

BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

A WHOLE LIFE

By Robert Seethaler

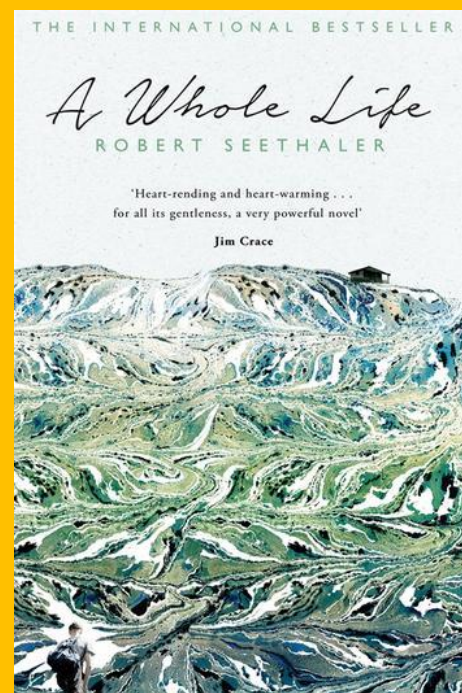
Translated from German by Charlotte Collins

Andreas lives his whole life in the Austrian Alps, where he arrives as a young boy taken in by a farming family. He is a man of very few words and so, when he falls in love with Marie, he doesn't ask for her hand in marriage, but instead has some of his friends light her name at dusk across the mountain. When Marie dies in an avalanche, pregnant with their first child, Andreas' heart is broken. He leaves his valley just once more, to fight in WWII - where he is taken prisoner in the Caucasus - and returns to find that modernity has reached his remote haven...

Like John Williams' *Stoner* or Denis Johnson's *Train Dreams*, *A Whole Life* by Robert Seethaler is a tender book about finding dignity and beauty in solitude. An exquisite novel about a simple life, it has already demonstrated its power to move thousands of readers with a message of solace and truth. It looks at the moments, big and small, that make us what we are.

Source: panmacmillan.com

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



Picador, 2015

Winner of the Goethe-Institut Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize, 2017

Shortlisted for the Booker International Prize, 2016

Shortlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award, 2017

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Seethaler is an Austrian living in Berlin and is the author of four previous novels. *A Whole Life* was his first work to be translated into English and quickly became an international bestseller, selling over 100,000 copies in Germany alone. He has also written for the screen and worked as an actor, including in Paolo Sorrentino's *Youth*. Seethaler's most recent book in English translation is *The Field* (tr. Charlotte Collins).

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Charlotte Collins is an award-winning British literary translator of contemporary literature and drama from German. She worked as an actor and radio journalist in the UK and Germany before becoming a translator. She was Co-Chair of the Translators Association from 2017-2020, and is the creator of the [Translators Association - 60 Years of Classic Translation](#) series.

RESOURCES

[An interview with Charlotte Collins](#)

[Review by Eileen Battersby for the *Irish Times*](#)

[Review by Julie Winter for *literarytranslators.org*](#)

[BBC World Book Club Episode on *A Whole Life*](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"evocative and moving" – Eileen Battersby, *The Irish Times*

"an elegant, understated book" – *Kirkus Reviews*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How important is the setting of the book? Could the events have taken place anywhere else? What is unique about the setting, and the way the author describes it?
- The novel begins in the 1930s and ends several decades after the Second World War. How important are historical events in the novel?
- The book is called “A Whole Life” (from the German, *Ein ganzes Leben*). Did you get a sense of this “wholeness” when you finished the book? If yes, how was this “wholeness” achieved? (e.g. the structure of the plot, recurring motifs...?) If no, why does it not feel “whole” or complete?
- The book is about “Life”, but death appears frequently throughout the book. Why do you think death appears so often throughout the novel?

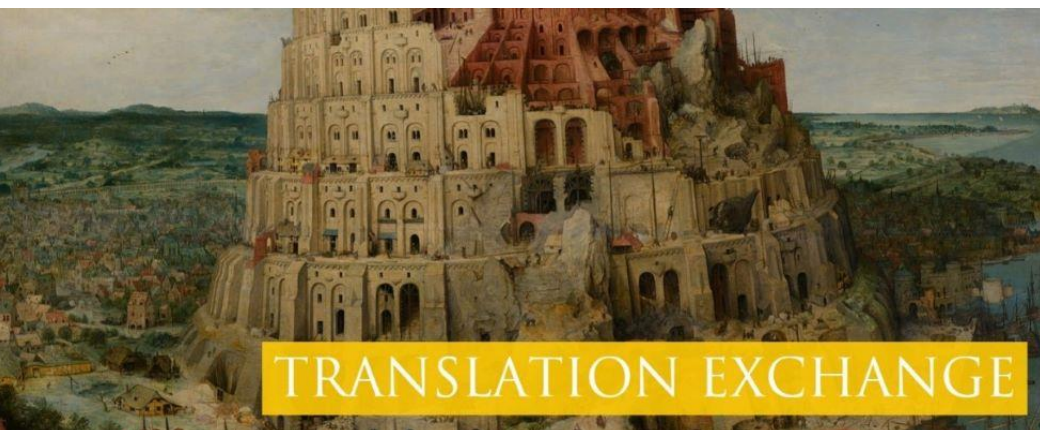
FURTHER READING:

The Tobacconist by Robert Seethaler, translated from German by Charlotte Collins

The Giraffe's Neck by Judith Schalansky, translated from German by Shaun Whiteside

