



Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association
Cumann Aistritheoirí agus Ateangairí na hÉireann

ITIA Bulletin

2017 / 3

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Editorial

Orhan Pamuk's Dutch translator, Hanneke van der Heijden, accepted our invitation to write this issue's article on fellow associations. It gives a detailed description of current conditions for translators, not only literary, in Turkey and, I believe, confirms the importance of the role of professional translator and interpreter associations who advocate on our behalf. National associations as well as bigger bodies such as CEATL (report on AGM also in this issue), FIT Europe and FIT Mundis do a lot of work raising our profile and visibility, lobbying for better working conditions, fair contracts, etc. I believe it also underlines the necessity for smaller associations, ITIA included, to be represented at these annual meetings and congresses as solidarity is vital in our common pursuit of status and recognition for our profession.

Moving from international to national, the ITIA continues to give voice on the matter of current practice as well as informing and educating professionals who use the services of translators and interpreters. The ITIA was delighted to contribute articles to the Law Society Gazette on legal translation and interpreting. Both pieces are very comprehensive - the link for Dr Mary Phelan's article on court interpreting appeared in our last issue and Dr Annette Schiller's article on legal translation appears in the May issue of the Gazette.

Happy summer reading!

Anne Larchet, Editor

MEMBERS' CORNER

Rachel McNicholl, Associate Member and PEN/Heim translation grant winner, reveals the inner workings of a literary translator's working life

Q. Describe yourself professionally in a few lines.

I'm a freelance translator and editor. I also teach a few hours a week in an adult literacy scheme, and give occasional translation or editing workshops. My clients range from individuals to publishers, cultural institutes, corporate bodies and NGOs. My translations of fiction and non-fiction by German-language writers have been published in journals and anthologies including *The Stinging Fly*, *Manoa*, *No Man's Land*, *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation* and *Best European Fiction*. My most recent book-length translation is *sometimes i lie and sometimes i don't*, short-stories by Austrian writer Nadja Spiegel (Dalkey Archive Press, 2015). In 2014 I received an Arts Council bursary to pursue literary translation. In 2016, I was awarded a PEN/Heim translation grant by PEN America towards a novel I would love to see published in English, *Operation Hinterland* by Anita Augustin (*Der Zwerg reinigt den Kittel*, 2012).

Q. When and why did you decide on a career in translating/interpreting?

It was an "organic" process. I always knew that I wanted to study languages, but I wasn't entirely sure where that would lead me. I studied French (minor), German and Italian for my degree in 1981, then went on to do an MA in German. Degrees or post-grads in translation studies didn't exist in Ireland at the time, but translation

into and out of the languages you were studying was part of the course anyhow. Before I went to college, I did a secretarial course. I had vague notions that languages and secretarial skills might lead to good opportunities in the EU, but in college I became more interested in literature and in social and cultural history. I wrote my MA thesis about a nineteenth-century German journalist, novelist and early feminist, and then I started a PhD. I had a scholarship for the first few years, but I never finished the PhD, partly because I ran out of enthusiasm and money, partly because I discovered new career options through part-time student jobs. I had been temping as an editorial secretary in various newspaper offices, including Der Spiegel in Hamburg. I became fascinated with how news is made, how the media filter our experience of the world, pre-select the books we get to read, and so on. I had also been writing readers' reports for publishers who were considering whether to translate an English-language book into German.

The insights I gained into how literature makes the journey from author to reader made me want to work closer to the coalface of literature production than to academic analysis of it, so I abandoned the PhD and started working in publishing and journalism. Translation was always an element of that work: at one stage I worked as desk editor and translator on a small team that produced a bi-lingual syndicated newspaper service set up by the German Press Agency.

I moved back to Ireland in 1997 and worked first as an in-house editor (Royal Irish Academy, then Blackstaff Press). In 2006 I went freelance, and decided that I wanted to translate again, not just edit. So I put out feelers, got some overflow work from former colleagues in Germany, started to get some commissions in Ireland, joined ITIA, and started to work on some literary translation projects of my own.

Q. Name the most important thing you did that helped you launch your career.

That's a tough question! In terms of re-launching myself as a translator, two things were very important: (a) researching the profession, including networking, and (b) translating a short story I really liked, not for any client but just to remind me why I love translating. (Later on I got it published.)

...some of the best translators I know had no formal translation training at all or didn't even study the source language at university.

Q. How important are training and qualifications for a career in translating/interpreting.

I think there are different schools of thought on this. Younger translators who have had the option to take degrees or postgraduate courses in translation studies will have started out with a greater knowledge of translation theory and have had more mentoring. On the other hand, some of the best translators I know had no formal translation training at all or didn't even study the source language at university. In terms of literary translation, reading widely in both source and target language is very important, as well as honing one's skills as a writer in the target language. I am a great believer in CPD, in attending relevant workshops, in learning from peer groups, and in keeping up with the literature.

