

Six English Poets about

May 2017 in Bucharest

Masterclass
of Literary Translation

The experience of translating
Romanian literature into English
with MTtLC students

Romania's Moment

Edited by Lidia Vianu



CONTEMPORARY
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The University of Bucharest. 2018

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Bucharest

Press Release

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Contemporary Literature Press is publishing today a book including the diaries and speeches of six English writers who were invited to work with Lidia Vianu's students in May 2017, in a five-day masterclass. The Romanian Cultural Institute hosted the masterclass, whose third edition will take place this year, between 16-20 April 2018. The students will translate Romanian short fiction into English.

This small book describes the English poets' reflections on the process of making Romanian fiction in translation sound more natural to the 'English ear'. As Joan Michelson so beautifully put it in this book, this may be **Romania's moment**. The University of Bucharest, The Romanian Cultural Institute, and the initiator of the series — Lidia Vianu, had, and still have, a large part to play in it.

Contemporary Literature Press publică un volum scris de șase poeți britanici, care au lucrat cu studenții Lidiei Vianu în mai 2017, în cadrul unui masterclass de traducere a prozei românești în limba engleză. Institutul Cultural Român a găzduit acel masterclass, care a ajuns acum la a treia ediție, proiectată să se desfășoare între 16-20 aprilie 2018. De data aceasta, se va traduce proză scurtă românească.

Volumul descrie colaborarea poezilor britanici cu studenții români. Cum spune Joan Michelson atât de inspirat în carte, cine știe, poate că acesta este într-adevăr **Romania's moment**. Dacă așa stau lucrurile, atunci Universitatea din București, Institutul Cultural Român și inițiatoarea seriei — Lidia Vianu, și-au reunit eforturile cu succes.

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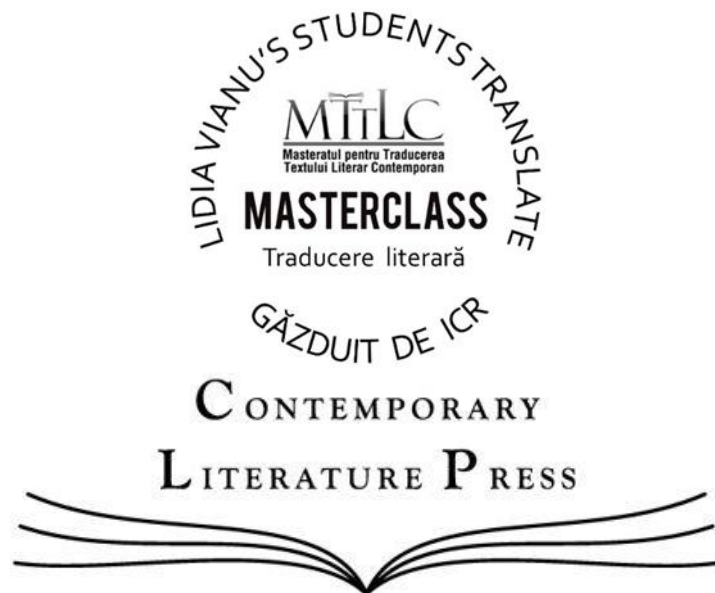
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*The extracts alerted me to a crossroad in history and culture that gives special importance to the translation of its literature. I am reminded of Spanish literature a generation after Franco, Israeli literature, a generation after the birth of the State, new literature from the former East Germany. Could this be **Romania's moment**?*

Joan Michelson



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Wendy French



Poem

How can it be winter now?
It's May in Bucharest
And young girls laugh by the river.



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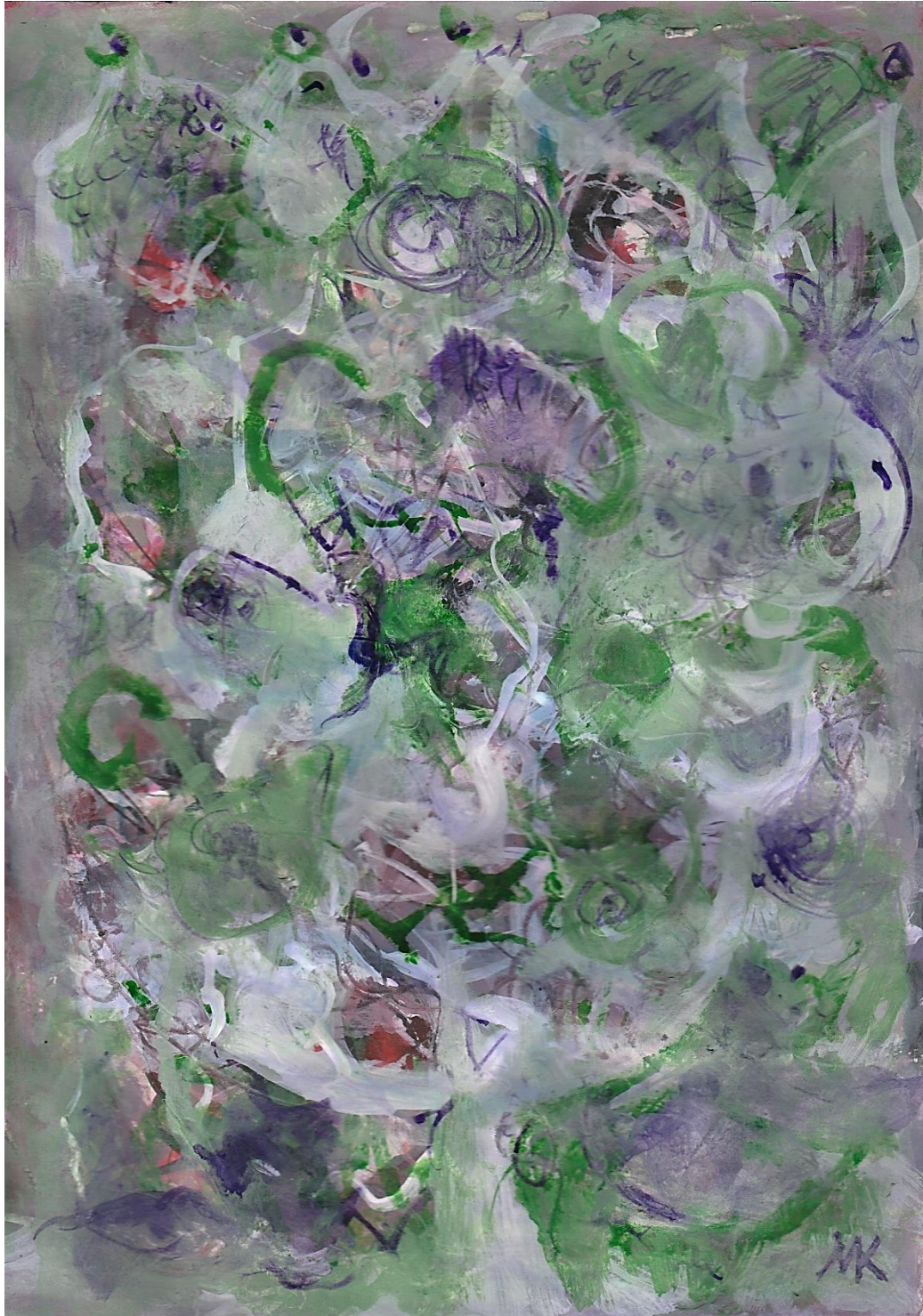
I've known winter and it comes when least expected. It's the same feeling I have when I see my dead father pushing up his grave. He never liked the dark. He was cremated, so his body would be set free, ashes flowing in the wind. The first day of winter is whenever I feel it. It could be October, November or even January. It can arrive in January when others have been bemoaning that cold of the morning for months. I always marvel at how the snowdrops, those tiny, delicate flowers push their heads through the hard earth. That's how I imagine my father to be when he prises open his coffin lid. Once winter came mid-August during the heat wave, the daisies lowering their heads in the summer breeze. No, it's not the temperature that affects my thoughts—it's this feeling that *it* has arrived and I never know when it's coming. Yesterday there was a scent of it in the air. But then today I arrived in Bucharest and the warmth from people drove winter back. There is a magic in this city that I so wish my father could see.