Perfume by Patrick Süskind, translated from German by John E. Woods

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

CELESTIAL BODIES

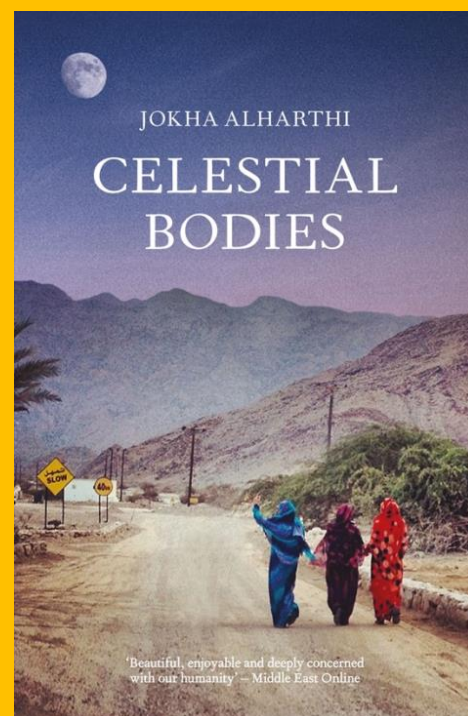
By Jokha Alharthi

Translated from Arabic by Marilyn Booth

Celestial Bodies is set in the village of al-Awafi in Oman, where we encounter three sisters: Mayya, who marries Abdallah after a heartbreak; Asma, who marries from a sense of duty; and Khawla who rejects all offers while waiting for her beloved, who has emigrated to Canada. These three women and their families witness Oman evolve from a traditional, slave-owning society slowly redefining itself after the colonial era, to the crossroads of its complex present.

Elegantly structured and taut, Celestial Bodies is a coiled spring of a novel, telling of Oman's coming-of-age through the prism of one family's losses and loves.

Source: sandstonepress.com



Sandstone Press, 2018

Winner of the Man Booker International Prize, 2019

Winner of the Best Omani Novel Award, 2010

Shortlisted for the Saif Ghosshab Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation, 2019

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jokha Alharthi is the author of ten works, including three collections of short fiction, two children's books, and three novels in Arabic. Fluent in English, she completed a PhD in Classical Arabic Poetry in Edinburgh, and teaches at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat. *Celestial Bodies* was shortlisted for the Sahikh Zayed Award for Young Writers and her 2016 novel *Narinjah* won the Sultan Qaboos Award for culture, art and literature. Her short stories have been published in English, German, Italian, Korean and Serbian.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Marilyn Booth holds the Khalid bin Abdallah Al Saud Chair for the Study of the Contemporary Arab World, at the Oriental Institute and Magdalen College, Oxford University. In addition to her academic publications, she has translated many works of fiction from Arabic, most recently *The Penguin's Song* and *No Road to Paradise*, both by Lebanese novelist Hassan Daoud.

RESOURCES

[An interview with Jokha Alharthi for the Guardian](#)

[An interview with Marilyn Booth for Scroll.in](#)

[Review in Time by Naina Bajekal](#)

[Review for the New Yorker by James Wood](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"A treasure house"
– Beejay Silcox,
The New York Times

"a beautifully
achieved account
of lives pulling at
the edges of
change" – Michael
Cronin, *The Irish Times*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Abdallah's story shifts between first- and third-person narrative. How does this affect the way his story is told, compared to the rest of the characters?
- How did you think having such a large cast of characters shaped the novel?
- Naina Bajekal writes for *Time* that *Celestial Bodies* 'pushes past stereotypical narratives of Muslim women defying patriarchy'. Do you agree? Why/why not?
- What role did poetry play in the text? Were you familiar with any of the poets or works mentioned?
- How did Alharthi create a sense of place in the novel? How did the contrast between the urban and rural environments contribute to this?
- To what extent does the novel deal with the recent history of Oman and the consequences and end of slavery?

FURTHER READING:

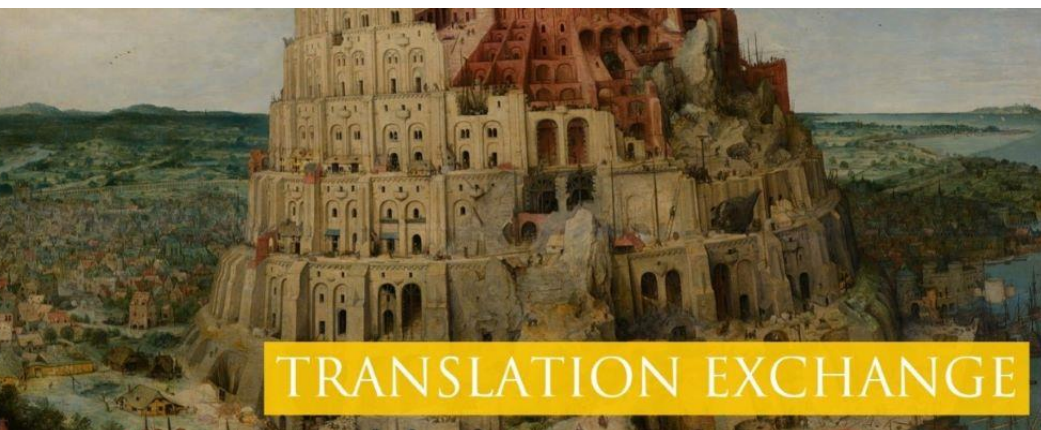
Girls of Riyadh by Rajaa Alsanea, translated from Arabic by Marilyn Booth

