen K. Levine (2011) demonstrate the importance and relevance of expressive arts—including poetry—for therapy and social change. More recently, Nicholas Mazza (2018) proposes a model of poetry therapy as a way of engaging with the power of language, symbol, and story to cultivate human rights, spirituality, and health. This paper builds on these studies by focusing on poetry about forced migration, its translation into other languages, and its impact on both individuals and diverse communities.

We will come back to translation as a form of recreation and social activism in subsequent sections, but first it is important to provide an overview of how *Over Land, Over Sea* and Journeys in Translation came about.

Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for Those Seeking Refuge

In the United Kingdom, large parts of 2015 were dominated by images of people crossing the Mediterranean on wooden fishing boats and rubber dinghies trying to get to Europe. There were images of people, including unaccompanied children, making impossible journeys on foot across borders and along railway lines in mainland Europe. And there were images of people climbing over razor wire, and police forces at the border of different countries using batons, water cannons, tear gas, and rubber bullets against them (Musiyiwa, 2021, n.p.).

Georgiou and Zaborowski observe that the mainstream media "sets agendas and [...] is read by 'the influential'—i.e. politicians and policy makers. Thus, while its impact expands beyond its direct numerical readership and spills into policy making, it also influences the public culture of what is and what is not acceptable and legitimate to say and do" (2017, p. 7). Drawing on a year-long project that analyzed the contents of quality press in eight European countries, they found that newspaper stories consistently emphasized the negative consequences of migrant and refugee arrivals, even when "little empirical, causal relationship could be established between the plight of migrants and the wellbeing of European countries" (*ibid.*, p. 9). The discourses promoted in the media were dominated by the views of politicians and government representatives, while refugee and migrant voices, and those of European citizens themselves, were muted, resulting in the creation of a problematic narrative: "actions and emotions were instead validated by the (Western) officials in charge" (*ibid.*, p. 10).

On Facebook and other social media platforms, while people commented on what they were seeing and shared their views, many reproduced the anti-immigrant rhetoric. Others responded by mobilizing their communities, taking up collections, organizing convoys, and travelling to camps in places like Calais, Dunkirk, and Lesbos to provide material support to the people arriving on Europe's shores (Musiyiwa, 2021, n.p.). Musiyiwa noticed that a lot of the responses on his Facebook feed were markedly different from those coming from politicians and the media, and that many included poetry. For example, one of his Leicester-based friends posted what he later described as "a rant" against the hostility towards refugees and migrants that was being normalized by a significant number of

politicians and the media. Reformatted and versified to change it from a prose piece, the rant was a poem.

In 2015, using his Facebook wall, Musiyiwa started writing poetry because it provided an immediate outlet and a way of processing the images and rhetoric he was seeing and hearing in the media. Inspired by responses to his poems, in September 2015 he posted a message on his wall asking: "Why not put together a poetry anthology?" The anthology could be sold to raise funds for groups conducting search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and those working with people seeking refuge in the UK. Three poets, Kathleen Bell, Siobhan Logan, and Emma Lee, volunteered as editors and Five Leaves Publications, an independent publisher and bookshop based in Nottingham, offered to typeset and publish the book (Bradshaw, 2016, n.p.). Musiyiwa encouraged his friend, Alan Mitchell, who did not see himself as a poet, to submit the reformatted "rant" for possible inclusion and it was published as "Alright, Jack?":

No, Jack.
I'm not alright.
Not by a long shot.
When did it become
the British thing to do
to coldly turn our backs
on people in desperate situations?
When did it become
the British thing to do
to talk about and treat people
as if they are the scum of the Earth?
When did it become
the British thing to do
to just shrug our shoulders
and ignore the suffering
of fellow human beings?
When did it become
the British thing to do
to be so full of hate?

No, Jack.

I'm not alright.

Not by a long shot.