But I'm about to contradict myself. I think the scent is developing. I felt it when I looked into the eyes of a stranger and from seeing her eyes look away. Her sad face warned me. It's seeing the young girls drink beer and laugh by the river's edge. The tourists seem content to be just passing through. But I want more than this but don't know what it is and suddenly I find myself singing *And it's cold outside* and the fan flicks open to a pale sky as a solitary bird flies to a corner of the parchment and in my mind pages are turned on and the dates have gone, angles are forever shifting and the temperature swings to the burning hour of frost. Part of my heart is in Bucharest.



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Diary

For one week of my life I had a bed in Bucharest. If you'd asked me six months ago if I'd ever go to Bucharest, I'd have said, 'In my dreams', but, thanks to the passion of Professor Lidia Vianu and the generosity of spirit and never ceasing hard work from Anne Stewart, the dream came to fruition. The off-shoot of writing both prose and poems has been this journey to Bucharest. The highlight of the week for me was the collaboration between the students and myself. The sessions were entitled 'Masterclass, Professor Lidia Vianu's Students Translate'. Every day created a new challenge and the students were eager to learn, to understand and to ask questions and most importantly of all were able and willing to question me. The success of any translation project is the dialogue between the author, the translator and the native speaker of the language that the work is being translated into.

Sunday

Heathrow Airport

I arrived to find Maggie Sawkins looking as anxious as I felt but once through the customs—and for once I wasn't stopped—various pieces of metal in my body make me a hidden target for security, we relaxed. Through to the Departure Lounge we spotted Anne Stewart and her warm 'Hallo' made me feel that this was now good. We were all in this together. Six British poets, four of whom had never been to Romania and two, Peter Phillips and Anne, who had been involved with this project last year but we were now on the same mission, to work with Romanian MA students on their translations for their dissertation. The greatest impression that I was left with after the flight was the speed with which the Romania air hostess spoke. I wondered how anyone could keep up with listening to the speed of words. However in my group the students seemed to speak in a slower pace to one another when they were debating a concept.



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The hotel, The Golden Tulip, was welcoming and as we arrived just before 9pm we were relieved to find that we could eat in the bar/restaurant whenever we wanted. We didn't need much but it was a time to relax together and to get to know one another a little. I shared three starter salads with Maggie and they were delicious. I was relieved, the food was going to be good. I could sleep at night even though I had been allocated Room 101! Room 101 was the torture room in George Orwell's 1984... We played a game walking to work one morning asking each other what would be the worst living thing to be locked up with in Room 101. What would yours be?

Day 1 Monday

An excellent breakfast with fruits and cereals and cooked food and so much of everything it was difficult to know what to choose. It was dry so we decided to walk to the Romanian Cultural Institute, Aleea Alexandru, where our first session would take place. We did a slight detour and took a short cut which turned out to be longer but we were able to see the streets and buildings of a beautiful city. When we arrived the students were all sitting round long tables and looking at us wondering who they would be allocated to. Lidia was warm even though she'd probably been a bit anxious as we were five minutes late. She spoke to the students and Anne told the students a little bit of our working history. And then work began in earnest.

My first impression of my students was their smiles. I explained that after listening to their names we'd start straight away as we wanted to accomplish as much as we could in five days. I wished I'd taken cardboard for the students to write their names on and stand in front of them as this would have helped to learn who they were. I like to know people's names. It is important to me and I knew it would take me couple of days to memorise everyone.

Our sessions were 10-12 with a break then for about 15 minutes and then we worked until 2. I decided we'd look at four pieces of work each morning. I hadn't realised that there were 2nd and 1st year students in the group, six of each and that more time should be allocated to the 2nd year students. This knowledge came to me as I caught an atmosphere of some unrest but we were able to sort it out and once I had acknowledged that I know understood we could ensure the 2nd year students were given plenty of time to discuss their work. But I did stress that we learn from one



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another all of the time and we learn from hearing and reading other people's work and the pitfalls and highlights of their writing. This dialogue informs and helps us to develop our own translating and writing skills. My students were very generous with their comments to other students about different points of grammar and vocabulary that arose in a discussion.

I was very impressed with the competence and creativity that came from the students with their translations.

Every day there was something that came up that we debated. The first morning it was 'knock on wood'. After a debate we deleted this phrase and added to the text, 'hold your tongue' as 'knock on wood' hadn't quite caught the essence of the mother's words, in my mind, with the rest of the sentiment. I'm still not absolutely sure about this but this is one of the challenges of translating that makes the act/art of translation a little like solving a crime!

After the morning session finished some of the students were going to their paid jobs as they are all postgraduate students, some with families but all with responsibilities. I encouraged the four whose work we had looked at to type in up again with the corrections and to bring it back to read to us the following morning. We could then see how it sounded and if any other changes could be made. Although we were working on prose I did say that sound and tone are very important in any work that will be read either silently or aloud.

The six of us were escorted by Stefan to a delightful restaurant with a variety of choice on the menu. I had a Tuna salad and although the tuna was seared which I had not expected I could eat some of it and my fellow poets helped out by eating the rest! We walked back to the hotel and each went our own way until suppertime when we were taken by Bogdan to the National Poet of Romanian's restaurant where we were treated to a magnificent meal and wine was flowing. Maggie and I thought the table that was laden with food from the countryside was the main course and we filled out plates devouring bean humus as though we'd never seen a bean before! Then the plates were cleared and out came the main course! I could only eat one meatball and one small potato because my eyes had been bigger than my stomach. The music and the food were intoxicating. We hired a taxi back to the hotel as were tired and taxis are relatively cheap in Bucharest compared to London anyway. I knew I would sleep because the brain had been working in the morning and the wine worked in the



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evening!

We met Ioana Ieronim, a Romanian poet, who was kind and interesting and I was so pleased to have met her. She gave us all a copy of her book, *House of the People*, poetry and prose which is illuminating about the life and beliefs of Ceaușescu. It helped me to understand the plight of the people of Romania.

Day 2 Tuesday

I already felt a bond with my students. They were all early, bar one who works in the city court, and had to go to work before our sessions and again afterwards working until nearly midnight. This was the level of commitment of all of them. They wanted to do well. I wanted them to do well. We decided that the four people who had presented yesterday would read their pieces back after the coffee break and towards the end of the morning when bodies were failing slightly due to constant close attention to words and tiredness.

We kept the same formula, two pieces of work before the coffee break and two afterwards. Two of the students were disappointed as their author who had accepted an invitation to come and hear their work could not make it after all. They volunteered to go first.

It struck me today how working with translations can be likened to working with people who have had strokes. Work that I have done in England, helping people to find words, to be able to express themselves. The process is similar, the drawing out of people their meanings, what they really want to say and how to best say it. I have to be very careful not to put words into people's mouths and therefore change their meanings by voicing my words and not theirs. It's a very delicate balance between giving ideas but leaving the voice with the author and first translator.

After the session we went back to Restaurant Doina and ate another excellent lunch. We walked around the city to Revolutionary Square until it was time to go to the tour of National Theatre. Ionuț Mihai Corpaci explained how the theatre developed and we saw each of the stages within the whole building. This prepared us for Saturday's play and made the whole theatre visit more interesting.

Supper tonight was at the Casa Universitarilor. We had a room to ourselves but not one with a view!



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Day 3 Wednesday

The week is slipping away fast. There is still a lot of work to do and the enthusiasm of the students prevents tiredness taking over our bodies. We are being so well fed but our brains need it!

I love the way we debate words/phrases/meanings and I'm still pondering on choices we made and whether or not certain sentences could still be improved.

In the afternoon we walked round the old town. We walked for nearly five hours so decided to have a quieter evening and all ate in *The Golden Tulip* as we could drop into bed easily. Maggie made friends with the waiter who has visited Portsmouth. He looked after us all exceptionally well. He advised us that instead of brandy we would be better off with orange juice as we were working in the morning!

Day 4 Thursday

Today we finished all of the students' work and I had asked them to bring in a short passage that they were having particular difficulty with. We looked at the work of the 2nd years first and thrashed out what we hoped would improve the style of the passage.

I gave the students a sentence to do write down and write for five minutes as free writing. I was impressed by the creative passages that were read out. We finished the session early as the six of us gave a short poetry reading from our work to the whole group. We also heard Ioana Ieronim read which was very special.

Day 5 Friday

And so to the last day of intensive work. This was only a two hour session as there was a Round table at 12 o'clock with a debate about the morals of translation the rates of pay which are very poor.

