Translating Comics: Between Bubbles, Cultures, and Constraints in East Asia

University of Nanterre, 10–11 April 2026

Organizers:

Marie Laureillard, Professor in Chinese Language and Civilization at the University of Paris Nanterre. Author of many publications in French on visual art and cultural history. Co-editor and co-author of the award-winning volume *La Bande Dessinée en Asie Orientale: Un Art en Mouvement* (Paris: Hémisphéres Éditions, 2024). An English translation of her chapter was published in the *International Journal of Comic Art* 26.2 (2024), "The Unique Aesthetic of Cao Hanmei in His Adaptation of *Jin Ping Mei: Lianhuanhua* or *Manhua*?".

Jaqueline Berndt, Professor in Japanese Language and Culture at Stockholm University. Editor and co-author of *The Cambridge Companion to Manga and Anime*. Recent publication: "What's in a Name? – Manhua, Manga – 'Manghua'?," in *Sinophone Comics: Histories, Identities, Medialities*, edited by Adina Zemanek (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2026, 25–44; Open Access: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111438184-002). Chairperson of the book series at Stockholm UP, which released Lee I-yun's Open Access monograph, *Taiwan Comics*: https://www.stockholmuniversitypress.se/books/m/10.16993/bcp.

ABSTRACTS

(1) Antonio Paoliello-Palermo

Translating Sinophone Comics: The Role of Translators' Notes in Italian Editions

This paper focuses on translators' notes in Italian translations of Sinophone comics (manhua), examining their role as paratextual elements in the mediation of cultural and semiotic distance. Although translators' notes have been widely discussed in studies on literary translation, their use in translated comics has received far less attention. This gap is significant, given that comics combine verbal language, visual elements, and spatial layout in ways that raise specific challenges for translators.

Building on Genette's notion of paratext (1987), the paper considers translators' notes as peritextual threshold spaces that influence how translated comics are presented to and interpreted by target readers. Drawing on a corpus of Italian translations of Taiwanese manhua, the analysis examines both how often translators' notes appear and how they are used, combining a quantitative overview of their frequency and placement with a closer reading of their content and functions. The paper seeks to explore how notes address culture-specific references, linguistic opacity,

and the visual-verbal interplay of the comics medium. Additionally, it examines whether different patterns of use correspond to different translation strategies, ranging from approaches that foreground cultural and linguistic difference (foreignization) to those that limit notes in order to support smoother reading in Italian (domestication). By focusing on translators' notes as sites of paratextual mediation, the paper highlights an often-overlooked form of translatorial agency and situates it within research on paratextuality, multimodality, and the translation of Sinophone comics.

BIO: Antonio Paoliello-Palermo is an Associate Professor of East Asian Studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, where he also earned his PhD in Translation and Intercultural Studies. His research focuses on Sinophone literature and culture from Southeast Asia and Taiwan. He also works as a translator, having translated Sinophone fiction and graphic narratives into Italian, including manhua by Ruan Guang-min and Rimui Yumin.

(2) Paula Martínez Sirés

Prefaces, Afterwords, and Cultural Mediation: The Role of Manga Translators in Spain's Early Manga Reception

This presentation examines the dual role assumed by manga translators from Japanese into Spanish as both cultural mediators and content creators through the production of prefaces and afterwords published during the 1990s and early 2000s. While paratextual studies in the Japanese context have explored the functions of prefaces and afterwords in literary works, paratexts produced by manga translators have received limited scholarly attention, despite their significance for the reception of manga in Spain. Drawing on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of a corpus of approximately 90 manga titles published in Spain, this study proposes to conceptualize paratexts such as prefaces and afterwords in manga translations as public spaces, or 'translation agoras,' in which translators and other cultural agents interacted with readers and positioned themselves as mediators and cultural authorities on Japan within the Spanish context.

The quantitative analysis first examines the frequency of prefaces and afterwords across the selected manga titles, considering publishers and publication dates, and classifies these paratexts according to their functions based on an adapted version of Dimitriu's (2009) typology. The following qualitative analysis explores representative examples from each category in order to reinterpret these early paratexts as 'translation agoras' that offered insights into Japanese culture, explained translation strategies, and fostered dialogue with readers during the initial stages of manga reception in Spain. This presentation thus argues that prefaces and afterwords written by manga translators and editors played a key role in disseminating knowledge

of Japanese culture among young readers during the 1990s and early 2000s, at a time when manga was beginning to establish itself within the Spanish publishing market.

BIO: Paula Martínez Sirés is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Sophia University, Japan. Her research focuses on Translation Studies applied to the Japanese and Spanish contexts. Some of her latest publications are 'Translating without the Full Picture: "Simulpub" digital translations of manga in Spain' (inTRAlinea, ed. M. Borodo, 2023) and 'Beyond rewording: Translation techniques and paratextual elements in Japanese intralingual translation' (Routledge, eds. R. Meade et al., 2024).

