SPECIAL BOOK REVIEW SECTION
presenting the 2021 ESCL
Excellence Award for Collaborative Research

The selection committee, comprised of four ESCL Executive Committee members – Ana Calvete, Patricia García, Zsuzsanna Varga and Metka Zupančič –, read the nineteen volumes that had entered the competition: a mix of edited books and special issues of comparative literary journals from all over the world, written in either English or French, and published between 2017 and 2020. Given that the prize is for collaborative research, emphasis was put on the excellence of the collaboration, as evidenced by the unified nature and coherence of the volumes, the academic breadth and depth of their introductions, and the overall quality of their contents. The selection followed a two-stage process: entries were first reduced to a longlist of eight books, and finally to a shortlist of four.

The award ceremony took place on Friday 17 September 2021, when the European Society for Comparative Literature held a virtual round table to honour the finalists and declare the winners of the ESCL Excellence Award for Collaborative Research contest: *Great Immortality: Studies on European Cultural Sainthood* (Brill, 2019), co-edited by Marijan Dović, a Senior Research Fellow at the Research Center of Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts, and Jón Karl Helgason, Professor of Icelandic and Comparative Studies at the University of Iceland.

LIST OF SUBMISSIONS

Amiri, Lida. "Refugees in Literature, Film, Art, and Media: Perspectives on the Past and Present". *Routledge Journal for Cultural Research*, 2019.

Bishop, Cécile, and Zoë Roth. "Race and the Aesthetic in French and Francophone Cultures". Special issue of *L'Esprit Créateur*, Summer 2019.

Blakesley, Jacob. *Sociologies of Poetry Translation: Emerging Perspectives.* London: Bloomsbury Advances in Translation, 2018.

Brodie, Geraldine, and Emma Cole. *Adapting Translation for the Stage*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Bujaldón de Esteves, Lila, Belén Bistué and Melisa Stocco. *Literary Self-translation in Hispanophone Contexts: Europe and the Americas = La auto-traducción literaria en contextos de habla hispana: Europa y América*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Chitnis, Rajendra, Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Rhian Atkin, and Zoran Milutinović. *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations.* Liverpool University Press, 2020.

Chao, Shun-liang, and John Michael Corrigan. *Romantic Legacies: Transnational and Transdisciplinary Contexts*. New York: Routledge Studies in Comparative Literature, 2019.

Dirscherl, Margit, and Astrid Köhler. *Urban Microcosms 1789-1940*. The University of Chicago Press, 2019 (for London: IMLR Books 13).

Dović, Marijan, and Jón Karl Helgason. *Great Immortality: Studies on European Cultural Sainthood.* National Cultivation of Culture 18. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019.

Gould, Rebecca Ruth, and Kayvan Tahmasebian. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Losada, José Manuel, and Antonella Lipscomb. *Myth and Emotions*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.

Finch, Jason, Lieven Ameel and Markku Salmela. *Literary Second Cities*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Karkulehto, Sanna, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen and Essi Varis. *Reconfiguring Human, Nonhuman and Posthuman in Literature and Culture*. Perspectives on the Non-human in Literature and Culture. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Kurmann, Alexandra, and Tess Do. "Rencontres: Transdiasporic Encounters in Việt Kiều Literature". *Portal. Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 15.1-2, 2018.

Mancini, C. Bruna, and David Punter. *Space(s) of the Fantastic. A 21ˢᵗ-Century Manifesto*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Reynolds, Matthew. *Prismatic Translation*. Cambridge: MHRA, 2019.

Roussel, Céline, and Soline Vennetier. *Discours et représentations du handicap. Perspectives culturelles*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019.

Roca Lizarazu, Maria, and Joseph Twist. "Rethinking Community and Subjectivity in Contemporary German Culture and Thought". *Oxford German Studies*, 49.2, 2020.

Stapleton, Rachel F., and Antonio Viselli. *Iconoclasm: The Breaking and Making of Images*. Montreal, QC, and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019.