(*Over Land, Over Sea*, p. 19)

On 1 December 2015, *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for Those Seeking Refuge* came out and is being sold to raise funds for Doctors Without Borders, the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum, and Leicester City of Sanctuary.[1] The anthology opens with "The Man Who Ran Through The Tunnel," a poem by Musiyiwa that reframes the story of a Sudanese man who walked, through the Channel Tunnel, from Calais in France to Folkestone in the UK. The incident is framed not as a breach, as it was being cast in most mainstream media narratives, but as something remarkable:

When I heard

how he ran

across continents

over rivers

through forests

through deserts

and through tunnels,

how could I fail

to be inspired?

(*Over Land, Over Sea*, p. 1)

The anthology features 101 poems and short prose pieces from 82 poets around the world, including people seeking refuge and descendants from an earlier generation of migrants as well as African, Asian, Jewish, and Middle Eastern poets. By reflecting this diversity, the anthology creates parallels between the movements of people across Europe since 2015, on the one hand, and past experiences of refugees, migrants, and exiles, on the other. The majority of the poems

1. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum is an independent registered charity set up in 2000 to work with and for refugees and asylum seekers. Leicester City of Sanctuary was established in 2007 and became a registered charity in 2010 before transferring to a Charitable Incorporated Organization in 2017. As an independent charity, the group works with the City of Sanctuary UK to encourage welcoming those seeking sanctuary.

were written directly in English, while several were translated from other languages. In this way, from its conception, with the voices contained within its pages, and in how it is being offered to audiences and what happens to proceeds from its sales, *Over Land, Over Sea* intervenes in prevailing European discourses around migration, thereby offering an alternative discursive space.

Although the anthology, performances, and readings have been well-received, no major newspapers or literary journals in the UK have reviewed it to date. Reviews have come from alternative, mainly online publications, such as *Sabotage Reviews* where the diversity of contributors and the importance of the anthology's message and purpose are highlighted:

> *Over Land, Over Sea* is a timely and generous publication […], exploring what it means to lose your home and to be forced to flee a conflict that has obliterated the concept of living safely in the country of your birth. […] When poetry is written for a worthy social cause, there is a different, more focused, level of engagement with content. The anthology's netting of such a disparate constellation of voices is part of its cumulative power. (McGlinchey, 2016, n.p.)

Words, languages, and communities of readers and writers can thus be mobilized to offer, embody, or inhabit space in which to discuss, seek solutions, intervene in and resist negative dominant political and media discourses on migration. *Over Land, Over Sea* aptly illustrates what Santini and Summerfield mean when they describe poetry as "a means of introspection […] an instrument of self-representation […] an art form which has the capacity to show the incongruities of society" and can act as "an agent of social transformation" that not only imitates or represents the world but seeks "to enact a change upon it" (2013, p. viii). This perspective is also at the centre of Journeys in Translation, which we will look at next.

Journeys in Translation

Journeys in Translation emerged from how the poets featured in *Over Land, Over Sea* utilized alternative spaces for dialogue on the anthology and its themes. One of these spaces was Everybody's Reading, a festival which, up until 2019, was a nine-day celebration of reading that took place across Leicester. It aimed to get the city as a whole engaged with reading and literacy. Activities ranged from small, community gatherings with a handful of people to large scale events.

As part of the 2016 festival, Musiyiwa and a friend picked eight poems from *Over Land, Over Sea* and turned them into postcards, which they distributed at the Leicester train station. They called the event the Journeys Pop-up Poem Library and chose the train station because it recalled how, in 2015, people seeking refuge walked along railway lines in Europe enroute to places they thought they would be welcome. The event aimed to encourage commuters to read, reflect, and talk about the current and historical journeys of people seeking refuge. In 2017, the organizers of the Journeys Pop-up Poem Library met to consider options for that year's edition of Everybody's Reading. They came up with the idea of inviting people to translate into other languages, in whole or in part, the eight poems that had been used the previous year, together with six more poems that contributors offered for inclusion in the project. The organizers settled on Journeys in Translation as the project's title.