Before the debate I did some more creative writing with my group as they appeared to enjoy that and I certainly enjoyed listening to their voices. A different side to their personalities came through. I only wish we could have taken this work further



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and worked with their writing voices. But there was no time.

My students gave me a beautiful traditional blouse and they asked me to wear it on Saturday to the theatre. I took some books and anthologies for them to choose and keep.

The afternoon was spent with Ioana at the Peasant's Village and eating in a very special restaurant. I have to thank Ioana for her time when she is so busy.

I have had the week of a life-time working with and getting to know my group. I feel like Miss Jean Brodie in *The Prime of...* and want them all to do so well.

Thank you so very much.

Day 6 Saturday

We took the morning slowly and then had lunch at Elena's house where her mother had prepared a banquet for us. It was relaxed and so good to visit a home. The time went very quickly and we had to go back to the hotel to change before the theatre visit in the evening.

It was a highlight meeting up with the students again and Elena joining us as we now all go on our separate journeys through life.

Bon chance dear students, *bon chance*. You have energised me and given me a new zest for language.



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Speech

An Intended Speech for Bucharest

Well, where do I begin? What a week! Leaving London to fly to Bucharest on May 7th, I had no idea of the strength of the students' work that we were about to hear and see, I had no idea about the warmth and hospitality we were about to receive, I had no idea about the generosity of spirit and laughter that would surround us and I had no idea that when the week's end would come I would be as sad as I was to leave my heart in Bucharest!

Thank you so very much to Professor Vianu for inviting us here. Her passion and vision are exemplary. I wish I could study under her supervision even now! Her collaborations with Anne Stewart have led to this whole project and its success.

Thank you to everyone who sponsored the project in different ways and therefore made it happen.

And a special thanks to my students for their hard work and determination to succeed. I wish very one every chance in life.

Thank you to all who have been involved in this project.



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Joan Michelson



Poem

Symphony of Songs

The summer I discovered Mahler
I learned of the many deaths he suffered

and that he spent the warmer months
composing music in a forest house.

I listened as if his songs were mine,
as if his birds woke in my garden.

With the strike of drum and cymbal
I felt my heart alive again with grief

only this time, it was given voice
to linger and repeat. And came to me

in the echo of his aching fading,
as one by one his instruments grow mute,

a whistling like a familiar calling.



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Diary

Dinners, Delights and Dedication

First the warmth we met from the Romanian people.

Next, the food: beetroot salad with horseradish lingering on the tongue and in the nostrils, milky orange pumpkin with green vegetable soup, and the breakfast combination of eggs, smoked salmon, white cheese, black olives, sautéed courgettes and cremini mushrooms, which is a delectable balance of salty, oily smooth and crumbly.

And then the image in the framed photograph hanging above the bedhead in my room at the Golden Tulip Hotel on Calea Victoriei at the junction of Bulevardul Dacia. The sepia reproduction could be the building on the other side of B-dul Dacia when it opened in 1880 as the Embassy of Germany. I learned the history of the building from Robert Stoica, the hotel receptionist. He told me more. On 23 August 1944 when the Red Army marched in, the German ambassador shot first his secretary and then himself. The following year, the building became a Theatre; after the 1989 revolution, the Casino Victoriei. The building has been empty since the casino closed in 2010.

Early the next morning I sit at my desk in room 606 looking through the window. The roof, which meets my eye-line, is rusting. The rust spills over the edge and runs in streaks down the face of the neo-classic structure. Boards have been inserted where glass panes are missing and the arched windows on the first floor are shuttered from within like blinded eyes.

It was as if the receptionist introduced me to the representative building on the night of my arrival. Unknowingly he was providing background for the texts the MA students at the University of Bucharest were translating.

Days One to Three

The first text we looked at was a chapter from 'Hotel Universal' by the contemporary Romanian writer, Simona Sora. The narrative of her hotel, which has



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gone through a change of name and function, leaps from the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth when 'dilapidated, damp and infested', 'Hotel Universal' has become a student hall of residence. Bearing its history, while fusing time, it moves beyond our own into the future. Chapter IV 'Meditation on the five senses', which we looked at closely, offers this compression of time through the image of chocolate: its introduction to Budapest, its call to the senses, its addictive taste, its commercial function, mystic aura and exploitation of Indian cocoa plantation workers whose 'souls' lie within the Parisian-style yellow wrapping paper and tin cases brought from Vienna.

Like this text, others that we worked on together proved to employ dark humour, poetic image and political innuendo. This is achieved through the authors tone and the dexterous handling of their story telling. It offers the reader narratives that resonate with under-layers and linger in the mind. The writing lured me, firing an excitement about developments in contemporary Romanian literature and what I am to discover within it.

The student generation has grown up in a Romania open to the world. This point of change brings a unique perspective to contemporary art. The counterpoint between then and now, between the students' world and the one their parents grew up in, between two different societal structures, raises questions about changing attitudes. As the week of seminars has progressed, with a focus on English and Romanian coupled in transit for transformation from one language into the other, I have become aware of a culture recreating itself.

The extracts alerted me to a crossroads in history and culture that gives special importance to the translation of its literature. I am reminded of Spanish literature a generation after Franco, Israeli literature, a generation after the birth of the State, new literature from the former East Germany. Could this be Romania's moment?

Day Four

I feel the pull of all I am meeting: the country in which I have landed, the Victoria area of Bucharest with its solid Neo-Romanian buildings, the literature the students have translated that we are polishing together, the dedication of everyone involved in this intensive week of discovery, learning and exchange, possibilities in



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this work which opens a larger world for the students, the ready humour with its ironic edging and above all, the warmth. I keep thinking: What a wonderful place! What a wonderful people! How lucky I am to have been invited to participate in this unique event.

Exchanging literatures, I have selected short passages from different English writers for them to translate into Romanian for one another and working with each other's translation, without seeing the original English, translate them back into English to then compare with the original and to discover options in language use in a discussion. In the improvement of language use for the English translations, we are working across the range including grammatical issues, sentence structure, pace, cadence, concision and identifying characteristic differences between the two languages. Perhaps most troublesome is the use of verbs. One in particular we contended with is the use in English of the present continuous, which can contain past, present and future. Romanian does not have this verb form and has to compromise, draw in adverbial phrases designating time to compensate. Also we found that the use of English by nineteenth century writers like George Eliot are closer in linguistic forms and use than contemporary British and American. As our speeding times reduce traditional more formal constructions and draw less on Latinate words, translation from Romanian into English is more challenged.

It is impossible to calculate the value and investment for the future of the work put in in this week of seminars. Twenty hours of intensive face to face work is an immense step within studies of this kind. Learning has taken leaps both for the students and for the poet-teachers.

Day Five

The students and I reviewed the week together. I was pleased to find that they found the sessions helpful and engaging ('not boring'), and that they could follow and understand my language and comments. In particular they liked the portioning of time between the editing, improving and polishing of the translations they had prepared for the seminar sessions and the challenges offered for other approaches to translation. We shared an emphatic 'yes' for the value of this exceptional opportunity for them as for us. I hope this is but a beginning for a development of an expanding



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translation and exchange programme.





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Speech

I would like to express my full and heartfelt thanks to Lidia and all those who supported an exceptional opportunity for a week in our lives as readers, writers, students and educators. The spirit, energy, devotion, continuous attention and sheer hard work that lies behind the development, promotion and execution of the University of Bucharest's MA translation project is commendable and beyond, daunting.

The vision and sense of mission which drives it forward is a huge step for intercultural relations. Long may it prosper. It is a force for good in our world.





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Graham Mummery



Poem

Why-Where-What-Who?

What clouds go back to survey
the land they sent rain onto
and count the crops?

Why do we keep looking for salvation
in the images of clouds
when we can find it in ourselves?

Where in the depths of magma
will the metals of today
reform and offer themselves?

Who put the metals into ore,
crushed the wood that became coal,
fertilised the land that feeds us?



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Diary

8 May 2017

Day One starts well with good breakfast at hotel. Staff friendly and helpful. With the other poets I walk to the Romanian Cultural Institute. There we meet Lidia Vianu for the first time. After introductions I am introduced to the students I am to teach, helping them with their translations from Romanian to English.

They present copies of texts they have worked on. My brief is to help them make the English they translate into become more natural to an English reader. I'm impressed with the portions from two texts they provide, two students have worked on each. One from a novel about exploring the past in the Balkans, another an experimental piece of prose.