THE LONG LIST INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES:

Chitnis, Rajendra, Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Rhian Atkin and Zoran Milutinović. *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations.*

Chao, Shun-liang, and John Michael Corrigan. *Romantic Legacies: Transnational and Transdisciplinary Contexts.*

Dirscherl, Margit, and Astrid Köhler. *Urban Microcosms 1789-1940.*

Dović, Marijan, and Jón Karl Helgason. *Great Immortality: Studies on European Cultural Sainthood.*

Finch, Jason, Lieven Ameel and Markku Salmela. *Literary Second Cities.*

Karkulehto, Sanna, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen and Essi Varis. *Reconfiguring Human, Nonhuman and Posthuman in Literature and Culture.*

Reynolds, Matthew. *Prismatic Translation.*

Stapleton, Rachel F., and Antonio Viselli. *Iconoclasm: The Breaking and Making of Images.*

THE SHORTLIST INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES
(REVIEWED BELOW):

Dović, Marijan, and Jón Karl Helgason. *Great Immortality: Studies on European Cultural Sainthood.*

Finch, Jason, Lieven Ameel and Markku Salmela. *Literary Second Cities.*

Karkulehto, Sanna, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen and Essi Varis. *Reconfiguring Human, Nonhuman and Posthuman in Literature and Culture.*

Reynolds, Matthew. *Prismatic Translation.*

*   *
*

Marijan Dović and Jón Karl Helgason (eds.), *Great Immortality: Studies on European Cultural Sainthood.* Series: National Cultivation of Culture, Vol. 18, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2019. 353 pp., ISBN: 978 903642295.

A stimulating and rich collection of essays, *Great Immortality* introduces and explores the metaphor of "cultural saint" in its bid to understand the complex relationship between authors' and creative artists' lives, their reception by their contemporaries and their posterity, and the relationship of these factors to 19th-century romantic nationalism. A "cultural saint" is a real-life literary author or visual artist whose sainthood is not based on the theological dimension of sainthood where saints have intercessionary powers on man's behalf; rather sainthood here is rooted in the very material and this-worldly character of a saint's *vita* (life), the *vita*'s afterlife *cultus* (as created by the social, artistic and historical reflections on the *vita*), and *effectus*, encompassing the larger social consequences of *vita* and its interpretation. The selection of these *vitae* shows that while these artistic lives may have different "potentials for canonisation" (5), the patterns of the *cultus* (the production and reproduction of canonical status) show similar patterns. The collection of essays owes much to the editors' earlier joint monograph, *National Poets, Cultural Saints: Canonisation and Commemorative Cults of Writers in Europe* (Brill, 2017), which first articulated the theory of cultural sainthood and illustrated it with the life of the Slovenian France Prešeren and the Icelandic Jónas Hallgrímsson. Through the multiplicity of "presuppositions, approaches, and methods" (6), *Great Immortality* offers an exploration of the ways in which the tripartite *vita-cultus-effectus* model could be productively deployed to examine the lives and afterlives of other European "cultural saints" and their contribution to shaping the role of national poets.

Much of *Great Immortality* is a collection of case studies from the two geographically cohesive cultural latecomer literatures of Europe: South Slav literatures (the expertise of the Slovenian Marijan Dović)

and Nordic literatures (the field of the Icelandic Jón Karl Helgason), but Ukrainian, Polish, Romanian, Georgian and Hebrew writers are also discussed through the lens of canonisation. The analysis of the Hebrew national poet Hayyim Bialik's career drives the point home about the explicitly metaphorical understanding of cultural sainthood, while the discussion of the Georgian Ilia Chavchavadze demonstrates the closeness of cultural and theological sainthood through examining the transformation of a revered poet into a saint through an actual canonisation – a process which is also analysed in a comparative essay about the Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik and his Catalan counterpart, Antonio Gaudí.

Geographies may differ, but temporalities offer a particularly important force of cohesion to the lives examined. By linking the cult of secular saints to the emergence of romantic nationalism framed around ethno-linguistic notions, Joep Leersen's introductory study sets the 19th-century intellectual context for the process of secularisation of religious cult and hero worship. Such canonisation concerns not only 19th-century literary figures but also the cult of Dante and Petrarch, and this is at its most noticeable in the *cultus* and *effectus* of the mediaeval Icelandic poet and chieftain Snorri whose cultural fate has come to be claimed simultaneously by Norway and Iceland, but it also stands for a supra-national Nordic commonality. The exploration of the posthumous life of a regional (pre-national) cultural saint makes a strong case for further examination of such cultural potential in broader historical and temporal contexts – which, as the author himself suggests, would "require a separate comparative study of its own'" (238).

Spreading geography as wide as this brings into focus the universality of the book's underlying assumptions. Yet, as scholars of cultural and literary area studies note, the desire to do justice to cultural latecomer nations and less well-known literatures or cultural heroes, while also exploring underlying pan-European cultural practices, often presents methodological challenges. By amply commenting on two distinct regions of Europe but also including a discussion about the progenitors of European secular literacy, Petrarch and Dante, the editors manage the overcome this challenge, and also show a method of resolving such tensions. The volume's engagement with the nature

of *cultus* presents not only important insights into European cultural history but also into 19ᵗʰ- and early 20ᵗʰ-century memory politics and canon formations.

