

## The Literary Translation Centre at London Book Fair 2016

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### **Non-native Translation: Is It Time to Rethink Where Good Translations Come From?**

**M**arta Dziurosz, translator-in-residence at the Free Word Centre and a translator between Polish and English, began this year's opening Literary Translation Centre panel with the question: is it time to let go of the distinction between translators who work into their native language and those who don't—and indeed, does the very concept of a native language still mean anything in our increasingly globalised world? While Chinese-to-English translator Nicky Harman announced her intention to be “curmudgeonly” and gave examples of the slips in tone and meaning she had seen non-native translators make (such as the oddly grandiose “I’m a model. Moreover, I’m a nude model”), academic and Turkish-to-English translator Maureen Freely spoke of the added freedom and flexibility that writing in English gave some of her overseas students (“They find a home in English, but they’re not locked inside that home”). Tuesday Bhambray, who translates from her first language (Polish) into her third (English), proposed that people who grow up with more than one language tend to feel more at home in translation, having spent their childhoods interpreting for their parents—though she added that that doesn't always help with her impostor syndrome (symptom: compulsive googling of every phrase she uses) when translating literature into a language that's not her own. But does the translator have to feel like a writer? Bratislava-born Julia Sherwood, who mostly translates from Slovak, said that she considers herself a reader of and advocate for the literatures of other countries first and foremost, and not a writer as such. The discussion concluded with Marta describing her recent experiences of working with bilingual and trilingual pupils in multicultural London schools. It was an exciting way to end it: there is, she said, “a fantastic generation of future translators growing up under our noses”.