I'm impressed by their skill in English. I don't speak any Romanian but I get them to read the original to help me get any messages from it. From past experience of readings in other languages something powerful will still come through. It does. I'm also impressed by their spirit. They are taking risks. I ask then to name anything specific they might need me to help them with. The texts are interesting. I would want to read more from the authors they have made available to me today. More tomorrow.

In the evening we are invited to the cafe of Mircea Dinescu who is a poet and local celebrity chef. The food is superb! Get to meet the poet Ioana Ieronim and her husband. Mircea is full of heart and a force of life, though does not speak English. Ioana too has much heart. We talk about poetry and music, especially about violinist/composer George Enescu whose house I hope to visit.

Meeting of hearts through language is what translation is about. I am feeling lots of heart here in Bucharest. More tomorrow.

9th May 2017

At breakfast, I leave some of my food at my table to get something else from the buffet. When I come back, it has been cleared, so I have to go back for more. It's



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busy in the breakfast area so perhaps that explains it. The waiters and waitresses are still being helpful with a smile, so I laugh and forget any transgressions I might feel.

Later we walk again to the Romanian Cultural Institute. There is someone from the British Council. We hear about problems of getting funding for things. They do have a similar problem here in Romania. Yet there seems to be so much commitment here to the arts, and it comes from love.

This is when I look at more translated work from students. I get the sense they are presenting me with things that they find challenging. Bring it on! I am also learning so much about Romanian history and culture all through them and something of how their language works. When I say this, one of my students challenges me: "You are being colonial with my culture," he teases. I'm not offended. I say to him: "I know your sense of humour." Then add "And you are being politically correct." He laughs.

I see him later as he accompanies us to the National Theatre here in Bucharest. He tells me he feels in the groups we are sharing a lot of laughter. There is passion also in what's being presented to me. Passion and laughter: for me when we have both we engage fully with life.

I see this again at the theatre. We are accompanied by my student and are given a tour of this impressive complex with 7 stages by Ionuț Mihai Corpaci whose passion and love for theatre is obvious. Later we return to our hotel for drinks and more laughter. Romania, you are giving us your best.

10th May 2017

In the morning it's raining heavily so we take a taxi to the Romanian Cultural Institute. For the first part of the events we work on more translations. Two students do different translations of the same piece in different styles. We have now done all the pieces they initially intended to bring. Tomorrow we decide they will bring problem pieces they have left. So for the second half we do a creative writing exercise writing a piece using one word selected from the work presented so far. There are some interesting things in each first draft, which they develop further in a rewrite part of the exercise. Often they find out they might produce a deeper piece out of the exercise. This takes us up to lunch.

Each day have been given lunch in a wonderful restaurant nearby in some



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woods. The food there is excellent as it has been in each place. After lunch we do some sightseeing. We get to the Enesco Museum, but it's closed. I have to make do with gazing into the eyes carved into a statue at another part of the town. A few minutes later we are at the square with the balcony where Nicolae Ceaușescu made his last stand. We reach a bookshop and find editions in English of the poet Marin Sorescu, who our friend guiding us remembers seeing daily on a bus. More to see tomorrow when we are due to do our reading.

11th May 2017

At last the sun has begun to shine. We are driven to a new venue for the Masterclasses with round tables. As my group of students is smaller than those of my colleagues, we elect to use only one. Like King Arthur, I suggest, and am pleasantly surprised to hear my students know the allusion.

The previous evening one student had suggested: "You have the language of Shakespeare." I responded "You have the language of Eminescu," suddenly realising he may have the capacity to know more than I of both traditions. How many Brits know of Romania's national poet? Many have little knowledge of the Bard also.

The workshop consists mainly of working on a few dense paragraphs of describing what in brief might be called an existential crisis. It taxes my abilities to translate. I'm grateful for conversations I've had with George Szirtes and David Constantine on translation. I remember George saying how a translation is a reflection of the original. It applies here, as do other things David taught me, how everything in the text must be translated. We do this here by taking out one adjective from the original and replacing it with a verb that implies the same in the action. Thus this text would be more readable to British audiences – I hope.

During the break we are told the reading will take place in the second half of the workshop. There are readings from Joan Michelson, Wendy French, Maggie Sawkins, Peter Philips and Ann Stewart. There is an additional reading from Romanian poet Ioana Ieronim with a poem about the clothes we wear and how they fit the many identities we have. This, as Ioana mentions, fits in nicely with my poem "Meeting My Innards" which I read out.

After that we have the afternoon in the old town of Bucharest. In a souvenir



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shop I find some recordings of George Enesco playing Bach. Difficult to get in the UK, even for a classical recording buffs like me. We haven't yet got to his house, but it's still on the cards.

During the break at the workshop there was a woman from PEN. I voice to her some thoughts from my heart. It's easy doing this work because it is something I love. But also, these translations I'm seeing are something special. Some of these students can write very elegant English even though it is their second, or even third language. A translation is an act of love between languages and cultures.

12th May 2017

Final day of teaching the students. One brings a beautiful poem she has written in the voice of Tutankhamun's wife who was also that pharaoh's half-sister. I believe it is the first time this student has presented a poem of hers to a group. It has a delicate and even sensual side to it, which is in beautiful English which maybe even has an appealing hint of a Romanian accent. Though that last bit should be taken as reflecting the music of the piece, not on the quality of the English written which is fluent.

Another produces several prose poems that have an experimental side to them. Again, the English is fluid and requires few corrections to make it publishable. It strikes me with these students, showing their own writing shows how impressive their command is of English, when they are not having to find ways to use it to serve another writer's words. It has been both privilege and pleasure to work with these students.

The latter part of the morning is taken up with a round table with a number of Romanian translators working in fields including subtitles and literature, as well as academics. The point is made that part of the work being done is the hard task of translating their own literature so it can be seen better outside Romania. From pieces I've worked on, there are exciting things being done, which have a Romanian vibration. Surely this is only a matter of time. A lot of this is down to the inspirational work of Lidia Vianu who has organised the project and who also speaks.

After the work we are taken to lunch. The food once again is marvellous. The hospitality here has been outstanding and delivered in a warm open-hearted manner which has made this trip such a delight. While walking in the town, I have a



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conversation about Vlad Tepes (aka Dracula) whose picture I've seen in the town. There is another angle on him here to the one I learned in Hungary where Dracula also has a different meaning. Vlad himself died in Bucharest, I find. If aspects of his history are still gruesome he was far from the vampire of Stoker's novel.

Tomorrow evening we go to a closing ceremony for events here at the National Theatre. It will be a sad departure. Bucharest is a fascinating and even beautiful city even if parts of it are in need of repair. But its premier glory for me is its people.

13th May 2017

Day starts with my much-wanted visit to the Enesco museum. Beautiful manuscripts in such a tidy hand. Pictures of composers including Bartok, Brahms etc. Also him with other great violinists including Kreisler, Oistrakh and of course Menuhin. My homage to Enesco on some ways is also to Yehudi whose teacher the former was. There are also pictures of Enesco's princess. But the highlight is the small house behind the museum with a room the great man composed in, which is some ways much more intimate.

Lunch is with our Romanian friend who invites all of us to a meal cooked by her mother. We are offered a tempting selection of Romanian dishes. As with all meals we've had here, the selection is marvellous and prepared with love.

For the evening we are invited to a closing ceremony which consists of a one woman show at the National Theatre given by Simona Măicănescu in English. I meet her afterwards at the bar. She is a charming woman fully engaged in her work. She would like to bring her show to London.

Also present at the Theatre are the British Ambassador and the Romanian Minister of Culture plus a number of other dignitaries. All delightful to meet. Lidia Vianu advises me these posts have been seen far. The Ambassador tells me he is aware of my Facebook posts.

After the performance my students present me with two volumes of Romanian poetry in bilingual editions. They tell me how much they enjoyed working with me. The feeling is mutual. Been a privilege to meet you and I love you all. Bucharest & Romania have treated us well. So much love comes from these workshops. Thanks to all connected with this including Lidia Vianu, the Romanian Cultural Institute, my



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students and the Romanian People.





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Speech

What to say after an amazing week here in Bucharest? The hospitality, the people, the amazing texts presented, the commitment and love of each of these students who have brought them to me.