Narinjah by Jokha Alharthi, translated from Arabic by Marilyn Booth

Leaves of Narcissus by Somaya Ramadan, translated from Arabic by Marilyn Booth

Arabic Poems, bilingual edition edited by Marlé Hammond

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

THAT HAIR

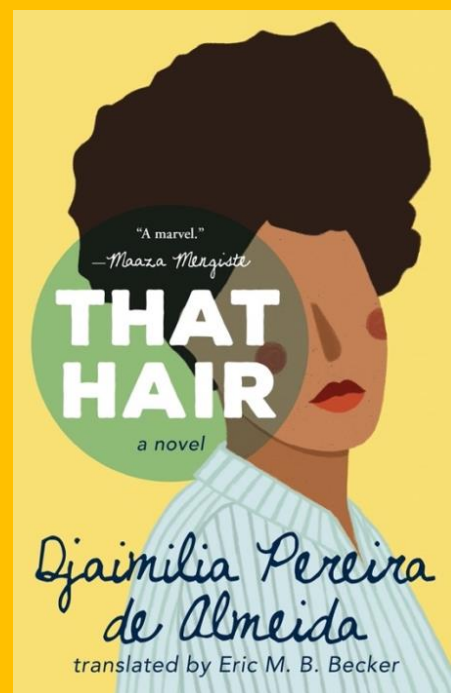
By Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida

Translated from Portuguese by Eric M. B. Becker

“The story of my curly hair,” says Mila, “intersects with the story of at least two countries and, by extension, the indirect story of the relations among several continents: a geopolitics.” Narrator Mila is the daughter of a black Angolan mother and a white Portuguese father. She was born in Angola but arrives in Lisbon at the tender age of three, and feels like an outsider from the outset. Through the lens of young Mila’s indomitably curly hair, her story interweaves memories of childhood and adolescence, family lore spanning four generations, and present-day reflections on the internal and external tensions of a European and African identity. In layered, intricately constructed prose, *That Hair* enriches and deepens a global conversation, challenging in necessary ways our understanding of racism, feminism, and the double inheritance of colonialism, not yet fifty years removed from Angola’s independence. It’s the story of coming of age as a black woman in a nation at the edge of Europe that is also rapidly changing, of being considered an outsider in one’s own country, and the impossibility of “returning” to a homeland one doesn’t in fact know.

Adapted from tinhouse.com

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



Tin House Books, 2020

Finalist for the PEN
America PEN Translation
Prize, 2021

A Notable Translation of
the Year at *World
Literature Today*, 2020

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida is the author of five books: the novels *That Hair*, *A visão das plantas*, and *Luanda, Lisboa, Paraíso*, as well as *Ajudar a cair*, a portrait of a community of people with cerebral palsy, and *Pintado com o pé*, a collection of essays. Her writing has appeared in *Blog da Companhia das Letras*, *Common Knowledge*, *Granta.com*, *Ler*, *Revista Pessoa*, *Quatro Cinco Um*, *Revista serrote*, *Words Without Borders*, *Revista ZUM*, and elsewhere.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Eric M. B. Becker is editor of *Words without Borders* and an award-winning literary translator from the Portuguese. He has earned fellowships and residencies from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fulbright Commission, PEN America, and the Louis Armstrong House Museum. In 2019, his translation of Mia Couto's *Rain and Other Stories* received honourable mention from the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize. He is a cofounder of the transatlantic Pessoa Festival. His work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Freeman's*, and other publications.

RESOURCES

[Review by Anita Felicelli for the LA Review of Books](#)

[Review by Omar Zahzah for Full Stop](#)

[Reading from *That Hair* by Eric M. B. Becker](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"A stirring and lyrical read" – Sarah Neilson, *Electric Literature*

"Heady and smart" – *Kirkus Reviews*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why is hair so important to Mila, the narrator? Why does it play a central role in the book?
- Mila talks about trying to avoid being confined to a stereotype, and wanting to 'do justice' to the 'sensual forms of origin'. (p.27) What do you think she means by this, and does she manage to achieve it?
- How does the author create a sense of place or a (lack of) belonging?
- What did you learn about either Angola or Portugal from the book? Do you think that any background knowledge is necessary to appreciate it fully?
- What did you make of the style and structure of the book?

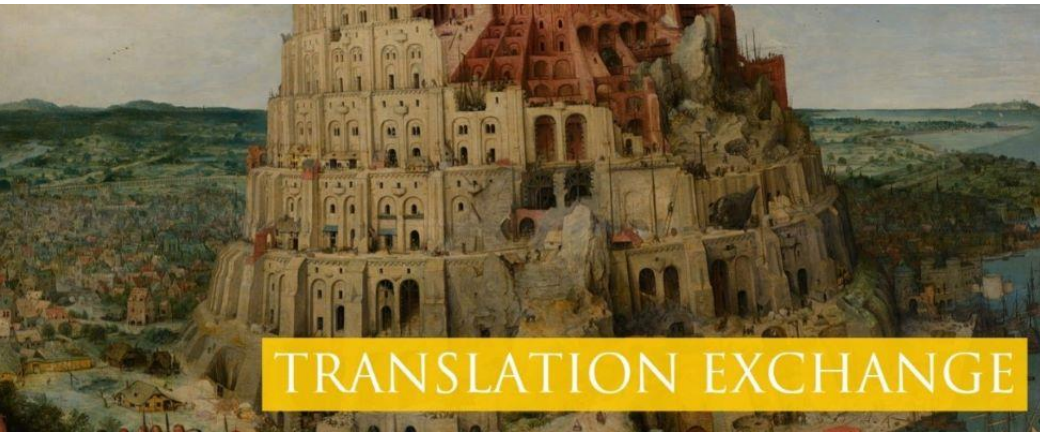
FURTHER READING:

Confession of the Lioness, by Mia Couto, translated from Portuguese by David Brookshaw

Transparent City, by Ondjaki, translated from Portuguese by Stephen Henighan

The Madwoman of Serrano, by Dina Salústio, translated from Portuguese by Jethro Soutar

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

THE ISLAND

By Ana María Matute

Translated from Spanish by Laura Lonsdale

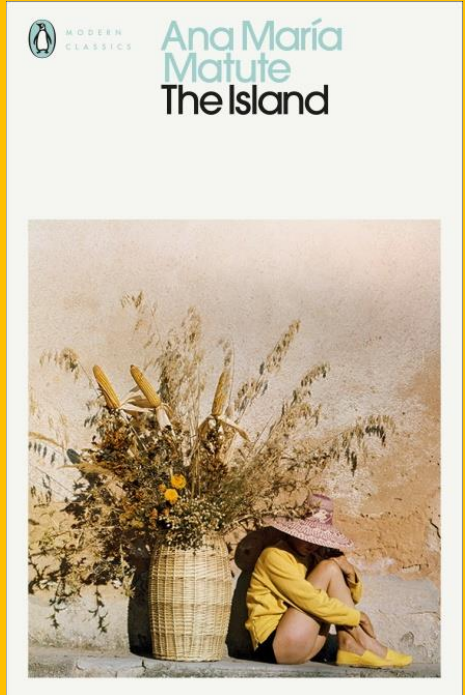
'This is an old and wicked island. An island of Phoenicians and merchants, of bloodsuckers and frauds.'

Expelled from her convent school for kicking the prioress, and abandoned by her father when her mother dies, rebellious teenager Matia is sent to live with her domineering grandmother on the scorching island of Mallorca. There she learns to scheme with her cousin Borja, and finds herself increasingly drawn to the strange outsider Manuel. But civil war has come to Spain, tearing communities apart, and it will teach Matia about the adult world in ways she could not foresee.

This feverish 1959 coming-of-age novel by one of the greatest Spanish writers of the 20th century depicts Mallorca as an inferno, a lost Eden and a Never Land combined, where ancient hatreds and present-day passions collide.

Source: penguin.co.uk

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



Penguin Classics, 2020

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Barcelona in 1925, Ana María Matute began her career as a novelist in the late 1940s, quickly becoming established as one of the most significant literary voices of the Spanish post-war period. In spite of singularly harsh treatment by the Francoist censor - which described her as irreverent and immoral, banned her from engaging in journalistic activities, and forced her to alter or delay the publication of her writing - Matute's lyrical prose style and sensitive treatment of both conflict and childhood earned her both the Premio Nadal (for *Primera memoria*) and Spain's National Prize for Literature in 1959, a rare seat in the Real Academia Española in 1996, and the Spanish-speaking world's most coveted literary prize, the Premio Cervantes, in 2010. She is, to date, one of only four female authors to have received it.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Laura Lonsdale is Associate Professor in Spanish at the University of Oxford and Fellow of the Queen's College.

RESOURCES

[Interview with Laura Lonsdale](#)

[Review by Mika Ross-Southall for the *Times Literary Supplement*](#)

[Review by John Self for the *Irish Times*](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"brilliant,
devastating . . .
every character is
remarkable and
captivating" – Mika
Ross-Southall, *The
Times Literary
Supplement*

"the style is
intoxicating" – John
Self, *The Irish Times*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- There is more than one translation published in English of this book, originally titled *Primera memoria* in Spanish (which translates literally as “first memory”). *The Island* (2020) is the most recent; the other translations are called *School of the Sun* (1963) and *Awakening* (1963). Do you think these different titles give different impressions of what the book is about? Which title do you think is best?
- Matute reflects that a child “is something other than a man or woman not yet grown. It is as though he had a different body, not simply a smaller one.” (“The Good Children”) What does she mean by this?
- Matute was unable to write in an explicitly critical way about the Spanish Civil War, because of censorship under Franco. How does she nevertheless manage to address it implicitly in the novel?
- What part does Matia’s doll, Gorogó, play in this story?
- How does the author draw parallels between the historical events of the persecution of the Jews and the Nationalist executions of Republicans?

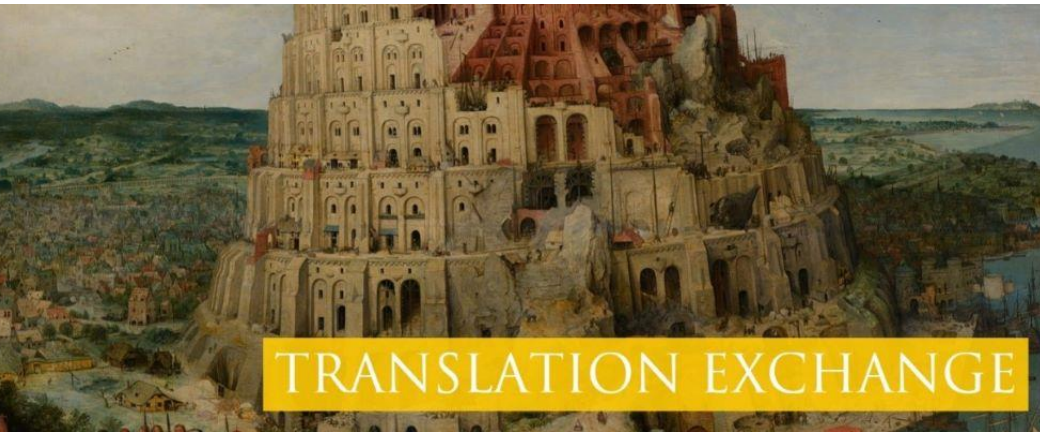
The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