Zsuzsanna Varga
University of Glasgow

* *
*

Jason Finch, Lieven Ameel, Markku Salmela (eds.), *Literary Second Cities*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 267 pp., ISBN: 978-3-319-62718-2.

Literary Second Cities (2017) is the second volume of a trilogy also comprised of *Literature and the Peripheral City* (2015) and *Literatures of Urban Possibility* (2021), all of which disseminate the results of research activities developed within the framework of the Association of Literary Urban Studies. These three volumes edited by Jason Finch, Lieven Ameel and Markku Salmela explore the concepts of "secondariness", "peripherality" and "possibility", respectively, and have been key to the creation of the Palgrave book series Literary Urban Studies, led by the three editors together with Eric Prieto.

Literary Second Cities brings together an impressive team of international scholars under the umbrella concept of "literary second cities", referring to those literary cities that contrast with those "alpha" world cities, for example Paris, London or New York. It engages with different types of "secondary cities", including those cities that have lost their capital status, satellite towns, twin cities and towns that are world-wide known only for providing in a specific (industrial, leisure) sector.

The collection of essays explores literary representations in a wealth of countries, namely Turkey, UK, US, Italy, Estonia, Finland and Sweden.

Indeed, the geographical diversity of the research offered in this book is one of its greatest assets, together with the contributors' methods and perspectives which go beyond literary studies and incorporate other disciplines and artistic fields, such as photography, architecture and urban studies.

Part I, *Defining the Second City*, charts the territory of second cities in literary urban studies. After the opening conceptual chapter authored by the three editors, Bart Keunen (Ghent University) offers a transdisciplinary definition of secondary urban environments in Chapter 2.

Part II, *In the Shadow of the Alpha City*, problematises the connections and hierarchies between secondary and dominant cities. It engages with the literary representations of Birmingham and Bristol in relation to London in the UK (Chapters 3 and 4, by Jason Finch and Adam Borch, respectively, Åbo Akademie University), Tartu to Tallinn in Estonia (Chapter 5, by Mart Velsker and Ene-Reet Soovik, University of Tartu) and the heterotopic status of Las Vegas in the USA (Chapter 6, by Markku Salmela, University of Tampere).

The notion of liminality is the key of the third part, entitled *Frontier Second Cities*. This section offers different perspectives on border zones, highlighting the symbolic and political dimensions of Diyarbakır in Turkey (Chapter 7, by Francesco Marilungo, University of Exeter) and Narva in Estonia (Chapter 8, by Elle-Mari Talivee, Estonian Academy of Sciences).

Part IV, *The Diffuse Second City*, comprises three essays that invite us to think beyond the established geographical boundaries of cities. It engages with growing urban clusters and sprawls in the suburbs and margins of dominant cities. In Chapter 9, centered on Turku in south-west Finland, Lieven Ameel (University of Tampere) and Tuomas Juntunen (Helsinki University) show that the narrative structures echo the fragmentation and peripherality of the urban fabric. Sophie Wennerscheid (Ghent University) offers in Chapter 10 an analysis on the Swedish suburbs incorporating gender and sexuality perspectives, and drawing on phenomenological approaches. Following this line, in Chapter 11, Giada Peterle (Università degli Studi di Padova) merges academic research with her own photographs and experiential walks around the forgotten areas of Venice's mainland and demonstrates the fruitful application of situated knowledge and movement in the analysis of suburban literary landscapes.

The closing Afterword by Marc Brosseau (University of Ottawa) provides a cohesive review of the book's contributions and addresses the notion of "urban secondariness" from the point of view of social and cultural geography.

Literary Second Cities demonstrates that the not so well-known or canonical cities (i.e., "second cities") generate particular kinds of urban experiences that are worth exploring and conceptualising. The editors and contributors make a convincing case for the importance of "secondariness" in urban studies in two major areas: secondary cities invite us to transcend the boundaries established by dominant cities (by looking at neglected satellite areas, for instance) and to de-stabilise the very notion of "citiness" (for example, by challenging the rural/urban binary). The volume engages with fluctuating notions of perceived centrality and geographical subordination, and unveils the hierarchies and power dynamics embedded in urban planning as well as in cultural representation of cities.

Lieven Ameel's, Jason Finch's and Marku Salmela edited book attests to the importance of the editorial input in selecting a wide range of representative cultural materials and, most significantly, in offering a theoretical tool with the necessary conceptual cohesion. The volume is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to literary urban studies, to cultural geography and, more broadly, to comparative literary studies, that brings to light the richness of these lesser-known literary cities in European cultures and beyond.