Journeys in Translation presented translation as a *form of recreation*. The project invited bilinguals, multilinguals, and language learners to translate or—for people who did not think of themselves as translators—"to have a go" at translating, in whole or in part, as many of the 14 poems as they liked. Participants were asked to then share their translations, together with their reflections on the poems and translations in letters and emails, on blogs and on social media; they were also encouraged to organize Journeys in Translation events of their own in their localities, which could include translation workshops or poetry readings (Lee and Musiyiwa, 2017, n.p.). In Leicester, the sites where these events took place included churches, libraries, and community centres (Musiyiwa, 2017a, n.p.). In addition, the Centre for Translation and Interpretation Studies hosted a number of seminars in which the poems were translated, read, and discussed (CivicLeicester, 2017, n.p).

As a result of the initiative, over a 12-month period, the poems were translated into languages that include Arabic, Assamese, Bengali, British Sign Language, Chinese, Dutch, Farsi, Filipino, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Irish Gaelic, Italian, Jamaican Patois, Polish, Romanian, Shona, Spanish, Turkish, and Welsh. The exercise culminated in an event that was held at the African Caribbean Centre in Leicester on International Translation Day, 30 September 2017, at which the 14 poems and some of their translations were presented before a live audience as part of Everybody's Reading. Although these were then archived to mark the end of that phase of

the project, Musiyiwa continued working with those translators who had expressed interest in translating the whole anthology.

One of these translators, Pietro Deandrea, a lecturer at the University of Turin, worked with MA students to translate *Over Land, Over Sea* into Italian over the course of two years. Asked to describe the work he and his students did as part of Journeys in Translation, Deandrea commented on the value of the initiative:

> Literature has the power to inspire empathy with its subjects. In our case, I had a feeling that we all understood the condition of contemporary migrants' more deeply. Besides, translation made us move a step deeper in our comprehension of the phenomenon, when we dirtied our hands with the raw material of these situations through the manipulation of words. So many times we were faced with a sentence, a line, or simply an image that subtly conveyed more than one aspect in the lives of contemporary refugees, and we consequently felt the ethical responsibility of transferring all these nuances into Italian. Maybe we did not always succeed in doing that, but we certainly reached the goal of fully engaging both our linguistic and humane alertness. In fact, these two aspects of a translator's activity eventually seemed to merge into one, and that is something I am quite proud of. (cited in Musiyiwa, 2017b, n.p.)

In keeping with the participatory action research approach that Journey in Translation fosters, in a 2018 article Deandrea reflects on the experience he and his class had when translating six of the poems:

> the six translated poems offered the participants a chance to reflect on issues such as the reversing of one's ingrained perspectives and the adoption of the Other's vision; the language of war; the spatial constraints of diasporas and migration policies; the questioning of stereotypical dichotomies between different cultures; and the genre of journalistic poetry with its potential to enrich media reports. A series of theoretical reflections and practical activities around translation emphasised the privileged role of literature for an ethical approach towards otherness. (2018, p. 27)

To illustrate some of these reflections and activities, Deandrea gives the poems in English and Italian, and discusses the issues each one raises and how he and the class approached them. For example, he describes Rod Duncan's "but one country" (see next section) as "a picture-text poem" with a distinctive shape that, as his students suggested, could be seen as "a mirror, an egg, a planet, a seed" (p. 29). Deandrea goes on to say:

> Then a closer reading revealed another, even stricter restriction. The poem is indeed a mirror, the second section being exactly specular to the first. Therefore, the same sequence of lines, if turned upside down, should be just as fluently readable. This mirror structure is a key message-carrier: we are given a xenophobic worldview first, and then one based on solidarity, and these two are linguistically presented as the two sides of the same coin, as made of the same ideas—a reference to how easy it can be to jump the fence to the other side, because it is only a question of perspective? (*ibid.*)

Per terra e per mare: Poesie per chi è in cerca di rifugio, which emerged from these efforts, was published by CivicLeicester in 2020 and is being sold to raise funds for three associations: Mosaico: Azioni per i rifugiati [Mosaic: Action for Refugees], Watch The Med Alarm Phone, and After18.[2] The edition was launched in December 2020 at an online event hosted by the Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies at the University of Leicester, which marked five years since the publication of *Over Land, Over Sea* and brought together poets, translators, human rights activists, educators, and people interested in poetry, translation, and migration (CivicLeicester, 2020, n.p.). The translated edition has received a number of very good reviews since it came out (see Splendori, 2021; Sozzi, 2022). *Per terra e per mare* was followed by *Peste mări și țări: poezii pentru cine caută adăpost*, the Romanian translation of *Over Land, Over Sea*, which we turn to in the next section.