(3) Martina Caschera
Translating "Chinese comics": two case studies from the Italian context

In 1971, *I fumetti di Mao* was published by Editori Laterza. It is a collection of seven Chinese comics in the *lianhuanhua* format translated from Mandarin Chinese, and framed by journalistic and academic essays edited by Jean Chesneaux, Umberto Eco, and Gino Nebiolo. Nebiolo authored the introduction, which also appeared in the English edition (*The People's Comic Book: Red Women's Detachment*, *Hot on the Trail and Other Chinese Comics*, edited by Endymion Wilkinson, Anchor Press, 1973). Sinologists such as Lionello Lanciotti, Sandra Marina Carletti, and Giorgio Zucchetti also contributed to this highly political project by acting as "comics translators." A prominent French sinologist, Jean Chesneaux, and an eminent intellectual and writer, Umberto Eco, authored the essays that close the book. In 2021, *Splendidi reietti* (*Haimen huisheng* 海门回声) was published by Add Editore. It is a niche, underground graphic novel authored by Seven and translated from Mandarin Chinese by me. In this instance, I—acting as both a sinologist and a "young" translator—also contributed a concluding essay addressing the translation of "Chinese comics." The proposed paper examines these two markedly different publications from a translational perspective. Specifically, it addresses: (1) comics translation and its "Sinophone articulation" from both a horizontal perspective (format and genre) and a vertical one (time and historical epochs; cultural capital and political weight); and (2) the positionality of comics translation scholars as translators.

BIO: Dr. Martina Caschera is an Assistant Professor of Chinese Literature at the University of Bergamo, Italy. She earned her Ph.D. in Oriental and Southern Asian Studies from the University of Naples "L'Orientale," with a dissertation on the Republican-era pictorial magazine *Shidai Manhua* (Modern Sketch). Her main research interests include Sinophone literature and media studies, with a particular focus on transmedia and transtextual phenomena. Since 2017, Dr. Caschera translates Sinophone comics. In 2023, she published *Il fumetto cinese. Introduzione ai manhua e ai lianhuanhua* (Tunué), the first Italian book dedicated to this subject, while in 2025,

she co-edited the volume *Media cinesi* (Carocci). Her essay "Sinophone Comics as a Thirdspace. Two Case Studies from the Italian Context" is part of the Open Access volume *Sinophone Comics*, edited by Adina Zemanek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 167-209; https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111438184-008).

(4) Asuka OZUMI

Making the Translator Visible: Notes and Paratext in Italian Manga Translation

Comic translation has often been described as a form of intermodal translation, in which verbal language interacts closely with visual and graphic elements (Kaindl 2004, Borodo 2015). Within this framework, paratextual elements such as onomatopoeia and signage constitute one locus of translation (Celotti 2008) where linguistic, semiotic, and editorial decisions converge. This paper focuses on translators' notes in Italian manga translation, examining how different forms of intervention contribute to making the translator visible and how their use has evolved over time. Drawing on Venuti's distinction between domestication and foreignization, the study adopts a descriptive and diachronic approach based on a selection of Italian manga editions published from the 1990s to the present. Early translations tended to minimize explicit translator intervention, favoring domesticating solutions such as graphic substitution and cultural adaptation (Zanettin 2014; La Marca 2026). More recent editions, by contrast, increasingly allow for the coexistence of Japanese textual elements and their explanations, reflecting changing editorial norms and a growing familiarity of Italian readers with Japanese language and culture.

The paper explores a range of paratextual strategies, including small in-text glosses used to render Japanese onomatopoeia, marginal or in-panel notes translating written signage, and more explicit translator's notes explaining culture-specific terms that are left untranslated. Through such interventions, the translator's presence becomes materially and visually legible on the page. By focusing on paratexts and notes as sites of mediation where translation becomes visible, the paper argues that the growing popularity of manga has created conditions in which foreignizing strategies and translator visibility become increasingly acceptable within the Italian publishing context.

BIO: Tenure Track Researcher at the University of Torino (Italy) and a translator. She has worked for fifteen years in the Italian manga publishing industry, first as licensing manager at Edizioni BD and then as editor-in-chief of the imprint Showcase (Dynit Manga). Her research focuses on manga translation and gender representation in manga. She has translated works by Bashō, Suzuki Izumi, Itō Shiori, Ayase Maru, Torikai Akane, Nananan Kiriko, and others.

(5) Blanche Delaborde

Translating Gender And Queerness: Around Boys Run The Riot

This talk proposes examining the translations into French, English, and Spanish of the manga *Boys Run The Riot*, created by trans author Gaku Keito and published in 2020-21, from the perspective of its queer and nonbinary translator into French. It aims to show the complexity and weight of various choices regarding the translation of the gender of trans and nonbinary characters in the series, taking into account not only linguistic constraints but also those pertaining to the manga format and the publishing context.

The first part of this talk will present how Japanese, French, English, and Spanish differ widely in their grammatical gender systems and show how these differences pose challenges in translating various scenes, challenges often compounded by formal constraints specific to manga. Secondly, the scope will be expanded to the relationship between gender expression, gender identities, and gendered language in Japanese, French, English, and Spanish-speaking spaces, and how that relationship impacts both the story depicted in the manga and its reception by readers around the world.