Patricia García
Universidad de Alcalá

*   *
*

Sanna KARKULEHTO, Aino-Kaisa KOISTINEN and Essi VARIS (eds.),
    *Reconfiguring Human, Nonhuman and Posthuman in Literature and
    Culture.* Perspectives on the Non-human in Literature and Culture,
    New York, Routledge, 2019, 301 pp., ISBN: 978 0429243042.

This transmedial volume probes literature, comics, gameplay, art
and human-technology interactions that take us to the threshold of
our humanity. It will be of particular interest to researchers who wish
to gain an overview of the field of posthuman/nonhuman studies and
to those who would like to see how one can implement theories that
are notoriously challenging to apply, such as poststructuralism and
material ecocriticism. The contributors rely on these theories to criticise
the anthropocentric ideology that has dominated human-nonhuman
relations and to increase ecocritical awareness of our embeddedness in,
and dependence on, natural and technological nonhumans.

    The value of this experimental volume lies in its ability to ask, rather
than answer, key questions, as can be seen from the introduction and
opening chapter, in which Sanna Karkulehto, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen,
Karoliina Lummaa, Essi Varis and Carole Guesse first attempt to define
"posthumanist reading" in a theoretical way (12), before applying it
to Michel Houellebecq's clone narrators and Finnish visual and sound
poetry. Then, analysing narrative techniques that writers use to explore
the gap between humans and nonhumans, Kaisa Kortekallio contends
that the first-person perspective has the ability to "authenticat[e] the
physical effects and bodily feelings" that result from human-nonhuman
relations (67) and Essi Varis convincingly shows the ability of Neil
Gailman's *The Sandman* to speculate about nonhuman perspectives.
In this graphic novel, the nonhuman characters (Dream, planets, bee-
tles…) change form to reflect how they see each other. The shape of
the spread also mirrors nonhuman viewpoints: for example, the action
is shortly framed in a giant ruby reflecting multiple scenes on its faces,
before being enclosed in the enamel surfaces of a row of teeth, as one of

the characters perceives the world through its mouth. Yet, at the same time, Varis never loses sight of "the insurmountable wall of [human] subjectivity" that complicates both the representation of, and research on, nonhumans (102). She responds to this challenge by writing that, "when faced with something unknowable […] imagining is the only option" (85) – which summarises the spirit of the volume.

> The volume successfully interrogates binary oppositions. For instance, Brad Bolman questions the (dis)similarity between humans and pigs, which was first theorised for anatomical dissections and later revisited by the performance of Miru Kim in a pigsty. In addition, Marleena Mustola and Sanna Karkulehto study the savagery of humanity revealed by monsters in children's literature, while Hana Porkertová reconceptualises the relation between guided and guide dog with the Deuleuzoguattarian concept of "assemblage" (189). Turning to AI, Cléo Collomb and Samuel Goyet undermine the instrumental AI/evil AI dichotomy. In the field of design, Patricia Flanagan and Raune Frankjær create technological hats that blink with you or rustle like bamboo, to demonstrate that machines can be "warm […] and organic" (250), and grant "access [to] the experiential faculties of nonhumans" (241).

Sometimes, the researchers' analyses show that the representations of nonhumans are lacking. For instance, Jonne Arjoranta, Marleena Huuhka and Mikko Keskinen show that some video games (*Aliens versus Predators* and *Minecraft*) and novels (Charles Siebert's *Angus*) have a very limited ability to provide insights into the experientiality of nonhumans.

Like all *avant-garde* work, the volume contains a few inconsistencies. For example, the authors could have made their arguments more compelling by justifying their methodological and theoretical choices more thoroughly. For instance, readers may wonder why some scholars choose Haraway's "becoming-with", instead of Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming-other" in order to discuss gaming (224), to argue that humans "become-with" nonhumans in Tolonen's *Monster Nanny* (136) and to contend that the artist Miru Kim "becomes-with" pigs during the few hours she spends in their pigsty (178), and why neither theory is thoroughly explained. One may also point out that the autoethnographic methods employed, including personal reading (Varis), game-playing (Huuhka) and friendship with the subject of inquiry (Porkertová), could also gain further persuasive power if the scholars reflected more purposefully on the bearing that their situatedness has on their research.