FURTHER READING:

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, translated from Spanish by Gregory Rabassa

The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende, translated from Spanish by Magda Bogin

Bonjour Tristesse by Françoise Sagan, translated from French by Heather Lloyd



TRANSLATION EXCHANGE

BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

THE SPECTRE OF ALEXANDER WOLF

By Gaito Gazdanov

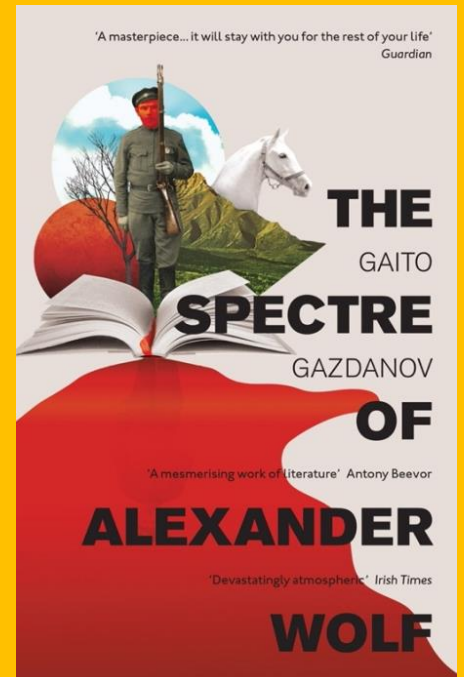
Translated from Russian by Bryan Karetnyk

'Of all my memories, of all my life's innumerable sensations, the most onerous was that of the single murder I had committed.'

A man comes across a short story which recounts in minute detail his killing of a soldier, long ago - from the victim's point of view. It's a story that should not exist, and whose author can only be a dead man. So begins the strange quest for the elusive writer 'Alexander Wolf'. A singular classic, *The Spectre of Alexander Wolf* is a psychological thriller and existential inquiry into guilt and redemption, coincidence and fate, love and death.

Source: pushkinpress.com

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



Pushkin Press, 2013

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971), the son of a forester, joined the White Army aged just sixteen and fought in the Russian Civil War. Exiled in Paris from 1920 onwards, he took on what jobs he could and during periods of unemployment slept on park benches or in the Métro. A job driving taxis at night eventually allowed him to attend lectures at the Sorbonne and write during the day; he soon became part of the literary scene, and was greatly acclaimed by Maxim Gorky, amongst others. He died in Munich in 1971.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Bryan Karetnyk is a scholar and a translator of Russian literature. He read Russian and Japanese at the University of Edinburgh, subsequently working as a translator for the Civil Service. His recent work focuses on Russian émigré literature, and his critically acclaimed translations of Gaito Gazdanov include *The Spectre of Alexander Wolf*, *The Buddha's Return* and *The Flight*.

RESOURCES

[An Interview with Bryan Karetnyk](#)

[A Reading by Bryan Karetnyk](#)

[Review in the *Guardian* by Nicholas Lezard](#)

[Review in the *Irish Times* by Eileen Battersby](#)

[Review in the *Independent* by Ivan Juritz](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"A compulsive read" – Daniel Levine, *The Millions*

Splendidly translated... a mini-masterpiece" – *Star Tribune*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- This book had a particularly striking opening and ending. What did you think of them? Did the opening grab your attention? Did you see the ending coming? What role do you think Pierrot's death played in the ending?
- What did you think of the protagonist/narrator? Did you think he had a clear narrative voice? How reliable did his accounts seem to you? Did you trust him?
- Bryan Karetnyk mentioned that the book has been read as a pastiche of different genres popular at the time it was written. What genres did you think the book fell into? Did you have an overall sense of its tone?
- *The Spectre of Alexander Wolf* was written in 1947. Do you think this was reflected in the narrator's attitudes? In what way? Do you think this had an impact on how questions of gender, sexuality and race were explored (or unexplored) in the book?