Drawing on Marc Démont's inspiring distinction between "the minoritizing translation" and "the queering translation," presented in "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts" (*Queering Translation, Translating the Queer*, Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl, eds, 2018), the presenter will analyze some discussions they had with the French publisher about the wording of specific panels during the translation process. Lastly, this talk will touch upon the visibility of translators through paratexts like indexes or afterwords, and in the marketing of translated editions, where the "all-transgender localization team" behind the English-language release is highlighted as a selling point.

BIO: Blanche Delaborde is a manga researcher and translator, based in Fukuoka, Japan. They obtained their PhD degree from Inalco, Paris, in 2019 with a thesis titled *Poétique des impressifs graphiques dans les mangas 1986-1996*. The chapter "Hearing Manga" in *The Cambridge Companion to Manga and Anime* (2024) provides an introduction to their field of specialization. They serve on the selection committee of the Konishi Foundation's Manga Translation Award, as well as the editorial board of the Open Edition journal *Comicalités*.

(6) Dalma Kálovics

From foreignization to domestication: Korean comics in Japan

In this presentation, I examine how the localization of not just comics content, but also publication format, relates to the acceptance of South Korean comics in Japan. Since the 1970s, there have been numerous attempts to introduce Korean comics in the

Japanese market, but these were unsuccessful, not least because of the localization strategy. For instance, in the 2000s, immediately before and during the Hallyu Boom, several Korean comics were released in Japan, partially as a tie-up with K-dramas. Most of these publications aimed to popularize Korean culture, thus, foreignization was chosen as the localization strategy. However, keeping the content as close to the original as possible, including the left-to-right reading direction and the A5-size Korean publication format, proved unsuccessful with Japanese readers accustomed to manga. Conversely, when Korean webtoons entered the Japanese market in the 2010s, they were domesticated from the outset, erasing every trace of their foreign origin. Korean characters became Japanese, and even the panel layout of scroll comics was edited to fit the Japanese reading direction. This level of domestication has been mostly retained, even for the majority of print releases of popular webtoons: the standard B6 size publication format and right-to-left reading direction of manga paperbacks are used, and these comics are released under the same label as Japanese manga. While several other reasons can be cited for webtoon's success as well, for instance, the convenient smartphone-optimized format, stylistic similarities, or the popularity of the isekai genre in both countries, domestication has undoubtedly contributed to the easy acceptance of Korean webtoons, making their success the first instance of foreign comics conquering Japanese readers.

BIO: Dalma Kálovics is an assistant professor at Kwansei Gakuin University, School of International Studies in Nishinomiya, Japan. She received her PhD in manga from Kyoto Seika University in 2019, researching 1960s shōjo manga within children's magazines from a media-historical perspective. Recently she has been focusing on the materiality of manga, and how different publication formats relate to the visual structure of comics, be it in 1960s children's magazines, rental comics and newspapers or recent digital comics, webtoons.

(7) Bounthavy SUVILAY

Editorial strategies for material domestication: history of the first manga translations in France (1970-2000)

This paper offers a historical translation-studies analysis of the first manga translations published in France, from their emergence in periodicals in the 1970s to their consolidation in bookstores in the early 2000s. It will be examined how French publishers developed material strategies of "domestication" (Venuti) that went beyond the text alone for a readership that was unfamiliar with the codes of Japanese comics at the time. Aimed to reduce cultural and formal strangeness, these strategies were embodied in the book itself and its paratext, depending on the target audience and editorial requirements.

The analysis will focus in particular on the concrete measures taken to accompany the discovery of "reverse reading" (from right to left): explanatory

numbering of panels, glossaries, footnotes, or endnotes. The evolution of these paratextual choices will be traced by comparing pioneering publications (e.g., in *Le Cri qui tue* or *Animeland*) with the first dedicated collections in bookstores (Glénat, Tonkam, Casterman). This approach sheds light on one aspect of manga reception in France through published translations, showing how the physicality of the book has been a crucial tool for cultural mediation, striking a balance between fidelity to the source work and adaptation to the norms and expectations of the target readership.

BIO: Bounthavy Suvilay is a lecturer in Modern Literature at the University of Lille and a specialist in Japanese popular culture (manga, video games, animation). Her work also explores the interactions between children's literature and other art forms through the poetics of the medium, showing how technology, the medium's reputation, and economic factors shape the creation and reception of works. She has published academic works such as *La culture manga* (2021) and *Dragon Ball, une histoire française* (2021), as well as popular science books, *Indie Games* (2 volumes in 2018 and 2022) and *Tout savoir sur Goldorak et les robots géants* (2024). ORCID : https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1528-6518

(8) Zhao Yangjie

Translating Marginal Women: French Mediation of Rural Chinese Lives in Ma maman and Le Printemps prochain

This paper proposes a comparative study of the French translations of two Chinese comics that render visible the lives of socially marginalized women in rural China, produced within distinct authorial projects and historical settings. Li Kunwu's *Ma maman* (Kana, "Made in," 2019; translated by An Ning) reconstructs the life of the author's mother in early- to mid-twentieth-century Yunnan, mobilizing a filial, documentary-inflected narrative to depict hardship, mobility, and resilience against the backdrop of social upheaval. Liu Yun's *Le Printemps prochain* (Wo de muqin: Xin zhen 我的母亲：心真; çà et là, 2023; translated by Mathilde Colo) portrays a rural woman— the author's aunt— in contemporary Henan, whose life is structured by an arranged marriage and the repetitive, often invisible labor of household work, framing the family as both shelter and confinement.