Journeys in Romanian

In this section, we give the linguistic, demographic, literary, and political circumstances in which *Over Land, Over Sea* and Journeys in Translation "migrated" into Romanian, before setting out what we hope the initiative will achieve as well as some of the risks we see within this context.

As the official language of the country, Romanian is spoken by more than 90% of the population and is the language of instruction in most schools. While the decades before 1989 were characterized by an assimilationist cultural strategy under the umbrella of the

2. Mosaico: Azioni per i rifugiati is a non-partisan association founded in Turin in 2006 which supports refugees, promotes human rights, and disseminates knowledge and information on forced migration. Watch The Med Alarm Phone rescue people at sea and run a self-organized hotline for people in distress in the Mediterranean Sea. After18 is a Leicester-based charity that works with young people who are seeking refuge in the UK.

Romanian language, numerous minority languages have since received more rights and are used in education, local administration, public services, and legal services. The second most spoken language is Hungarian (6.1% [2011 census]), followed by Romani (1.1% [2002 census]). Ukrainian and German occupy, respectively, fourth and fifth place. These languages are used in local signage, administration, education, and the justice system in the regions where they are spoken. Other minority languages include Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Macedonian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Tatar, and Turkish, with English and French spoken as international languages.

Statistics on migration reveal how Romania is changing from a country that was seen mainly as a source of migrants to one that is itself becoming a destination country. In 2019, the foreign-born population represented 8% of the total population, an increase of 278% since 2009. The number of first asylum applicants also increased by 26.2%, to reach around 2,500. And in 2020, there were 6,138 requests for asylum, a 137% increase in comparison with 2019. Considering this data, most conversations about migration take place in Romanian and English, but also in French and, more recently, in languages spoken by migrants (for example, Arabic and Ukrainian), some of whom have become volunteers or members of local NGOs, or work as intermediaries in institutions that help border crossers.

The general discourse on migration in mainstream media usually defends people on the move and those seeking refuge by presenting the facts objectively, although there are cases of exaggerated rhetoric in tabloids and other news outlets, notably in connection with the 2015 refugee crisis as recent research demonstrates (Rehejeh 2020, 2021; Cernicova-Buca, 2018; Corbu *et al*., 2017). Thus, migration has permeated further into domains such as legislation, education, and social work, in which translation plays an important role.

In these conditions of demographic change and media coverage, the migration legislation of Romania had to change too. One important direction was the establishment in 2017 of the Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees, which includes many local NGOs and institutions such as the UNHCR and local universities. Created to improve conditions for migrants and refugees, the Coalition works to revise the legal framework in order to guarantee better practices and more social justice for these communities. In this

evolving context, the new National Strategy for Immigration places significant emphasis on border protection and the integration of refugees and migrants, especially as far as access to the labour market is concerned (Romanian Government, 2021). The new focus on integration is important because, until recently, the main focus was on fighting illegal immigration.