It's that word, "love," I want to dwell on most. The English writer Rudyard Kipling once wrote words that suggest East and West may never meet. Fortunately, he also suggested a few lines later that when people do meet, there is neither East nor West. It's the last part I have felt most this week and none of the pessimism of the earlier words.

I believe translation is an act of love between languages and cultures. This is what I have felt in the texts presented to me, the beauty of the translations which reflects the original authors, and in the skill and commitment of the students who live the visionary potential Lidia Vianu offers us through this project. I hope I too live that love and vision in this dialogue of our cultures.

It has been both privilege and pleasure to be here and live this vision. May we bring this to our lives, both our cultures and through that offer something, even if it is in a small way, to the world.





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Peter Phillips



Poem

Love Poem to Bucharest

You're the gem, the bracelet, the drop of dew
you wear when I think of you.

You're a glitzy dress, a didgeridoo
a silk scarf fluttering, a cheese fondue.

You're a smile of smoked salmon on my plate,
a prawn cocktail, a piece of carrot cake.

You're a cassata ice cream, a Friday night date
an apple pie with custard, a line to translate.

You're not a courgette, a plate of peas
or a sprig of flowering broccoli.



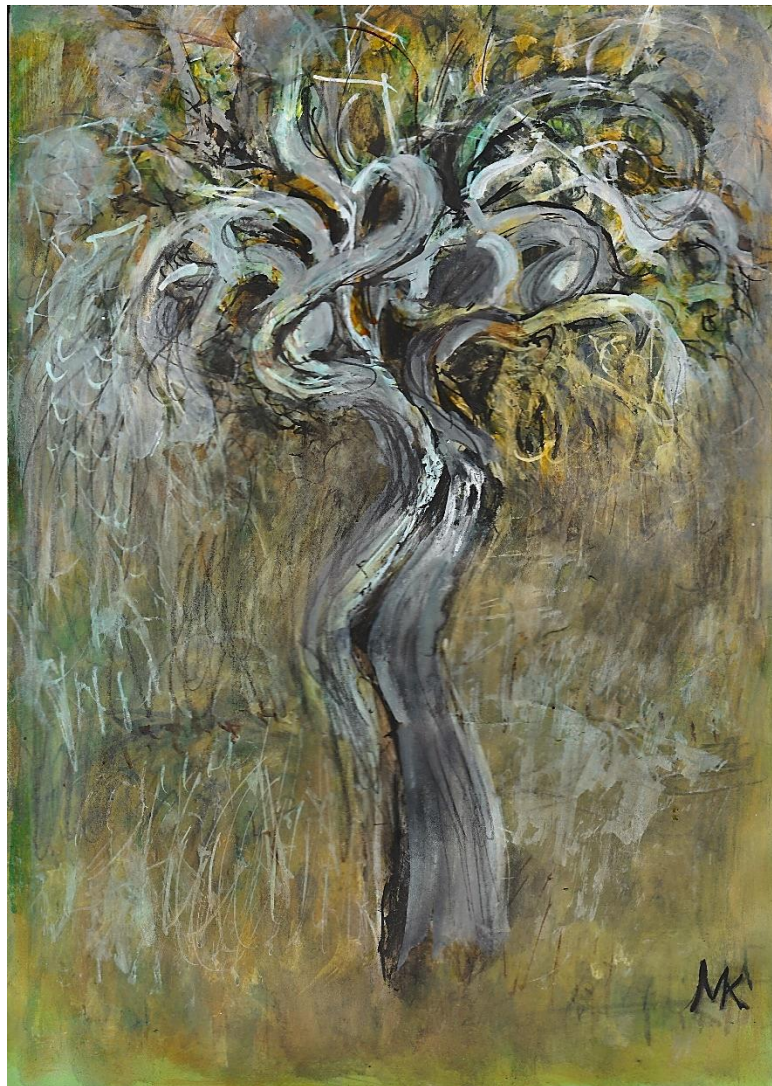
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You're not a lentil, a nut stir-fry,
a raisin loaf or chilli chutney.

Everything about you is wonderfully bliss,
you are prettier than Rome and lovelier than Paris.

I'm overheated and absolutely wordless,
so I'll end this poem with a kiss. x





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Diary

1. The Students:

They are hardworking, enthusiastic and tried their best to help make sense of their translations. We struggled with long lines, extensive use of adjectives strewn like confetti over the page. Often sense and meaning was obscure. Sometimes it seemed not to exist. However, they were patient and keen to find solutions. Although some had day jobs and one even worked in a call centre at night, they were cheerful, respectful and awake. They wanted to find the right answer and were impressive.

We had time to do some creative writing and they embraced this. Firstly, I introduced a sensuous poem written by our poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy. It was called *Warming Her Pearls*. We all read parts of it and then discussed what it was about. Then I offered a poem written by the American poet, Elizabeth Bishop. It was a villanelle and therefore conformed to a particular type of rhyme scheme. We compared poems, what made them different and which one they preferred. They were evenly divided about which one was their favourite.

As exercises, they were asked to:

- * Complete about ten similes.

- * Write a love poem and then another one with a first line suggested by me. The line was "A voice of jasmine and stephanotis".

- * Write a piece of ten line prose, using ten words we had all suggested.

Considering English was not their first language they did extremely well. They were brave. Although some of them did not write a love poem. I understood. Good love poems are not easy to write, especially in a foreign language.

When I was their age, I would not have had the confidence or foresight to expose myself to such an inspiring and specialist course. It's not only the act of translation which is important it's the exposure to a different culture. In these changing times that must not be underestimated.



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2. The British Poets' Poetry Readings with Ioana Ieronim:

What fun. Where did our nerves go? I didn't see or hear any flying round the room. This was because we were greeted with a such a warm welcome. Thank you Ioana for your memorable poems, I'm so pleased you read.

3. The Round Table discussion:

It was fascinating but sad to learn of the problems in finding the finance for your translation work. There is no easy answer, but it was stressed that the quality of translations was crucial.

4. Tour of the National Theatre:

Thank you for such brilliant tour around the building, so eloquently conducted by Ionuț Mihai Corpaci. He perfectly explained with love, its ethos and what this theatre means to Romania and her people. The one person show *The Fever*, was electric.

5. Dinner at Mircea Dinescu's restaurant *Lacrimi și Sfinți*:

Thanks Mircea, I want to be buried in your restaurant under the floor, if there's still space. I expect it's already booked up.

6. To Ariadna Ponta of The Romanian Cultural Institute.

Thanks to everyone for working so hard in hosting our visit, it was really appreciated.



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Speech

Around 2005 I decided I wanted to learn about translating and signed up to do a course involving four languages. I think they were French, Italian, German and Swedish. Unfortunately, it was a disaster. I had no previous language skills apart from schoolboy French. The course was over four evenings and lasted about two hours for each session.

My inexperience soon showed as I struggled with meaning, grammar and syntax. Even though the words were provided it became impossible to learn and there was insufficient time to give me proper attention. That was not the purpose of the course. Naturally, I developed antipathy towards translation.

Things changed when I was introduced to the present **poetry pRO** project. Polishing student's English translations became fascinating and enjoyable. The exposure to the person behind the words linked to the cultural visit was a revelation. I'm enormously thankful to the foresight of Professor Lidia Vianu. She has been responsible for conceiving something hugely worthwhile that is substantial in number of ways. It's not a fleeting success, her students will attest to that for many years to come.





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Maggie Sawkins



Poem

Parliament Street 1977

My mother said it was like living in a rabbit hutch – the terraced house where I was born. So perhaps it wasn't such a fluke that led me to work in a tiny office in the brass-plaques 'narrowest street in the world'. Three days a week I typed up articles on an IBM Daisywheel for the *Exeter Flying Post*. When the crossword puzzle compiler went off sick I was asked to step in. But my clues, I was told, were either too cryptic or not cryptic enough. Once the editor invited me along to a lunchtime launch of *The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady*. It was the first time I'd seen a caviar canapé or tasted champagne. Back at the office we were so tipsy we had to lie down on the floor.

This is how the future finds us. The walls tilting inwards. The door left open.



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Diary

Arrival

Six of us British Poets, along with luggage, squash into the airport taxi and the driver delivers us to the plush Golden Tulip Hotel. I'm so pleased that my room on the eighth floor has a view across the rooftops. As I look out I notice an old mansion type house directly opposite that looks deserted. Over the next few days I will come across many such buildings in this intriguing city.