Beyond their shared focus on women's survival, these works illuminate two contrasting transnational publication economies. *Ma maman* (2019) was released first to a French-language comics readership, raising questions about what "translation" entails when publication and legitimization proceed through a French-first route before returning to the Chinese-language market in 2021. *Le Printemps prochain* (2023), meanwhile, emerged from a Chinese graduate project and gained domestic visibility before its French translation later that year, prompting questions about how an already public social critique is reframed for francophone readers.

Methodologically, I combine close reading of selected sequences with paratextual and material analysis: typography and lettering choices; the scope, placement, and visibility of translator's notes (what is glossed, where, and for whom); editorial omissions and selection (including the absence of the author's afterword in French); and micro-level translation decisions affecting kinship terms, domestic labor, and gendered power relations. The comparison aims to clarify translator agency within two circuits of Franco-Chinese comics circulation, showing how verbal and graphic mediation jointly shape the intelligibility—and the politics—of rural Chinese women's representation in French.

BIO: Yangjie Zhao received his PhD in Languages and Literatures from *École normale supérieure – Université Paris Sciences et Lettres* (ENS–PSL) in 2025, under the supervision of Anne Simon and Marie Laureillard. His doctoral dissertation examines the translation and reception of the homosexual themes in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* in the Chinese-speaking world. He is currently a *maître de langue* at Université Paris Cité. His research interests include Chinese-French literary translation and intercultural studies.

(9) Alba Quintairos-Soliño
Shaping the Idea of Manga through Translation: The Case of Editorial Decisions in Spain

The notion of "paratranslation", coined by the University of Vigo in 2005, brings to the forefront the role of paratexts in the translation process, emphasizing that a text cannot be accurately translated if they are not taken into account and, consequently, (para)translated as well. In this regard, it must be noted that not only images or sounds are considered paratexts, but also all the historical, economic, social, cultural or anthropological aspects that influence the (para)translation process in any possible way (Yuste Frías, 2008, 2010, 2022). Thus, layout, materiality, editorial criteria, the economic context, readers' preferences, political decisions, etc., are among the elements that need to be understood and, if essential, conveyed in the target text.

With this in mind, and due to their multimodal nature, graphic narratives such as manga posit themselves as one of the most challenging source texts when it comes to translate their comprehensive paratextuality: not only are they based on the careful combination of texts and images, but they have also started to include soundtracks, sound effects and GIFs as part of their narrative as they became digital. Nevertheless, paratexts surrounding the translation process (such as editorial or political decisions) are also essential to understand phenomena such as the popularity of manga in particular cultural contexts (Quintairos-Soliño, 2023).

With paratranslation as a theoretical framework, this paper explores how editorial decisions regarding translation have become a determining paratext of manga in the Spanish market, shaping the idea of both manga and the mangaesque in the

target culture. In this vein, not only will the case of the Spanish language be explored, but also the particular correlation between editorial criteria and Spain's co-official languages, such as Galician and Catalan, will be taken into account.

BIO: Ph.D. in Translation & Paratranslation with a thesis on the translation of manga (with a special focus on *Detective Conan*). Assistant lecturer at Centro Universitario de la Defensa de Zaragoza. As a member of the T&P and LediCUDe research groups, her research focuses on the paratranslation of the text-image relationship and the representation of Otherness in pop culture. She has published numerous articles and chapters on manga as a cultural reference, available at https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0064-1695.

(10) Yoon-Jung Do
A Study on the Translation Patterns of Characters in Images within Graphic Novels: Focusing on Works Translated Between Korea and France

This presentation examines modes of translating characters in images, focusing on works translated between Korea and France. In comics, characters appear not only in the form of dialogue and narration but also in the images themselves. These characters in the image have two levels. The first is onomatopoeia. The second consists of other characters, which can be further classified into three types. First, signs, placards, and location names appearing in the background, such as at subway or bus stops. These are generally architectural elements; second, characters within more common media, including paper-based media like books and newspapers, and digital media like screens on digital devices; and third, characters embedded in everyday objects, embroidered on sports uniforms. It will be examined how these diverse layers of characters are transformed and preserved during the translation process. Additionally, characters appearing in paratextual elements (such as covers and introductory pages) will be considered.