In 2017, the same year that the Coalition was formed, Scottish poet Neil Leadbeater sent Manolachi a few advertisements regarding translation opportunities. One of them was about Journeys in Translation. Acting on this, by the autumn of 2017, Manolachi had already translated the 14 selected poems into Romanian and sent them back to the project coordinators for publication. To Manolachi, the poems clearly represented a more empathic perspective on what had been transmitted in the national and international news about the refugee crisis. Moreover, the Romanian context, where existing local NGOs specializing in migration were rather invisible, could benefit from the combination of poetry and social or community-centred work that Journeys in Translation promotes. Some of the poems conveyed a universal feeling, the need for tolerance. For example, "but one country" by Rod Duncan, analyzed above, is both a reverse poem and a visual poem that questions the condition of human beings on planet Earth, while shaping the message so as to express the tension between division and unity:

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
but one country	**o singură țară**
our home	acasă
is but one country	este o singură țară
truly, the whole earth	adevărat, întreg pământul
is there for them to settle	e ca oricine să-și găsească loc
tell us if you can, where else	spuneți-ne, dacă puteți, în ce parte
shall we go when they have come?	să ne mai deplasăm atunci când vin?
they do not belong in our homeland	dar ei nici nu sunt de pe aceste meleaguri
you should blush when you say to us	nu vă îmbujorați chiar deloc când ne spuneți
we must turn our vision upside down	să ne schimbăm cu totul punctul de vedere
we must turn our vision upside down	să ne schimbăm cu totul punctul de vedere
you should blush when you say to us	nu vă îmbujorați chiar deloc când ne spuneți
they do not belong in our homeland	dar ei nici nu sunt de pe aceste meleaguri
shall we go when they have come?	să ne mai deplasăm atunci când vin?
tell us if you can, where else	spuneți-ne, dacă puteți, în ce parte
is there for them to settle	e ca oricine să-și găsească loc
truly the whole earth	adevărat, întreg pământul
is but one country	este o singură țară
our home	acasă
Over Land, Over Sea (p. 123)	*Peste mări și țări* (p. 110)

Over the next academic year, 2018-2019, Manolachi used more poems from *Over Land, Over Sea* as teaching material in several seminars with first year students of English. The students chose poems they felt able to translate and worked on them individually and in small groups, commenting on their content, shape, and message, in order to produce publishable versions in their mother tongue. They also translated newspaper articles about the 2015 refugee crisis and its aftermath to compare different types of discourse and learn new vocabulary. Together, the class saw how poetry—in contrast with mass media—can better represent the emotional experience of refugees as people with their own voice, who have lives, memories, and dreams that carry cultural and literary value. As homework, students freely chose different articles on the topic—usually objective in style—to translate into Romanian, from sources such as the *BBC*, *The Guardian, Deutsche Welle*, *Free Europe*, and *Al Jazeera*. They were also given a list of guiding questions and asked to write personal essays about some

of the emigrants and immigrants they know, thus turning migration from something they heard or read about in the news into something personal and familial. Some of the students came from families with a migration background; a few were migrants themselves while several others had parents working abroad. Therefore, the ability to translate proved to be a matter of real and urgent significance.

In the summer of 2019, Manolachi decided to translate the whole collection with the help of those students most interested in the project. As part of the process, she had a series of conversations with some of the poets via email, who clarified both cultural and aesthetic aspects. For example, some of the poems are elliptical and have a traumatic story behind them, related to either recent migration events or to conflicts that happened decades ago, during the Second World War. Others use language with multiple meanings, that can be read in different ways, or language that imagines and encourages new possibilities. For example, "Landing on Lampedusa" by Laila Sumpton is a narrative poem about an unnamed female character that reaches the seashore.[3] Elements in the poem suggest it may be a turtle. Although the original mentions only "cargo" when referring to her eggs in the third stanza, the Romanian version uses "povara de ouă" [egg load] and "ouăle de țestoasă" [turtle eggs] for reasons related to grammatical structure and artistic imagery. The author and the translator exchanged emails to clarify details like these and to agree on the translation choice. What may get lost in translation is the sense of massive commodification suggested by "cargo," which is compensated for by the sense of fragility represented by "eggs." To convey the idea that life itself is commodified, the translated version includes the word "viață" [life] in the last line of the stanza:

She heaves the *cargo*	Își ridică *povara de ouă*, pe care
she will never see alive,	nicicând nu le va vedea prinzând viață,
but knows they are whiter	dar știe că ele sunt mai albe
than the moon they have not seen.	decât luna despre care încă nu au habar.
Her *cargo* has been squirming	De când marea nu le mai leagănă,
since the sea stopped rocking them	*ouăle de țestoasă* freamătă întruna
and this is the closest they will ever be.	și cam aceasta e toată *viața* lor.
Over Land, Over Sea (p. 40; our italics)	*Peste mări și țări* (p. 39; our italics)

3. The original and its translation are available at Traducerile de Sâmbătă [Saturday Translations].

Later that year, in September 2019, as a participant at the European School of Literary Translation (ESLT) Summer School held in Rome, Manolachi talked about Journeys in Translation as an example of an *ad hoc* literary translation project meant to have a social and educational impact. The originality of Journeys in Translation was highlighted as a multilingual, transnational, and translocal approach to making culture and poetry adaptable to different media and contexts (educational, cultural, social support, political intervention), which draws on urgent daily problems and attempts to add them to the socio-political agenda. Therefore, the translators' role is to take action and intervene in problematic discourses by using their specific linguistic, cultural, *and* socio-political skills. The ESLT program also included a session on the PETRA-E Framework of Reference for the Education and Training of Literary Translators. What is particularly relevant for this article is that the Framework showcases skills like the justification of translations, literary creativity, knowledge about context in source and target texts, understanding culture-specific elements, intercultural skills, intertextual skills, and familiarity with financial, ethical, and legal aspects, all of which are elements that Manolachi and her students worked with as they translated poems from *Over Land, Over Sea* into Romanian.

Peste mări și țări: poezii pentru cine caută adăpost was published by CivicLeicester in March 2022. In line with how Journeys in Translation operates as a form of social intervention, *Peste mări și țări* establishes links with groups and organizations that support refugees and migrants. In addition, the money raised from sales is donated to three groups: Sea Watch, Asociația LOGS Grup de inițiative sociale, and the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group.[4] Speakers from each of the three groups will be invited to take part alongside poets and translators in public events that will be held to bring the translated anthology to people who are interested in questions around migration and who, in addition to hearing poetry

4. Sea Watch is a Berlin-based human rights non-profit association dedicated to sea rescue of border crossers coming to Europe. LOGS Association is a grass roots, non-governmental organization based in Timișoara, Romania. Founded in 2019, the association promotes cultural diversity and the integration of refugees and migrants, and offers social and psychological counselling. South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group, established in 2007, is based in the UK, and is made up of volunteers from all over the world who organize campaigns for asylum and migrant rights.

being read and discussed in Romanian and English, will also learn about the work the three organizations are doing and the challenges they are experiencing.

Poetry and Translation as Sites of Activism

Turning now to the literary and political context specific to Romania, unlike many countries in the West where the production of literary texts that at once speak to and seek to influence contemporary issues is an established feature, in Romania, the practice is perceived to be recent and unfamiliar, particularly with respect to poetry focusing on migration and refugee issues. Journeys in Translation thus fills a need in the current cultural context, for initiatives which demonstrate that poetry is for everyone and which challenge the view, expressed in some circles, that poetry is just words. For example, in a speech given in the European Parliament, the then European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker declared in 2015: "What we need is shared solidarity. To be honest, I have had enough of poetry. I find the rhetoric of concern attractive at first but not all the time. On 13 May we will propose a system of relocation throughout the European Union. Solidarity must be shared" (2015, n.p.). While we agree that Europe can and must do more to ensure safe passage for people seeking refuge, we disagree with Juncker's suggestion that poetry is "just words." In the Romanian context, as in a number of other countries in Europe, there is need for projects such as Journeys in Translation that can mobilize both literature and social support as catalysts for change.

Currently, in Romania and its diasporas the association between poetry and socio-political issues appears to still be dominated by what has been called *rezistența prin cultură* [resistance through culture]. The phrase emerged in connection with the beginning of Romania's erstwhile communist regime operating under Soviet political and cultural influence in the 1950s and referred to a form of active underground opposition against what was perceived to be an illegitimate political apparatus. Resistance through culture meant the refusal to eulogize party leaders and the country's totalitarian regime, writing against the official propaganda, and the refusal of censorship.