After freshening up, we meet in the hotel restaurant for an evening meal. I'm a fussy eater but the menu, thankfully, looks more than appetising. I order beetroot salad in horseradish sauce while the others order something heartier. We wash it all down with a bottle of red Romanian wine.

Tomorrow we will be delivering the first of our masterclasses at the Romanian Cultural Institute. Anne tells us that the students will be eager to get going. I'm not sure what to expect so I'm preparing to 'play it by ear'. Fellow poet, Joan Michelson, is worried about having to sit in one place for too long and announces she is going to take her hot water bottle. I'm worried about not being able to sleep and have another glass of red wine. Wendy French has promised to ring me at 7 am – if she survives her night in 'Room 101'. I go to sleep comforted by the sharing of human frailties with my fellow poets.

First Day

I wake while it's still dark and look at my watch. It's 5.30, which means (as Romania is two hours ahead) it's really 3.30 am. I close my eyes, cross my fingers, and wait to drop off. A short while later the phone rings. It's Wendy French with my wake-up call. I go down to the restaurant where a breakfast feast awaits: mozzarella cheese, grapes, ham, scrambled eggs, olives, rolls, tomatoes, and cucumber. I join the other five poets who are already there tucking in. Alongside Graham Mummery's teacup I notice three large pills and a map of Bucharest.

We enjoy a meander through this new city, searching for the place where we



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are to meet our students for the first time. Wendy remarks that we must look a motley crew. After a while, trying to follow the map and searching for short cuts, we realise we are lost. We ask a passer-by for help.

Eventually we arrive at the Romanian Cultural Institute where Prof. Lidia Vianu introduces us to a sea of student faces. We are then led to our allotted table. My first translation workshop is about to begin and I'm worried that I won't remember anyone's name.

The first text to be read aloud by the first student is an extract from a memoir written in the form of letters. The text's title has been translated as 'The Trader of Beginnings' and the subject of the letters is Kafka, one of my favourite writers. The first thing I notice is that Romanian sentences tend to be longer than the English equivalent. However, I am very impressed with this student's translation.

An interesting part of the process is the unravelling of nuances, especially when it comes to figurative language. For example, in another of the prose pieces, I discover that what had been described as 'a brown penny' turns out to be a tobacco stain on the ceiling. This is the character in the text speaking:

'And if I read, I smoke. Someone before me had the same habit, because otherwise there wouldn't be a brown penny on the ceiling.'

Mmm.

After this first session, us six British Poets are escorted to the impeccably swish Restaurant Doina by Bogdan, our brilliant student guide. On the way I ask him if he has ever seen a bear—I had been reading about Romanian wild life in my Lonely Planet Guide. Unfortunately, he tells me, he has only seen a bear once, and that was in a zoo.

In the evening another student, Stefan, escorts us to the restaurant of the national hero poet, Mircea Dinescu. When we arrive, the food is laid out on the table: a bean dip and a kind of ratatouille made with spinach, and olives and bread, and it is all delicious. The meal, which we discover, was only the starter, is accompanied by wine from Mircea's vineyard, plus three musicians on accordion, fiddle and something else, who play American tunes, such as Sinatra's 'I Did it My Way'. Our Romanian host asks them if they can play more traditional music, which they do—but



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with much less gusto. When the main course arrives (lamb meatballs and salad) Wendy and myself wish we hadn't gorged ourselves so much on the first course. There is little room for anything else.

After the meal we climb into a bright yellow taxi and meet up for a nightcap in the Golden Tulip restaurant. After discovering we had to get up in the morning to deliver workshops, the waiter does his best to discourage us from ordering a round of plum brandies. *'You will need a clear head,'* he says. *'You're better off having orange juice.'* However, we are not deterred. Anne gets her plum brandy, Graham an ouzo, Peter an Irish Whisky. My Courvoisier, arrives in a brandy glass balanced over a glass of hot water, on top of which is a serviette containing coffee beans. Wendy, who is being virtuous, ends up drinking the hot water. Joan has wisely gone to bed.

The waiter tells me that he has been to my home city of Portsmouth. He remarks on the number of people he'd seen there with tattoos, including a pregnant woman. Come to think of it, I haven't noticed any Romanian people with tattoos since I've been here. It's quite refreshing to see people's skin 'in the nude'.

Second Day

At breakfast the restaurant is full of young professional types attending a conference in the hotel. We arrive at the Romanian Cultural Institute 15 minutes early just as the staff are laying the tables with snacks for lunch.

Some of the students tell me that their texts are 'difficult' to understand even in the original Romanian language. One extract, written from the viewpoint of a dog, for example, has us all baffled. I was glad I had taken it back to the hotel yesterday so I could become more acquainted with it. One paragraph, which describes the dog drifting in and out of a dream, reminds me of James Joyce's stream of consciousness prose in *Ulysses*.

In the evening Ștefan and Bogdan escort us to the National Theatre. Along the way I ask Bogdan about the earthquake of 1977. I notice that many of the older, deserted buildings have a large red spot declaring them unfit for habitation. I try to imagine what it must be like to live with the threat of the earth disappearing from under your feet.

Ionuț Mihai Corpaci, the artistic consultant of the National Theatre, is waiting



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to give us a guided tour. We learn much about the theatre's history and about the architecture during the Ceausescu era. It's refreshing to hear that the Romanian government supports the theatre so well. Seats, we are told, are a lot cheaper than in the UK. In the basement gallery, there is a statue of Toma Caragiu, one of Romania's greatest actors, whose life was cut short in the 1977 earthquake.

After dinner at the University we return to The Golden Tulip for a nightcap. The waiter tells us that he is going to the Isle of Wight Pop Festival in the summer. I tell him that I was there when Jimi Hendrix played. I think he's impressed.

Third Day

Today it's cold and the students arrive in dribs and drabs for our workshop. Translation in some ways is not so unlike the process of workshopping poems in one's own language. Entering the mindset of the writer is a slow and intimate process. Sometimes it seems there are endless possibilities, endless interpretations. Today the students ask me about poems that rhyme. They are interested to know whether, as a poet, I would prefer to lose the rhyme or the meaning. I tell them that most of my poems are written in free verse.

On the way back to the Golden Tulip, we pass Revolutionary Square and the monument of Heroes and Martyrs that has been nicknamed 'the baked potato'. I think how in English we would probably call it 'the jacket potato'.

Fourth and Fifth Days (rolled into one)

Sunshine. Hurrah! At last I can wear the summer dress and flip flops I bought for the journey.

During these last two sessions, I introduce the group to some creative writing exercises, including automatic writing and riddles. It is great to see the students so inspired and equally wonderful to hear them read their own creations. The imaginative quality and verve of their writing is impressive. We finish our last session with the writing of a group riddle poem.

Here it is:



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What Am I?

I come in all shapes and sizes.
I can open the door.
I have more than one eye
but I can't see.
I slip through holes
but not in the ground.
Sometimes I'm told to be quiet.
I can be made of chocolate.
I can be made of bone.
I spend most of my life tied down
but if you eat too much
I might fly away.
I'm there at the beginning.
I am the last resort.

Collaborative Poem

Sixth Day

In the afternoon, we take a yellow taxi to Elena Nistor's home, where her mother has cooked us a traditional Romanian dinner. It's a privilege to see where and how real people live. On the way, we come across a beggar dodging in and out of moving traffic. He is wearing hardly any clothes, his body is covered in burns, and his arm is a stump. The taxi driver dismisses my exclamation. I wonder about the plight of people who have lost everything and who have very little left to lose.

In the evening, we return to the National Theatre to see 'The Fever', a powerful one woman dramatic monologue and commentary on the divisions between affluence and poverty. During the performance, I find myself dreaming about bringing my own one woman play, 'Zones of Avoidance', to this beautiful theatre in Bucharest. In one of my sessions the students told me that issues like mental illness and addiction are not



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spoken about openly in Romania.

During the reception, the artistic consultant gives me his card and invites me to send him details of my play. Afterwards I speak to the English Ambassador. 'What does an Ambassador do?' I ask. He tells me that this morning he attended the funeral of a Romanian tourist who recently died after jumping from a bridge during the recent terrorist attack in London. Tomorrow we will be going home.