The contributors' exploration of non-anthropocentric viewpoints is also occasionally undermined by anthropomorphising expressions, such as "cross-species understanding" (5) or electricity that "pursue[s] happiness" (224), which are problematic insofar as they presume reciprocity, choice and intentionality. However, the volume skilfully reflects on its own limits in the afterword, in which Juha Raipola criticises material ecocriticism for ignoring the "differences between human and nonhuman agency" (267). By inviting scholars to "analyze the numerous ways in which matter escapes our desire for narrative descriptions" (277), Raipola ends the volume with precious advice for further research.

Ana CALVETE
Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès /
University of Helsinki

*   *
*

Matthew REYNOLDS (ed.), *Prismatic Translation*, Cambridge, UK, Legenda, "Transcript 10", Modern Humanities Research Association, 2019, 381 pp., ISBN: 978 1781887257.

Resulting from a long-term collaboration among several scholars and from investigations at various conferences, mostly from 2015 onwards, this ample volume edited by Matthew Reynolds bears the mark of in-depth discussions about a topic that has eventually been present in the collective literary awareness, but which has also been exposed to many contradictory – or complementary – interpretations and approaches. The two words that formulate the topic to be examined, "prismatic" and "translation", also form a defining syntagm first in Reynolds' introduction

in the initial portion, "Frames", and then in the following four parts of the volume, in the nineteen essays that compose it.

A prismatic array of scholars and translators from nine countries (with some additional affiliations), UK, Canada, Israel, Slovenia, Germany, New Zealand, Hungary, France and Ireland, contribute, again in a rather prismatic manner, to the basic structure of contrasting and comparing various approaches and experiences. Section II, titled "Languages", contains three essays: the topics of multilingual literary culture, according to Francesca Orsini, combine in this portion with notions of visual untranslability, such as inherited from Egypt, as demonstrated by Hany Rashwan, together with the analysis of translation over time, presented by John Cayley. "Cultures", section III, contains five essays: Yvonne Howell deals with "prismatic" translations and adaptations in Russia; Kasia Szymanska examines literary metatranslations; Adriana X. Jacobs is interested in extreme translation practices, mainly with regards to the "globalized" English. Cosima Bruno explores the Taiwanese poet Hsia Yü's experimentation with machine translations; finally, in this section, Jernej Habjan problematises the impact of culture on translations. "Practices", section IV, contains five essays by practicing translators: Jean Anderson considers a translator as a dispersive prism; Pari Azarm Motamedi offers her lingo-visual translations of Persian poetry, namely by Shafii Kadkani. Audrey Coussi presents her translations of "nonsense" alphabets. Eran Hadass shows how his algorithmic translations impact languages like Hebrew. Finally, Philip Terry presents the necessary modernisation processes in his translation of Du Bellay. The last section, V, dedicated to "Readings", also contains five essays. Patrick Hersant contrasts Coleridge's usage of foreign names and their subsequent translations in various languages. Péter Hajdu compares five Hungarian translations of Petronius' *Satyricon*. Alexandra Lukes deals with Louis Wolfson's therapeutic translations; Dennis Duncan examines the process of pseudo-translation in Harry Mathews's *Armenian Papers*. In the final essay of the volume, Stefan Willer elucidates a phenomenon of (Goethe's) translation of *Le Neveu de Rameau* as a possible replacement of (Diderot's) original. The index, by Daniele Nunziata, doubtless serves as an additional guide in these meanderings from one facet to another, to stay with the prismatic metaphor, underscoring the breadth of this editorial endeavour.

While the approach adopted here allows an original presentation to underline the many complementary facets of the translator's quest, one question springs to mind: for all those who have ventured into any type of translation practices and reflections, has their work ever been anything but prismatic? What, then, is the major contribution of this rich and (prismatically) exhaustive volume? As stated by its editor, the volume, with its approach, "offers a theorisation of translation in general [...]; and it also gives us a terminology for current practices", as all "[t]ranslation is inherently prismatic" (9). As such, it combines in-depth textual analyses with multiple translational strategies, considering the source material in its "multiple textuality" (7) and, thus, "paradigmatically generating multiple texts" (2). With such a "reconceptualisations of language" (13), the translation process can "no longer be a 'channel' between one language and another but rather a 'prism'" (3), "chang[ing] everything that passes through it" (9).

A somewhat deconstructive question remains: where does "translation [as] fundamentally multiplicatory" (2) begin and where does it end, if it means "opening up the plural signifying potential of the source text and spreading it into multiple versions" (3)? The editor and the contributors all seem to embrace both the necessary doubts and the unending rhizomatic possibilities of the process. In this sense, may the volume *Prismatic Translation* "ope[n] the way to more plural translation practices, and to an exploration of how far readers might be receptive to them" (3).

Metka Zupančič
University of Alabama at
Tuscaloosa