The transformations and retention of characters during image translation can be examined broadly from visual and linguistic perspectives. The visual aspect will primarily be analysed in terms of structural elements, such as position, orientation, and segmentation units, as well as formal aspects, such as size, typeface, intensity, and colour. The linguistic perspective will focus on whether the characters were retained in the source language or translated into the target language. The analysed works are French translations of Korean works, Korean translations of French works, and works by authors of Korean origin who are active in France. The latter category includes authors who publish in both France and Korea and perform auto-translation. As a whole, this study is expected to provide a starting point for future investigations into the functions and effects of transforming and preserving characters in images, along with the related strategies.

BIO: 도윤정Yoon-Jung Do, who holds a doctorate in history and semiology of text and image from Paris VII University, is an assistant professor at Incheon National University in South Korea. Her research focuses on analysing pages and books, media that combine text and images. Recent publications (in French): “A Study of Suzy Lee's Album: Analysis of Black and White Pages” (forthcoming), “The Rhythm of Accordion Books by 이수지 Suzy Lee” (2025), “Korean Poet Yi Sang, Illustrator of Pak T’aewôn's Novel, in *A Day in the Life of Novelist Mr. Kubo* (1934)” (2020).

(11) Daryna Morhun

Negotiating Word, Image, and Culture: Intermedial Challenges in Manhua Translation

In his *Theory of language: the representational function of language*, Karl Bühler identified three functions of language: expression, appeal, and representation. Building on his theory, Katharina Reiss et al. developed the Skopos theory, which views communicative purpose as the defining factor in translation. Accordingly, texts can be classified based on their dominant function. In her later work, Katharina Reiss added audio-medial texts, arguing that their meaning is strongly shaped by extralinguistic context and that a text is not limited to written form alone. Therefore, translation must also account for this context in order to achieve an equivalent effect on the target audience.

This typology can be further expanded to include intermedial texts – those at the intersection of different art forms, such as comics (including manhua, manga, manhwa, etc.), graphic novels, drama, screenplays, and song lyrics. In such texts, extralinguistic elements are not supplementary but integral. Translating them involves not only rendering verbal content and adapting cultural references, but also aligning the translation with the visual and medial components, which poses significant challenges and offers broad potential for linguistic research.

During the translation of Sinophone (Taiwanese and Hong Kong) manhua into Ukrainian, several challenges arise. Titles, as the primary appealing element, require particular attention. A literal translation was used in only one case: Pen So’s 回憶見 (*See You in the Memories*). In other cases, like Kiya Chang’s 異人茶跡, the Ukrainian title emphasized historical exotism and the central theme of tea, resulting in a version close to “Formosa: Chronicles of Tea Ceremonies.” The translation of onomatopoeia is another key issue. Given the polysemy and polyphony of Chinese interjections, literal translation is often impossible. Their expressive function, supported by visual context, allows for meaning-based translation or partial retention of original forms to preserve the reader experience. I Finally, translating manhua requires deep cultural competence in both source and target languages. Balancing domestication and foreignization is essential to recreate the original communicative effect while maintaining clarity for the target audience.

BIO: Daryna Morhun is a PhD student at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, researching the intermediality in literature, and a translator of Sinophone manhua. She has translated "A Teatime Adventure" by Chang Kiya (3 vols), "Crouching Lion in a Bookstore" by Xiaodao (vols 3 and 4) for "Safran" Publishing House, and «See you in your memories» by Pen So for "Vovkulaka" Publishing House, as well as Sinophone prose ("The Piano Tuner" for "Safran" Publishing House).

(12) Nick Stember
Soldiers, Citizens, and Compatriots: Bo Yang's Contentious Localization of Popeye

In 1968, the social critic Guo Yidong (penname Bo Yang, 1920–2008) was famously arrested by the KMT-led military government of the Republic of China (ROC) for his humorous mistranslation of a Popeye cartoon strip. For his rendition of the strip, Guo altered a line in which Popeye appeals to the residents of a deserted island to vote for him (and his son) for president, using a stock phrase from the speeches of then-president of the ROC, Chiang Kai-shek. This seemingly minor infraction resulted in charges of collusion with the Chinese Communist Party, and a conviction of "attempting to subvert the government by illegal means." After spending over nine years in prison, Guo was finally released following international pressure, going on to write *The Ugly Chinaman*. Owing in part to Guo's notoriety, this acerbic critique of the Chinese national character would become a controversial bestseller in both Taiwan and the PRC. In this paper, I consider the larger context for Guo's mistranslation, and subsequent arrest, trial, and (partial) conviction. As I argue, in localizing *Popeye* to provide a pointed criticism of not only Chiang Kai-shek, but also his son, Chiang Ching-kuo, Guo demonstrated the many ways in which cultural products can gain in translation, taking a relatively ephemeral work of popular culture and transforming it into a lasting example of speaking truth to power.

BIO: Nick Stember is a London-based media historian and translator of Chinese literature and popular culture. His work focuses on the remediation of the past through historical fiction and graphic narrative.