Post Script

I'm back in Portsmouth—the city of tattoos—and for the past two days I have been reading Ioana Ieronim's, anthology, 'House of the People'. Her words, written in poetry alongside the testimonies of others, are a truly powerful way of sharing history. I realise how little I know, and feel inspired to learn more about Romania. One day I will return.

Answer to Riddle: A button



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Speech

I must admit I was a little anxious about this visit to Romania, but I'm so glad I said 'yes' to Anne Stewart's invitation to take part in this unique project. I would like to thank Prof. Vianu, for making something as extraordinary as this happen. Also, I would like to thank my lovely group of students for their brilliant words, and for listening to my own story so attentively. And last but not least, a big thank you to Ștefan and Bogdan for escorting us here and there and for making the city of Bucharest come to life. It's truly been one of the best experiences of my life. One of the most rewarding things about teaching others is that you learn so much yourself.



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Anne Stewart



Poem

Learning at the RCI

for the students of MTTL

Loving this academic role, recalling
my one ambition, when I was small,
to grow up to be a teacher, I wonder
'Did I miss my calling?'

Behind me, the troubled road, turned wrong.
An ignorant life. Its sorry song. But there's no
purpose to excuses. Better, the gratitude learned
from dark turned bright by love and years.

Why wonder, about that road not taken,
'Did it miss me? Did it feel a ghost of loss?
Hope that I might turn? Did it miss me not at all?'
I doubt it noticed an absentee.



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And what could I have offered, before I learned
this passion of my own? Safer, better, wiser,
this elderly glistening dawn. Late glimmer.
For those who came before, for you, for all.





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Diary

The road signs welcome us to Bucharest. The taxi driver points out cultural sites on the journey in the dark. Finding Ioana Ieronim's note written for Peter (from last year's visit) in my phrasebook, I read it out again to him now. 'Tuica de prune, vă rog, dacă se poate'. Our taxi driver bursts into laughter – and here we are again, at the Golden Tulip. It feels like a home from home.

Monday:

Last year's visit was so rewarding, working on translations of poetry, and I'm looking forward to the switch from poetry to prose. I'm looking forward to meeting the students and am surprised – and delighted – that several of the students were also in last year's poetry groups. Amongst the students and organisers, new friends, and renewal of acquaintance with 'old friends'. What could be nicer in a beautiful city in a foreign land?

We take a shortcut and arrive 10 minutes late. We're lucky. The texts haven't arrived yet and we have time to talk with the students before we begin. They are keen to get started! Their work is so nearly perfect that we make fast progress and, already, I'm planning additional work in case we should 'run out of work' by the end of the week.

We find that we have 'working pairs' – two students having worked on the same texts, each bringing a different fragment from it. It's interesting – and impressive – to find that their translated voices 'cohere'.

As last year, the students are keen to act as guides between venues, and it's a pleasure to hear them so proud and appreciative of their city and culture as they point out landmark sites and tell us their history.

In the evening, we renew other acquaintances: Mircea and Maşa Dinescu, Ioana Ieronim. Pinning Mircea down – he's seated at another table with important guests – to present a few small gifts is a hard task and I have to grasp his shirt to hold him in place! Everyone laughs, even the musicians, when he takes the gift for Maşa – a potted orchid – and dances with it.



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Tuesday:

My group is joined by author Doina Ruști—we are working on Alexandra Victoria's translation of Ruști's 'Patru bărbați plus Aurelius' (Four men plus Aurelius)—and Prof. Jim Brown, who has taught nearly all of the students at one time or another. When they leave, we are joined by an experienced translator (English into Romanian). It's interesting that more questions arise in their presence and I decide to probe more deeply—and obliquely—into the original Romanian linguistic choices for the remainder of the week.

Two students, Stefan and Bogdan, escort us to the National Theatre of Bucharest (TNB) and they, and a third student, Amalia, join us on the tour. It's amazing! Seven theatres, some of the most technically flexible stage set-ups in Europe and beyond. Romanian design, Austrian construction. One theatre could have been made for putting on Maggie's 'Zones of Avoidance'—our guide generously suggests that she sends the text. The main theatre is sumptuous. Their programme is extensive—diverse and ambitious—sometimes incorporating as many as 80 shows, and, subsidised to keep ticket prices down, they attract some 80% of the city's population at one time or another.

Wednesday:

The translations are so good that we often find very little change is needed. It's the knotty problems that we spend a lot of time on. Idioms. Ambiguity in the original texts. Images that are clumsy to reproduce in English. Perfect translations that cause problems in English because of the baggage that comes with particular words (we had some fun with 'blow'—don't ask!)

Throughout the week, outside the workshops, we poets share these knotty problems, talking through what might be done, where we might adopt the Romanian, change the order of things, where we need to find a creative solution. Often we find that we're attracted to the story and aim to look for the translation when it's published. In my group, we've adopted a Romanian idiom and, thanks to one student with a fondness for puns, Ruxandra Vorotneac, have created some new words in English.



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Two examples:

Nadina Țărucă is translating a sci-fi piece in which a Red-Queen-like character calls for a bag of her favourite treats. These are tiny live men produced by machine, for wearing as jewellery, for eating, for pulling the limbs off of for amusement (sorry, chaps. I didn't write the story!) Nadina has called them 'munchies' – a perfectly good translation for 'treats' – but something more visual is needed elsewhere in the story and our pun-lover comes up with the rather delicious 'Manchies'...

In Alexandra Victoria's translation (Tuesday) we needed an unambiguously (unlike 'moggie' and such in English) demeaning epithet for a cat. It has to be used many times so it has to sit nicely in the linguistic flow. The closest we come is 'pathetic cat' but Ruxandra goes one better and comes up with 'patheticat', which the group unanimously applauds.

As suspected, we run out of work in the last hour and have time for a comparison between 2 translations of the same fragment, some general discussion, and the warning that 'something different this way comes' for next day. I hope they will find it a challenge.

Thursday:

I've prepared a two-hour workshop for the morning. A piece of English text (a long prose poem), split into two parts, on separate sheets of paper. Each one is marked with an optional stopping point partway through. The students split into two groups, each with an arbiter, as they'll be under considerable time pressure – we've had no fisticuffs this year yet and we don't want them now! – and they are each given one part to come up with a single group translation into Romanian. Our workshop time is reduced considerably (photographs and introductions to new visitors) so they have only 40 minutes. When we come together again, I pass each group's Romanian translation to the other and the groups are asked to translate them into English. The idea is to see how close they come to the original English, not having seen it. They have less time for this, as, by now, they have a feel for the voice(s), character(s), scenario and so on. I'm very impressed with the results (see below *). In particular, that there are no 'wrong-turns'. Well done, my group! We discuss various aspects of



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the exercise – for one thing, working as a group on a single piece is new to them.

The afternoon work-session is cancelled and our poetry readings brought forward by 2 hours. All works out rather well. But, Elena, my friend, I am so sorry that you missed the readings because of the time-change, particularly Ioana Ieronim's reading, which included a commissioned poem called 'Brexit'...

Friday:

I've prepared some creative writing exercises. One is 'character and image'. The students are asked to come up with an image of someone seen in the past – one which has stuck in their minds – and to write a few sentences about it. The exercise is titled 'The man in the green pyjamas'. I explain the source – a man at the hotel who stands outside each morning, at the corner of Victoriei and Dacia, in fluffy velvety green pyjamas, with a design on them of white feathery fronds, to smoke his morning cigarette. I give examples of the questions this image raised for me. Amongst them: Does his wife not smoke? Does she smoke, but draw the line at standing outside in her negligée?

We talk about flash fiction, and look at examples of the glose and the sonnet, and the students are invited to write any one of these, drawing on their ideas about their image, and to use the same construction for their titles. By the end of the morning, we have 14 pieces of new work. 10 students have chosen the glose, one writes a sonnet, the others write flash fiction. Our titles range from the simple 'The girl with the Violin', 'The old man with the guitar', through the more intriguing 'The cat who looked like an owl' and the somewhat alarming 'The boy who follows us to the University', to the more poetic 'Ed Sheerin sings to the plankton and the stars'. Creative writing wasn't in their schedule. How did they find it? They are told that it's perfectly OK to say they didn't enjoy it or didn't want it. All fourteen are adamant that they enjoyed it a great deal (phew...) and would enjoy doing it again (excellent!)