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

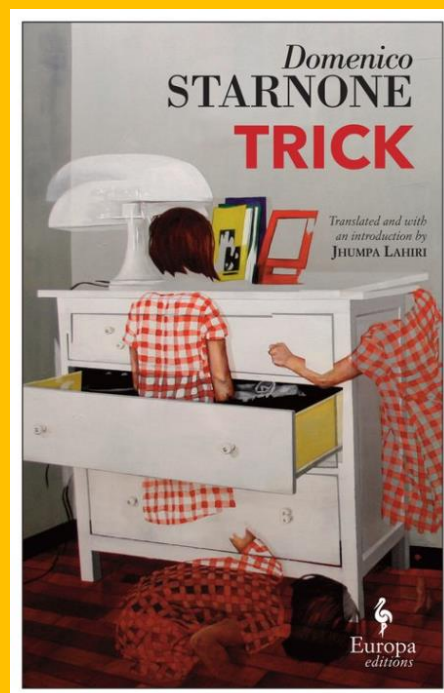
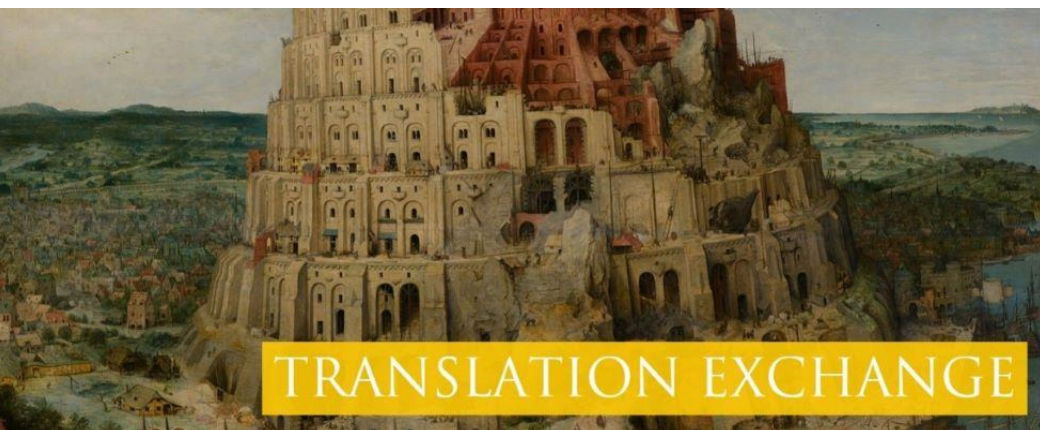
FURTHER READING:

An Evening with Clare by Gaito Gazdaov, translated from Russian by Bryan Karetnyk

The Passenger by Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz, translated from German by Philip Boehm

Subtly Worded and Other Stories by Teffi, translated from Russian by Anne Marie Jackson

The Real Life of Sebastian Knight by Vladimir Nabokov



BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

TRICK

By Domenico Starnone

Translated from Italian by Jhumpa Lahiri

Imagine a duel. A face-off between a man and a boy.

The same blood runs through their veins. One, Daniele Mallarico, is a successful illustrator at the peak of his career. The other, Mario, is his four-year-old grandson who has barely learned to talk but has a few tricks up his loose-fitting sleeves all the same. The older combatant has lived for years in almost complete solitude. The younger one has been dumped with a grandfather he barely knows for 72 hours.

Starnone's sharp novella unfolds within the four walls (and a balcony!) of the apartment the grandfather grew up in, now the home of his daughter and her family, where the rage of an aging man meets optimism incarnate in the shape of a four-year-old child.

Lurking, ever present in the conflict, is the memory of Naples, a wily, violent, and passionate city where the old man spent his youth and whose influence is not easily shaken.

Adapted from europaeditions.co.uk

Europa Editions, 2018

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Domenico Starnone was born in Naples and lives in Rome. He is the author of thirteen works of fiction, including *First Execution*, *Via Gemito*, winner of Italy's most prestigious literary prize, the Strega, and *Ties*, a *New York Times* Editors' Pick and Notable Book of the Year, and a *Sunday Times* and *Kirkus Reviews* Best Book of the Year.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Jhumpa Lahiri is the Pulitzer-Prize winning author of *Interpreter of Maladies*. Her books include *The Namesake*, *Unaccustomed Earth*, *The Loveland*, and, most recently, *In Other Words*, an exploration of language and identity.

RESOURCES

[Jhumpa Lahiri in conversation with Domenico Starnone for Europa Editions](#)

[An interview with Jhumpa Lahiri in the Paris Review](#)

[Review in the Guardian by Tim Parks](#)

[Review in the Times Literary Supplement by Laura Freeman](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"Witty to the point of hilarity... and achingly moving" – *Kirkus Reviews*

"A compelling tale of calamity" – Tim Parks, *Guardian*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Was there a passage in the text that you thought was a central tipping-point or moment of conflict?
- Were you sympathetic to Daniele's feelings of decline and frailty? How would you characterize him?
- What role did you think class played in Daniele's self-understanding? How did it affect the way he related to other characters in the novel?
- Did the notes at the end of the novel change the way you understood or approached the rest of the text? Why do you think they were illustrated when the rest of the text was not?
- The Henry James story that Daniele is illustrating is *The Jolly Corner*. What relationship does it have to the novel *Trick*? If any of you have read it, you could discuss it from that perspective, but if not, you still might consider how Daniele talks and thinks about it. What is its importance for him?

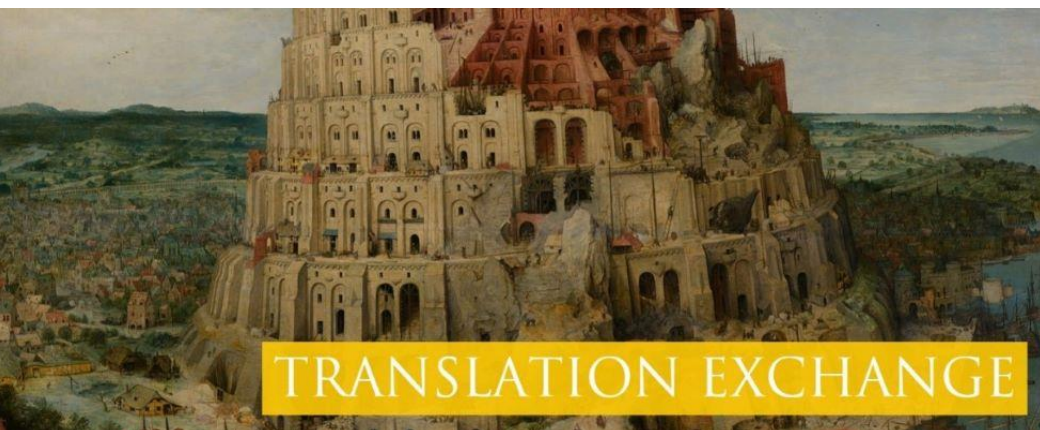
The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