(13) Giovanni Stigliano Messuti
How did it end up there? Editorial solutions to linguistic and visual extravagance in the collected works of HANAWA *Kazuichi (1972–1980)*

Often labeled as a leading exponent of the *ryōki gekiga* (bizarre gekiga) subgenre, Hanawa Kazuichi (b. 1947) defies the boundaries of both *eroguro* (erotic-grotesque comics) and *gekiga* (dramatic comics). While his most mature works exhibit an autobiographical vein (especially following his three-year imprisonment from 1994 to 1997), his earlier ones are entirely fictional, with a more unconventional approach to humor, visuals, and historical accuracy. The latter approach can be noted in the stories

featured in the anthology *Tsuki no hikari* (*Moonlight*), originally published in the magazine *Garo* from 1971 to 1974, and collected in a special volume by Seirindō,with the addition of a new original story, in 1980. Its recent translation into Italian has posed several adaptation and lettering issues.

First, in linguistic terms, Hanawa's humor lies in the insertion of cultural references and expressions that are chronologically inconsistent with the late Edo/ Meiji/Taishō-era settings and sound out of place given their context. Second, in visual terms, Hanawa often places text outside the conventional frame of speech bubbles, and he does not adopt a consistent shape for them (e.g., no clear distinction between inner thought and direct speech). In addition, he arbitrarily intersperses panels with Chinese characters (*kanji*), sometimes to add context (e.g., the emotional state of a given character), sometimes purely for decoration, as if to exorcise some sort of horror vacui. Moving beyond Hanawa's renowned example of *watakushi manga* ("I-manga") represented by the volume *Keimusho no naka* (*In Prison*, 1998–2000), this study examines the translation, lettering, and layout strategies adopted in the Italian edition to make *Tsuki no hikari* accessible to local readers. It will also demonstrate how a combination of appendices and footnotes can help avoid excessive localization of the original text, without impairing the reading experience.

BIO: Giovanni Stigliano Messuti is PhD candidate in Film Studies at the University of Zurich, with a background in Japanese Studies (BA, MA). He is a professional journalist (OdG), film critic (SNCCI, FIPRESCI), and literary translator. He has translated from Japanese into Italian and curated the footnotes of *Esther* (published in 2024, finalist for the Sophie Castille Award for Comics in Translation 2025) and *Lyrica* (2025) by Miyanishi Keizō, *Tsuki no hikari* (2025) by Hanawa Kazuichi, *Rabu rettā furomu kanata* (2025) by Hayami Jun, *Kasumisō ni yureru kisha* (2026) by Uchida Yoshimi, and *Seikimatsu fukumakō* (TBA) by Miyaya Kazuhiko.

(14) Inkyeong CHUNG

Beyond Untranslatability: 'Che' (체) as a Linguistic–Visual Register in Korean Comic Translation

As hybrid media combining text and image, comics challenge translation models that privilege verbal language over other semiotic resources. This paper examines the concept of che (체) in Korean comics as a case that complicates conventional, text-centered models of translation. While che is often loosely glossed as "style" (of illustration and font), I argue that in Korean comics it functions more precisely as a linguistic–visual register: a culturally sedimented mode of expression that encodes genre, affect, and narrative stance through both drawing style and typography.

Focusing on examples such as *sunjeong manhwa-che* (순정만화체) and the ironic deployment of *gungseoche* (궁서체), a typeface conventionally associated with

solemnity and authority, this paper shows how che operates as a semiotic shorthand. Readers are expected to recognize these visual-linguistic cues immediately, activating shared genre memory and cultural expectations prior to, or even independently of, verbal content. In this sense, che collapses distinctions between text and image, functioning simultaneously as register, typography, and intertextual reference. Yet rather than framing che as simply “untranslatable,” this study proposes the notion of semiotic displacement. In translation, the meanings encoded in che are rarely preserved at the typographic or visual level; instead, they are redistributed across other semiotic domains, such as narrative tone, dialogue choices, paratextual explanation, or editorial framing. This displacement reveals structural constraints within comic translation workflows, where translators and editors operate within segmented production roles that treat linguistic content, typography, and visual form as separable.

Ultimately, this paper contributes to broader discussions on multimodal translation and argues for a more integrated approach that recognizes the translator’s role not only as a mediator of language, but as a negotiator of semiotic hierarchies shaped by cultural literacy, publishing norms, and graphic tradition.

BIO: Inkyeong Chung is a Korean instructor and independent researcher in Korean linguistics. She holds an M.A. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Pennsylvania. Her research has been presented at numerous institutions and conferences, including Columbia University's 30th Graduate Student Conference on East Asia. She has also translated passages for the textbook Topics in Korean Language and Culture: Volume Two (Routledge, 2024).

(15) Dana Iacob

Ethics of Translating Darkness: Moral Ambiguity and Translator Responsibility in Dark Fantasy Manga

Dark fantasy manga occupies a distinctive position within the global circulation of comics, characterised by moral ambiguity, aestheticised violence, and the destabilisation of conventional ethical binaries. This paper examines how such narratives challenge established models of translation ethics, particularly when mediated for culturally and linguistically peripheral audiences (eg, Eastern Europe).