Romanian philosopher and essayist Andrei Pleșu, himself part of the 1980s cultural resistance, a former minister of culture (1989-1991) and of foreign affairs (1997-1999), described resistance through culture as "contemplative people's way of 'fighting'" (2010,

n.p.). His statement came as a reaction to a talk show between the Romanian-born German writer Herta Müller and Gabriel Liiceanu, the editor of her works translated into Romanian, which was held at the Romanian Athenaeum on 27 September 2010 after Müller had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature the previous year.

Müller's critical remarks about Romanian intellectuals' inadequate reaction to Ceaușescu's regime, their passivity regarding state politics, and their refuge in art, literature or philosophy sparked heated debates in the country and abroad at the time. The debate revealed how, prior to 1989, going into politics meant becoming a communist activist controlled by the party. Since there was no political pluralism, writing, speaking or going against the grain of party political and State-sanctioned discourses, was considered risky by both individuals and communities. Even though dissidents existed, they always acted alone. Or, if they wanted to gather and formulate a common point of view, their efforts were ineffective. Literature—including translations—that criticized the economic, social, and political system was subjected to fierce censorship; its writers—or translators—risked being sent to jail. As a result, the use of the term "activist" in Romania still recalls the obligation to adhere to party political ideologies, and its association with poetry still evokes official eulogies. The power of poetry to express real social problems was—and still is, for some—overshadowed by party political discourses.

In the first two decades after 1989, resistance through culture was marked by various difficult transitions, among them the transition from a centralized to a decentralized economic system, from dictatorship to democracy, and from State-controlled to privatized press. Those were the decades when publishing houses transformed into private businesses, which meant the emergence of a plurality of cultural discourses influenced in part by the expansion of literary and specialized translation markets.

The Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Herta Müller, "who, with the concentration of poetry and the frankness of prose, depicts the landscape of the dispossessed" (Nobel Prize, 2009, n.p.), also led to a change in focus in Romania. Before Müller received the prize, literature had been associated with the elites; after 1989, there were increasing demands that literature should serve everyone. These demands coincided with the development of the Internet and social media networks, and the creation of small publishing enterprises

responding to needs around inclusiveness and freedom of expression. There has also been an increase in competition between the resistance through culture of the older generations and the emerging #resist movement of the younger generation, which is calling for more representation, equity, and the transformation of social structures from entities that serve the interests of the rich and powerful into ones that serve current and future generations as well.

Translation as cultural practice has gained more importance over the past decades due to a confluence of factors that include migration, the growth of the publishing market, media and the Internet, online commerce, and translation studies as an academic field. This trend has been partially shaped by the liberalization mentioned above. On the one hand, traditional resistance through culture includes translating and retranslating marketable classical literature and successful contemporary writers. On the other hand, the modern #resist movement draws on current social movements to offer alternatives of expression, often supported by digital media, to circles and communities rarely represented by either mainstream media or mainstream literature.

This shift can be noticed in Mihai Iovănel's *History of Contemporary Romanian Literature 1990-2020*, which adopts a markedly different ideological perspective in comparison to most literary histories published over the past decades. The book is highly significant for how it adopts a transnational point of view oriented towards works published over the period in question. The last four chapters are dedicated to what Iovănel calls "transnational specificity" (2021, p. 11), in contrast with the concept of national specificity proposed by critic George Călinescu in the first half of the 20th century, and more attuned to today's globalized world. While Iovănel primarily posits literary translation as a tool for exporting and importing literature that deals with Romanian ethos, values, and history, written by authors born in the country, but who may live abroad, a new generation of literary theorists has emerged that brings together critics and literary historians from Romania and its diaspora, and is doing a significant amount of translation at different levels, from and into many languages. In the process, this generation is establishing multiple connections with the international world of literature, criticism, and philosophical thinking. As a result, resistance through culture in Romania is changing and can now be viewed as a complex set of intercultural networks in which literary translation

plays a significant role in shaping the country's emerging multicultural literature.

