

In response to NourbeSe Philip's public criticism of our work, Benway Series makes clear that:

The translator reached out to the author and tried to get her involved in the whole project. The author replied she was glad about it but she never followed up the invitation to participate, to discuss the translation and to see the translation samples. The author was definitely free to be busy or not interested, it was precisely out of respect for her time and priorities that we followed the institutional way by contacting the publisher and complying to all their requests: sending them the books of our catalogue, illustrating the project in depth, submitting samples to blind peer-reviewing, and buying the translation rights, whose terms, we assumed, had already been discussed by author and publisher. The project has neither been pursued behind the author's back nor has been carried out without an attempt to involve her in a timely fashion.

Benway claims validity and legitimacy for the book, both in terms of poetic rendition and in terms of the graphic rendering of the text, which has been elaborated and produced with the utmost care. If the current outcome is not to the author's enjoyment, reasons are traceable to either misunderstanding or lack of communication, certainly not to a lack of good faith in pursuing it. The accusations made on the ground of identity differences (if there were no differences, books wouldn't be translated, after all) or of presumed racial essences are unfortunate and unfounded. Evoking racial violence as a term of comparison with the work of translating and printing a book of deep complexity and transcultural significance is offensive, not so much to us, who have been moved to such an enterprise by our high regard for Philip's book, but to all the victims of such appalling violence. The request of destroying a book for the possible flaws that it might show sounds especially absurd, disturbingly bringing to mind the practices of authoritarian and fundamentalist regimes around the world.

We think that undermining the practice of translation is dangerous, in particular in the passage from a close-to-universal language such as English to a minority one such as Italian. Benway Series is a non-profit publishing project that deeply believes in the making of bilingual books and literary translations. We believe that good books can talk across time and space, resounding with distinctive poetics and unique cultural value, potentially inspiring people who don't have access to the originals, and unceasingly participating in the making of shared meanings.

Mariangela Guatteri e Giulio Marzaioli