Drawing on theories of translation ethics (Berman, Venuti, Pym), the study conceptualises the translator not as a neutral intermediary, but as an ethical mediator responsible for negotiating conflicting value systems, reader expectations, and market constraints. In manga, meaning is distributed not only through verbal language, but also through visual composition and narrative pacing, even more so in dark fantasy narratives that rely heavily on ellipsis and silence. Consequently, approaches that privilege linguistic equivalence alone are insufficient for translating dark fantasy manga.

The paper further situates dark fantasy manga within the aesthetic framework of Japanese Gothic, understood not as a fixed genre but as a cultural mode emphasizing liminality and moral non-resolution. The Gothic mode amplifies the ethical challenges of translation by foregrounding ambiguity as a narrative value rather than a problem to be resolved. When such texts are translated into peripheral languages, these challenges are compounded by additional cultural tensions, including asymmetries in literary prestige, limited familiarity with genres, and heightened pressures toward normative readability. Using selected examples from *Kuroshitsuji* (written and illustrated by Yana Toboso) as a case study, the paper argues that the genre functions as a 'stress test' for the dichotomy of domestication and foreignization.

From the standpoint of translation ethics, this study highlights the unstable ethical terrain manga translators navigate. It suggests that dark fantasy manga, informed by Japanese Gothic sensibilities, reframes translation ethics as a process of sustained negotiation with alterity rather than a problem with a final resolution.

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(16) Yı Sang-i

Translating Voice and Performance in the Korean Webtoon 정년이*(Jeongnyeon): Constraints and Possibilities in the Japanese Context*

This paper examines the Korean webtoon *Jeongnyeon* as a case study of translation absence and media-specific constraints in the translation of East Asian comics. Centered on women's *gukgeuk* (Korean traditional theater), *Jeongnyeon* relies heavily on vocal performance, musicality, and gender performativity, articulated through text and image. Despite the global circulation of Korean webtoons and the availability of Naver Webtoon's Japanese platform, *Jeongnyeon* has not been officially translated into Japanese. At the same time, the TV show adaptation of *Jeongnyeon* is currently available in Japan on Disney+, with Japanese subtitles but no Japanese dub—an unusual choice in a media culture where dubbing is well established. This asymmetry between subtitled audiovisual translation and the absence of both dubbing and comics translation raises crucial questions about voice, performance, and cultural translatability.

Rather than evaluating an existing translation, this paper examines *Jeongnyeon* by analyzing the translation challenges embedded in the work itself. Focusing on performance scenes, song lyrics, and visualized vocality, it explores how the webtoon's sonic and musical dimensions pose specific problems of loss, preservation, and reconfiguration in Japanese. It further examines how conventions in Japanese manga and performance culture—such as the casting tradition of the Takarazuka and established narrative expectations—may constrain or alternatively expand the work's

reception. By comparing the webtoon's untranslated status with the subtitled circulation of its drama adaptation, this study highlights the media-specific conditions under which translation becomes possible, partial, or deferred. Ultimately, it argues that the absence of a Japanese webtoon translation should be understood not as a lack, but as a meaningful editorial and cultural phenomenon, revealing the politics of selection, adaptation, and voice in contemporary East Asian comics translation.

BIO: Yi Sang-i is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at the Graduate School of Korean Studies, the Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul. She holds a BA in Japanese Literature and Teaching Korean as a Foreign Language, as well as an MA in Japanese Literature. Her research interests include East Asian cultural reception, the sociology of translation, cultural sociology, and gender studies. She has presented papers at the International Conference of Korean Studies in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and the East Asia Early Career Researchers' Joint Research Forum in Beijing, China. Her recent presentations examined the representation of the Korean diaspora in performing arts and issues of recognition in postwar Okinawan literature.

(17) Olga Bobrowska

Adaptation as Ideological Practice. The Case of a Puppet Animated Film Rooster Crows at Midnight *(Banye ji jiao, 1964, dir. You Lei)*

This paper examines how the film *Rooster Crows at Midnight* was adapted from an ideologically specific source text and, in turn, became a source for further visual adaptations. At the same time, this paper aims to present the means and methods applied in animation filmmaking that complied with the ideological principles established by the radical supporters of Mao Zedong (especially Jiang Qing) in the first half of the 1960s. The film analysis unravels the multilayered construction of the historical reality embedded in the film as well as in the related preceding and following cultural texts: the memoirs of the soldier Gao Yubao (this autobiographical story, published in 1951 in *Jiefangjun wenyi*, reminisced how a young, clever field-worker Gao struggled with a malicious landlord Zhou Bapi) and a still-photography short story published during the Cultural Revolution (in 1973, Beijing-based Foreign Language Press released in English a specific form of *lianhuanhua* where the drawings were replaced with stills from You Lei's film). The animated *Rooster Crows at Midnight* may be acknowledged as an exemplification of Maoist cultural production's inclination to remold textual content deeply rooted in the collective imagination in accordance with the inner flows and updates of the dominant doctrine. The creators of such cultural texts (as well as their receivers) absorbed new, desired meanings and 'forgot' the hitherto recognized interpretations of the texts. The film represents a strong anti-revisionist approach towards cultural production, and it uses a communicative strategy of creating image-ideas that convey ideological meanings determined by the increasing

radicalization of the Maoist revolutionary agenda (e.g., the anti-individualistic concept of the 'spirit of a screw' or the concept of the 'continuous revolution').

