

Call for proposals

Kunwar Narain's poetry in translation

International Symposium organized by the Section des langues et civilisations slaves et d'Asie du Sud (SLAS),
in collaboration with the Centre de traduction littéraire de Lausanne (CTL)

25-26 March 2021, University of Lausanne

Description

Translating a poem means to enter into dialogue with it, to respond to its complexity, to instil a part of oneself as well. It means continually oscillating between languages, cultures and contexts. And, at the same time, it means taking a series of very concrete decisions: how to recreate, or not, rhyme and rhythm, how to transpose the various connotations of a word or a phrase, how to convey intertextual references and the polysemy of a text?

Such questions will be at the core of the international symposium devoted to the poetic work of the Indian author Kunwar Narain (1927-2017), to be held in March 2021 at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland). For this meeting—the first entirely devoted to the poet outside India—translators of his poetry will dialogue with researchers working in Switzerland, India, Europe and elsewhere.

Kunwar Narain, considered by his peers, readers and critics as one of the most perceptive and original voices in Indian poetry, has left a deep imprint on Hindi literature in the 20th and 21st centuries. His work is characterized by a great thematic richness and explores all aspects of life, from everyday contemporary concerns to profound metaphysical questions. Whether his poems deal with history and mythology, the moral and the socio-political, existential themes of life and death, nature and ecology, or memories and journeys, all express a profound humanism and embody a subtle blend between the apparent, outer simplicity of language and the mature, inner complexity of content. While the author's poems will serve as the basis and common thread for the presentations, broader considerations on the aesthetic, theoretical and editorial issues specific to the translation of poetry will enrich the content of this symposium.

Speakers are invited to address, but not exclusively, the following topics:

– criteria and decisions behind the selection of poems and themes privileged by the translators and/or the publishers;

- a reflective analysis of how the essential aspects of a poem are prioritised, the translation approach adopted and the stages leading to the final version of a translation established;
- a comparative study of the linguistic and cultural criteria specific to the languages of the translations published and their respective results;
- critical reflection on the notions of “translation”, “rewriting”, “transcreation”, and “adaptation”;
- insights and worldviews in the poet’s work emerging from its close reading and translation;
- analysis of the interaction between the author’s poetry and his poetic prose;
- reflection on contemporary ways of communicating and bringing Indian poetry to life outside its original environment, through and beyond books, in India and abroad; etc.

This symposium responds to a growing interest in the work of Kunwar Narain, of which several translations into different languages are forthcoming. Beyond the scientific exchange of the speakers’ contributions, it will also be an opportunity to hear the intimate poetry of this Indian author. The organizers intend to include this symposium in the programme of the *Printemps de la poésie 2021* (<http://printempspoesie.lyricalvalley.org/>), by presenting the festival audience with a trilingual (Hindi, French, English) public reading based on the first French translation of the author’s poems by Nicola Pozza and the new second volume of poems in English translation by the poet’s son, Apurva Narain.

Submission deadline

The deadline for the call for proposals is **1 September 2020**. We would be grateful if you could let us know your intention to participate as a speaker in the symposium by sending a working **title** as well as a **1500 character abstract** to nicola.pozza@unil.ch. We will inform you of our decision on the selected contributions by 17 October.

Each speaker will give a **30-minute presentation in English**. After every 2 or 3 speakers, a 30-minute discussion will be held with the other participants and the audience.

All travel, accommodation and meal expenses during the symposium will be covered by the Unil.

N.B. We will of course remain attentive to the evolution of the COVID-19 crisis and to the international situation (especially with regard to the possibility of travel). For the time being, we assume that the symposium will be able to take place, we but will notify the participants of any unexpected changes.

Organisation

Nicola Pozza (Unil, SLAS), in collaboration with Angela Sanmann (Unil, CTL) and Apurva Narain (New Delhi)