Journeys in Translation and *Peste mări și țări: poezii pentru cine caută adăpost* are part of this emerging scene. We suggest that, in this context, Journeys in Translation is activist because of how it is bringing poems about migration into Romanian literature and how this, in turn, has the potential of encouraging the publication of more Romanian poetry on the same themes. We also suggest the project is activist because of how it encourages translation at the same time as it encourages people who encounter and experience the project to take a closer, more sensitive and nuanced look into migration, the reasons why people move, and what these factors mean at an individual, familial, and community level. In addition, the project demystifies translation and allows bilinguals, multilinguals, and language learners to experience translation as everyday practice, as something they are already doing in their everyday lives and as something that is not the sole preserve of professionals. Furthermore, as evidenced by some of the recurring comments that attendees make when they are exposed to, experience or take part in workshops, readings, and discussions around Journeys in Translation, the project also speaks to those who are monolingual. One of the recurring comments that attendees make is how striking it is to hear individual poems being read in more than one language. Attendees report being moved by the sonic quality of the readings and by how different readers deliver the poems, including the use that some make of voice, tone, and gestures.

We further suggest that because of the work Journeys in Translation and *Peste mări și țări* are doing, the project has the potential to reframe how activism is understood in Romanian literary settings, moving that understanding away from the term's association with resistance through culture of the older generation of Romanian activists towards an understanding of activism that includes engaging with human rights, social justice, migration, and related issues.

The relative openness of the contemporary Romanian literary and pedagogical environment, together with the interest that national institutions and local, grassroots organizations are demonstrating towards supporting refugees and migrants, has meant there is growth in the amount of work that has been taking place since 1989, designed to increase citizens' and residents' awareness around migration. Thus, the translation of *Over Land, Over Sea* into Romanian—alongside

the Journeys in Translation component—not only raises awareness on issues around migration, it also raises awareness and appreciation of the diversity of languages spoken in Romania, and can support community building efforts.

Conclusions

As we have sought to demonstrate through these case studies, Journeys in Translation as a *form of recreation* encourages speakers and learners of other languages to have a go at translating poems from *Over Land, Over Sea* in full or in part. The effort can be individual or collective in that those who are interested can work on it alone or with friends or family members, or they can work on it as groups or communities that have one or more languages in common. The initiative can be a way of being in communion with others. Those taking part do it because they want to, because they can, or to see if they can. The effort can have pedagogical value in that it allows those taking part to find out how to translate texts from one language to another. It can be a way through which people who are bilingual, multilingual, or who are learning another language can check competencies in translation. It can also lead to the development of interest in translation as a field of study or as a profession. Furthermore, sharing the translations in public or private readings creates space for conversation on the issues the poems explore.

In the UK, as in other countries in Europe, dominant media and political discourses on migration tend to be dehumanizing. In many instances, they frame people who are looking for refuge not as people but as numbers that need to be kept down. Extrapolating from how the UK has turned from a country that routinely celebrated having a tradition of welcoming refugees to one now actively seeking to pass on its refugee protection obligations to countries like Rwanda, we are aware there is a risk that the largely positive discourses currently taking place in Romania can follow a similar trajectory. In Romania, as in the UK, *Over Land, Over Sea* and Journeys in Translation create spaces in which people can talk about migration in ways that do not rely on dominant media and political discourses but which, instead, draw on people's lived experiences whether as citizens and residents, or as refugees and migrants. The anthology is also a way to fundraise for groups and organizations that support refugees and migrants. Journeys in Translation can thus be seen as presenting translation not only as recreation, but also as *social activism* because, like *Over Land,*

Over Sea: Poems for Those Seeking Refuge, the project's overarching aim is to intervene in and change dominant European discourses around migration by encouraging reflection on the reasons why people move from one place to another or from one country to another. In this way, the initiative contributes to the social, cultural, and literary scenes in the UK, Romania, and elsewhere; scenes that, to varying degrees and extents, are marked by tension around literature and translation as sites of activism.

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