FURTHER READING:

Ties by Domenico Starnone, translated from Italian by Jhumpa Lahiri

The Days of Abandonment by Elena Ferrante, translated from Italian by Ann Goldstein

Whereabouts, written and translated from Italian by Jhumpa Lahiri



BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

UNDER THE TRIPOLI SKY

By Kamal Ben Hamed

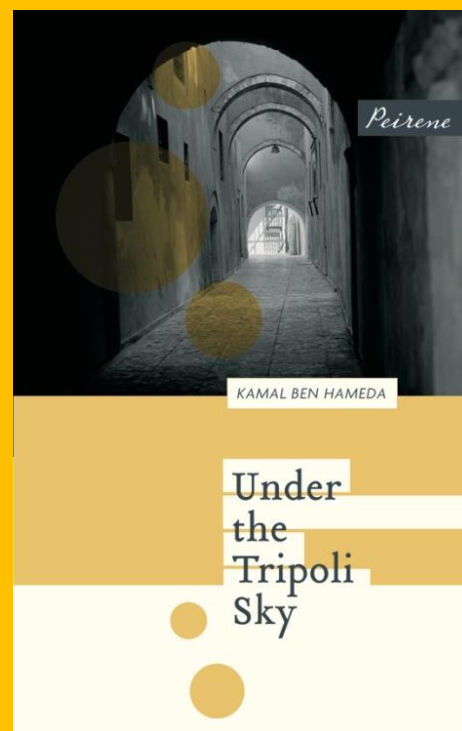
Translated from French by Adriana Hunter

A fascinating portrait of a pre-Gaddafi Libya on the verge of change.

Tripoli in the 1960s. A sweltering, segregated society. Hadachinou is a lonely boy. His mother shares secrets with her best friend, Jamila, while his father prays at the mosque. Sneaking through the sun-drenched streets of Tripoli, the boy listens to the whispered stories of the women. He turns into an invisible witness to their repressed desires as he becomes aware of his own.

Adapted from peirenepress.com

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



Peirene Press, 2014

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kamal Ben Hamed was born in Tripoli in 1954. In his early twenties he moved to France. He now lives in Holland where he works as a Jazz musician and writer. Kamal has published several collections of poetry. In 2012 *La Compagnie des Tripolitaines (Under the Tripoli Sky)* was nominated for a number of prizes, including Le Prix Ulysse and Le Prix du livre Lorientales.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Adriana Hunter has translated over 50 books from French, including works by Agnès Desarthe, Véronique Ovalde and Hervé Le Tellier. She has translated four titles for Peirene: *Beside the Sea* by Véronique Olmi, for which she won the 2011 Scott Moncrieff Prize, *Under The Tripoli Sky* by Kamal Ben Hamed, *Reader for Hire* by Raymond Jean and *Her Father's Daughter* by Marie Sizun. Adriana has been short-listed twice for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize.

RESOURCES

[Interview with Adriana Hunter](#)

[Review from Tony's Reading List with comparisons of English and French text](#)

[Review for the Independent](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"A short but shimmering read."
Malcolm Forbes,
The National

"excellent" – David
Mills, *The Sunday
Times*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

(These questions have been adapted from the [Pereine Press website](#).)

- Is *Under the Tripoli Sky* a book about Tripolitan women? What happens to those women who decide to live their lives in an unconventional way?
- Magic and storytelling are elements of childhood that can accompany us into adult life. The novel is interspersed with references to magic, tales and legends. Should this be considered a nostalgic goodbye to childhood or a reminder of what is important to carry with us into adulthood?
- What is the role of food in the book and how does food relate to the prominent presence of women in the novel?
- The Father is an unseen and mysterious figure, but what influence does he have on the lives of other characters?
- *Under the Tripoli Sky* is set at the time just before Gaddafi came to power and Libyan society underwent a radical transformation. Did you feel that your being aware/not aware of these events affected your reading of the story?

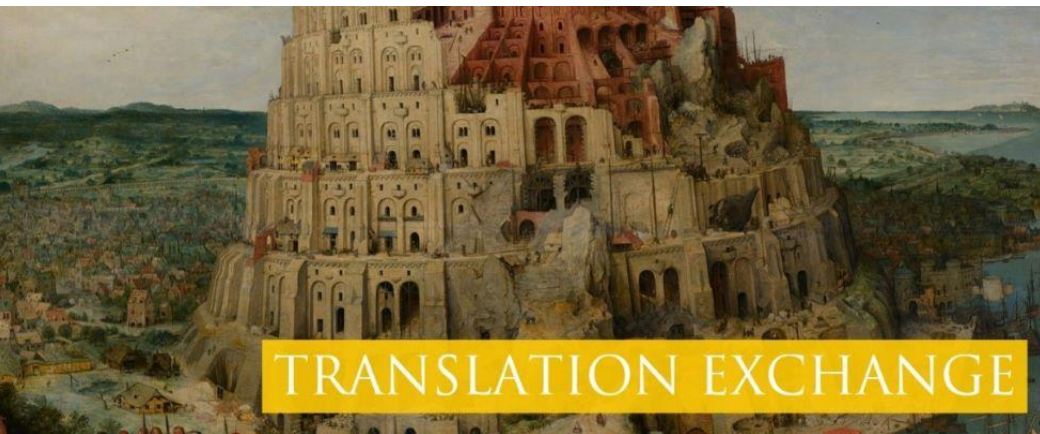
The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