BIO: Olga Bobrowska, PhD, is an animated film scholar, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art and Design of the UKEN University in Kraków (Uniwersytet Komisji Edukacji Narodowej), Poland, co-founder and festival director of StopTrik International Film Festival (Maribor, Slovenia), film culture activist, and curator. She authored two monographs published by the CRC Press (*Chinese Animated Film and Ideology, 1940s-1970s: Fighting Puppets*, 2023; *Chinese Animated Film and Ideology: Tradition, Innovation, and Interculturality*, 2024) and co-edited the books *Obsession, Perversion, Rebellion: Twisted Dreams of Central European Animation* (2016), and *Propaganda, Ideology, Animation: Twisted Dreams of History* (2019). She is a permanent contributor to Zippy Frames.

(18) Mariia Guleva
A featherless bird that flew internationally: a case study of a 1956 manhua and a 1960 diafilm

The back cover of *Manhua* magazine no. 67, published in Beijing in June 1956, contained a colourful seven-panel strip titled "Bird crying in cold" (*Hanhaoniao* 寒号鸟) by Li Cunsong 李寸松. It told a story of a featherless bird which, upon being shown kindness, suddenly grows arrogant—and loses all it gained from the kind acts of others, left featherless in the snow. The story is narrated in a short introductory text and in seven pictures which are almost text-free. While this is not a full-length *lianhuanhua* or similar comics form, it is nevertheless a pictorial narrative which relies heavily on the sequential moves and readers' imaginative interpretation of the gutter—therefore, it is a variant of comic strips.

The featherless bird, however, did not stay put. In 1960, it appeared in the Soviet Union under the name, not of *Hanhaoniao*, but *Wulingzi* 五灵子, literally a "five-spirit bird." Instead of just seven panels, Soviet Wulingzi became a full-length still-frame visual narrative, *diafilm*, containing 40 panels. The story, while running along similar lines, was adorned with many more details, and the artist, Piotr Repkin, skilfully explored the somewhat limited colour palette of diafilm material to create the impression of vibrant, colourful scenes. Diafilm, a medium widely used in the USSR for education and for children's entertainment, was in fact quite similar to *lianhuanhua* in its reliance on an individual image with a short textual caption, so media in the case of *Hanhaoniao–Wulingzi* stories are quite closely linked. Yet there are curious distinctions between the two renderings of the featherless bird story, which allegedly originated in folk tales. In my paper, I propose to examine translation in two senses: the Chinese story told in Russian for Soviet viewers, and the translation of the "folk" story into images by Li Cunsong and Repkin.

BIO: Mariia Guleva is an assistant professor at the Department of Chinese Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University. Her Ph.D. thesis (defended in March 2025) was devoted to the study of Chinese political cartoons of the 1950s and their place in the broader landscape of socialist cartooning. Her publications and further details are listed at https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7348-5438 and https://ksi.ff.cuni.cz/en/people/structure-and-staff/mariia-guleva/.

(19) Lena Henningsen

Adaptation and transmediation

Adaptation and transmedial processes are constitutive of Chinese *lianhuanhua*. The rise of lianhuanhua in the early 20th century was intricately linked to the business of producing comic adaptations of the latest movies; later, adaptations of film, of fiction, and other texts, including diaries, continued into the Mao era. Moreover, *lianhuanhua* artists consciously employed, or quoted, topoi and tropes from other fields of culture, including caricature, propaganda posters, and the visual arts more generally, ranging from traditional painting styles to modernist woodcut prints. Adaptation, thus, is transmediation. At times, it was highly didactic; adaptation also served to communicate clear political messages on distinct topics. However, with scholars of adaptation studies (Hutcheon, Sanders, or Baetens), I want to emphasize that works of adaptation are never "just" derivative works that duplicate or parrot a message communicated in the alleged original work. Rather, they need to be considered as works in their own right. In their recombination of previous elements and in their (re)interpretation of the alleged original (or, sometimes, originals), they tend to find their own voice and their own messages in their distinct combination of image and text, navigating a simplification of the text and ambivalence in the visuals. Using one literary ("Diary of a Madman" by Lu Xun), one cinematic (Norman Bethune), and one musical example (the biography of Abing, a blind street musician), I will trace these processes of adaptation and transmediation. They point, I argue, not only to a core characteristic of this form of art, but also to the wider processes of adaptation in (popular) cultural production in China.

BIO: Lena Henningsen is PI of the ERC-funded project *Comics Culture in the People's Republic of China* (*ChinaComx*) at Heidelberg University. She is currently writing a book about the adaptation of Lu Xun's fiction into *lianhuanhua*, as part of her broader research on adaptation and innovation in Chinese literature and culture.