The Round Table 'în limba Română' had worried us a little. How on earth would we contribute to a discussion in Romanian? But we needn't have worried. Stefan and Bogdan are on hand and translate as the various Romanian contributors have their say. How can we ensure that translation is seen as a bona fide job of work? How can these students be sure they will earn a living from their work? These are



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interesting questions for creators of literature too. We have no problem relating to this concept. It was good to see the debate entered into, the dialogue begun. One point that arose, and I certainly agree with it, is that the contributors to a literary translation should include a 'native speaker' of each language involved.

Saturday / Sunday:

We have a treat in store on Saturday. We've seen a couple of the museums and such that were on our personal lists at the beginning of the week, or arrived on our lists during the week: The Village Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Old City, guided walks, finding treasures in the bookshops (so, in addition to the lovely gift, from the students in my group, of Nichita Stănescu's 'Wheel with a Single Spoke' – thank you! – I now have a beautiful book with 2 cds 'Povești Românești' published by Editura Gama). All that's left in the time that's left is the Enescu Museum and a little browse round the shops. But only for a couple of hours, because, this year, as last, Elena Nistor's mother, Tania, has invited all of us for a traditional Romanian lunch – more like lunch, dinner and supper all at once! Tania is a fine cook and she and Elena are delightful hosts. Thank you both...

On Saturday evening we attend a performance – a very powerful performance – of Wallace Shawn's 'The Fever', in English, adapted and performed by Simona Măicănescu. This is part of the closing ceremony of the 'Masterclass' week. It's hard to believe it's all over. Mircea Dinescu provides the wine and Ioana Dumitru provides a variety of delicious patisserie. I find that our charming and witty tour guide from TNB, Ionuț Mihai Corpaci, is also the evening's barman. He is good, it seems, at many things...

I love what the Romanian accent does to English. On the plane home, I indicate a group of seats close by and ask the Romanian man next to me 'You all seem to know each other. Are you all attending a special event in the UK?' He tells me they are sellers and that there are 13 of them. I'm about to ask him what he sells when I realise his accent has misled me and his inevitably non-plussed reply would be 'The sea!!' It turns out they're joining their ship, currently at anchor off Portland.

Back at home, all I can think about is how wonderful and inspiring the week has been, how generous and friendly everyone has been, and how grateful I am to



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have had this second opportunity to work with this exceptional programme.

* The Wad, prose poem by Anne Stewart.

First fragment, 303 words. Information given: £50 is, say, around 270 RON

original, to optional stopping point	translation into Romanian by 2 nd years, re-translation to English by 1 st years
<p>This is how the road feels with its skin wet and no tread of taxis through it. I hold the wad lightly at a distance; look around for someone to give it to. My fingertips push into the unfamiliar roughness of a fifty. I'm a fifty pound note. My ridges are thick and comforting. I'm a fat wad, a cushion for fingers. Sympathy flows through me. I'm someone. I tip up my glass for the last drop of brandy and stop when my left hand closes on the missing wad in my pocket. Someone up to no good, with a jagged knife and a friend called Jacko, has just caught me fingering his wad; stealing my first bubble-gum from the corner shop.</p>	<p>This is how the road feels, with its wet skin, no taxis in sight. I'm holding the wad of money in front of me, searching for someone to give it to. I'm feeling, with the tips of my fingers, the rough, foreign texture of a fifty pound note. I am a fifty pound note. My well-marked streaks are soothing. I am a fat wad, a cushion for the fingers. I'm taken over by pity. I'm someone. I tip the glass for the last drop of cognac and I stop: my left palm is closing around the missing wad in the pocket. Somebody up to no good, with a jagged knife and a friend nicknamed Jacko, caught me feeling his wad, stealing the first piece of gum from the corner shop.</p>

Second fragment, 270 words. Information given: In the first fragment, it's late at night in the city. An adult female of unspecified age, has found a fat wad of notes (currency) in the road. She is alone when she finds it. The value of the outside note is £50 (say, around 270 RON). She's a little confused at the situation she finds herself in and has been going through a variety of scenarios in her mind from the point of view of those who the money may belong to and what may happen next.



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original, to optional stopping point	translation into Romanian by 1 st years, re-translation to English by 2 nd years
<p>This is how the road feels. Somewhere between dismissed and hunted down. I'm on the corner of Mill Street and Conduit Street. I'm the fancy car shop before the hairdressers' came, before the nouvelle clothes emporium with flimsy jumpers served on platters. It's hours since I put my lights out and closed and some poor soul who came late has just noticed the lost deposit for their second Mercedes. Mercedes! What do they need, then, with a wad of fifties? I'm the wad. The camera's rolling and the runner's taking bets. I'm an office-worker on the town.</p>	<p>I'm at a crossroads. Somewhere between being free and being hunted. I am at the junction of Mill & conduit. I am the luxury car dealership that came before the hairdresser's and extravagant clothes boutique, where jumpers of fine fabric are brought to you on a silver platter. I turned off the lights and closed up hours ago and an unfortunate soul who arrived too late just realised that he's lost the deposit for the second Mercedes. Mercedes! That what's the £50 wad for? I am the wad. The cameras are rolling and the stage assistant is collecting the prize money. I'm a white collar out on the town.</p>



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Speech

I know 3 phrases in Romanian—Nu vorbesc Românește. Unde sunt ochelari mei? And, having returned to the hotel after a drizzly morning and sitting at a table on the patio, Am stat într-o baltă!—so it's best that I say my few words in English.

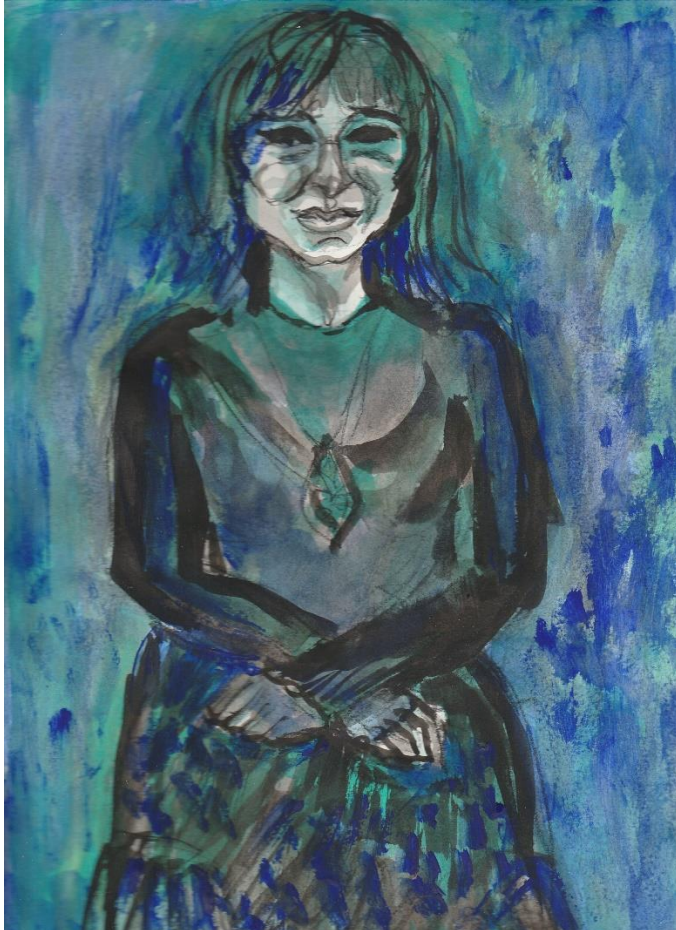
I was very impressed with the calibre of the students' work, their enthusiasm and commitment. Talking with the other poets, words that came up repeatedly, about the work, the city and organisation, were 'inspiring' 'warmth' 'impressive' 'generosity' 'invaluable' and, about Prof. Vianu, 'visionary'. We feel that these students, having the benefit of Prof. Vianu's challenging programme, and working so hard in their commitment to it, are all likely to become high-flyers—respected contributors to international cultural exchange. Working with them has been a real pleasure. We thank them for their work in our groups and, to students, organisers and sponsors alike, thank you for making us so welcome and for introducing us to more of the culture of Romania and the work of Romanian writers. One point that arose in the Round Table discussion on how translators can make a living from their work was the value of working closely with 'native speakers'. We hope that students will continue to be offered this opportunity.

Oh, and one more phrase in Romanian: Noi iubim București.



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