FURTHER READING:

The Gardens of Consolation by Parisa Reza, translated from French by Adriana Hunter

In the Country of Men by Hisham Matar

Chewing Gum by Mansour Bushnaf, translated from Arabic by Mona Zaki



BOOK CLUB FOR SCHOOLS GUIDE

WHITE HORSE

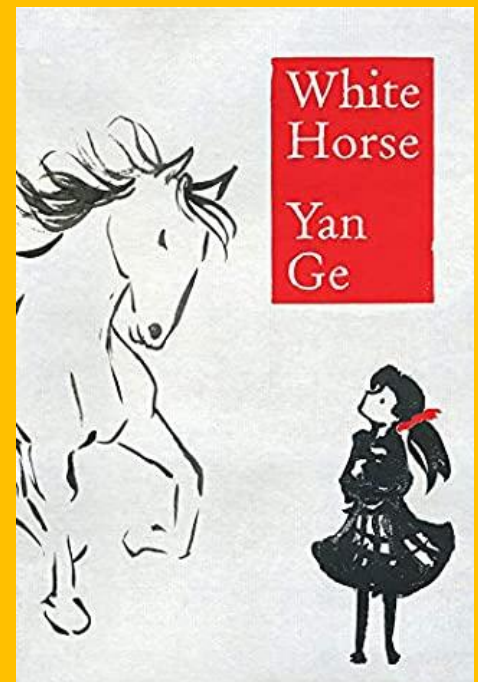
By Yan Ge

Translated from Chinese by Nicky Harman

Yun Yun lives in a small West China town with her widowed father. Her mother died in mysterious circumstances, but Yun Yun spends a lot of time at her nearby uncle's house with her affectionate aunt and her cousin, Zhang Qing. Older than Yun Yun by a couple of years, Zhang Qing is keen to dive into the excitements of adolescence, but clashes repeatedly with her authoritarian parents. Ensuing tensions reveal that the relationships between the two families are founded on a terrible lie. Through Yun Yun's eyes, we watch as her secure world begins to fall apart. And why does she keep seeing a white horse?

Adapted from hoperoadpublishing.com

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).



**Hope Road Publishing,
2014**

Shortlisted for the
Warwick Prize for Women
in Translation

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yan Ge was born in Sichuan in the People's Republic of China. She is the chairperson of the China Young Writers Association. *People's Literature* magazine choose her as one of China's twenty future literary masters, and she was picked as Best New Writer by the prestigious Chinese Literature Media Prize. Her other novel, *The Chilli Bean Paste Clan*, was published in 2018. Yan Ge lives in Norwich with her husband and son.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Nicky Harman lives in the UK. She translates full-time from Chinese, focussing on contemporary fiction, literary non-fiction, and occasionally poetry, by a wide variety of authors. When not translating, she spends time promoting contemporary Chinese fiction to English-language readers. She works for Paper-Republic.org, a non-profit registered in the UK, where she is also a trustee. She writes blogs (for instance Asian Books Blog), give talks and lectures, and takes part in literary events and festivals, especially with the Leeds Centre for New Chinese Writing. She also mentors new translators, teaches summer schools (Norwich, London, Warwick and Bristol), and judges translation competitions. Nicky tweets, with Helen Wang, as the China Fiction Bookclub @cfbcuk. She taught on the MSc in Translation at Imperial College until 2011 and was co-Chair of the Translators Association (Society of Authors) 2014-2017.

RESOURCES

[Yan Ge in conversation with Nicky Harman for the LA Review of Books](#)

[An interview with Nicky Harman for Asymptote Book Club](#)

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

"A fascinating tale of receptive hearts, rebellious spirits and hidden secrets infused with cultural values in this small Chinese community." – *Dunia Magazine*

"a powerful coming of age tale" – *Books Go Walkabout*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Were there any questions that were left unresolved for you at the end of the novella?
- What role did you think the white horse played in the novel?
- How was the story affected by being told from Yun Yun's perspective? What elements did she miss out, or misunderstand? How did her voice shape our view of the events we were told about?
- How would you describe the relationship between Yun Yun and her cousin Qing?
- What did you think of the adults in the novel and their actions? Did you sympathize with them or not?
- In an article from the *LA Review of Books*, Yan Ge told Nicky Harman that "White Horse is a special case where the character/narrator is clinically insane". Does this tally with your perception of Yun Yun? How did you respond to her character?

The **Translation Exchange** is an outreach initiative promoting modern languages through creative translation. To find out more about our events, including the International Book Club, go to our website (<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/translation-exchange>) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

FURTHER READING:

The Chilli Bean Paste Clan by Yan Ge,
translated from Chinese
by Nicky Harman

Goodnight, Rose by Chi
Zijian, translated from
Chinese by Poppy
Toland

Waste Tide by Chen
Qiufan, translated from
Chinese by Ken Liu