Q. How do you find clients?

Mostly I find clients through word of mouth and networking. Sometimes colleagues pass on work they can't take, and I do the same. One experienced translator I heard at a seminar advised others to "go to the watering holes". He didn't mean pubs (although that could be part of it), but going to conferences or seminars, festivals or other events where the people who write the

kind of texts you want to translate tend to meet, or where you will find the people likely to commission the translations. I suppose it is all about getting yourself on the potential client's radar, even if you find "selling yourself" difficult. Sending out CVs is less effective and very much "pot luck". I am registered with one agency but can rarely take the jobs as they tend to be last-minute with very tight deadlines. In terms of planning work ahead, I should probably do more to remind former clients that I'm still alive and working; that's a neglected item on the "to do" list!!

Q. Do you think it is necessary to specialise?

Not in my case, but it may make sense if you have acquired specialist skills and can carve out a niche in that area. I like variety in what I translate, though I would be the first to turn down a job (or refer the client to the ITIA directory) if I thought it was too specialist for me. Researching the terminology and context for an unusual topic can be very time-consuming, so you have to weigh up the pros and cons in terms of fee, timeframe, and how much you want/need the job. I used to do a lot of translating-cum-rewriting of PR for a German car brand, so there was a fair bit of research initially, but it paid off when more work came in of a similar type. In literary translation, you often have to research specialist vocabulary anyway – for example, if a character is a train driver, or the narrator is describing the unihemispheric sleep behaviour of dolphins!

Q. What is your favourite type of text/assignment?

I love literary fiction and essays where the author's style presents interesting challenges; also any job where I end up learning new things. The downside is that a text that presents creative challenges or requires a lot of research takes longer to translate than something very straightforward. The payment model rarely allows for this.

Q. What is the best/worst thing about being a translator/ interpreter?

Best thing: Through translation, I can make the work of German-language writers I admire accessible to friends who can't read it otherwise. A close tie for "best thing" is the people: I have yet to meet a boring translator!

Worst thing: I was going to say fees, but I'll save that for the next question! The worst thing in terms of literary translation into English is the fact that so little of it is published in in the first place. In the whole Anglophone world, only 3% to 5% of all books published (regardless of genre) are originally written in a language other than English. So, basically, there are far more good books – and far more translators dying to translate them – than there are publishers willing to adopt them. There are signs that this situation is improving slowly: In 2016, the Man Booker International Prize published research showing that the volume of sales of fiction in translation in the UK had increased compared to stagnant sales of original fiction (i.e. not translated).[1] Over time, this might encourage more inward translation and give Anglophone readers greater access to literature from the rest of the world.

I keep a timesheet for every job, and it can be very depressing when I work out my average hourly pay for the job.

Q. Is it possible to have a good standard of living?

In my experience, it's difficult to live from translation alone. We know from surveys conducted by CEATL and other associations that translators earn below the average industrial wage. Most of the literary translators I know in the US and UK, even very well-established folk, have to generate additional income, e.g. from teaching and workshops. In my case, editing and a little teaching are other income streams. It's hard to see how translators' standard of living can improve when the model of payment is based on a fixed fee per word (or line or page) and the

“going rates” are very low. I keep a timesheet for every job, and it can be very depressing when I work out my average hourly pay for the job (fixed fee divided by total hours worked). It often works out at below the minimum wage – and that’s excluding time spent looking for work, chasing payment, doing admin, taking time off. Sometimes the creative reward compensates somewhat, but it would help if the “going rate” were more realistic to begin with. Which is why it’s important for us translators and interpreters to fight for – and uphold – reasonable rates as best we can.

Q. What advice would you give someone thinking of embarking on a career as a translator/interpreter?

Read as widely as possible in source and target languages and translate as wide a range of texts as you can before specialising (if you decide to specialise). Go to the “watering holes”. Network. Keep learning. And remind yourself as often as you can why you like translating.

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[1] For further detail on the research, see <http://themanbookerprize.com/resources/media/pressreleases/first-research-sales-translated-fiction-uk-shows-growth-and> (last accessed 13 June 2017).

Çevbir Kitap Çevirmenleri Meslek Birliği Literary Translators’ Society Turkey

Working as a literary translator in Turkey

A large part of all books published in Turkey every year, whether fiction or non-fiction, are translations. The majority are translated from Western languages, most notably from English, but also from German, French, Spanish, Italian and Russian. As a more recent phenomenon, a

few translators have started to translate books directly from lesser-known languages in Turkey such as Portuguese, Japanese, Hungarian and Dutch. Though no exact figures are available, and estimates are difficult to make, several thousand people in Turkey have been engaged with the work of literary translation at some point in their career. However, a considerable number of them have been forced to leave the field after translating one or two books, because of the prevailing conditions in the market.

Like their colleagues in other countries, literary translators in Turkey not only experience the same joys of translating texts into another language, they also share the same problems. As freelancers with a profession that is often considered to be a mere hobby for well-off people, and working in a commercial market with strong competition, the legal position of literary translators is weak. Furthermore, since most translators work from home, they have only limited possibilities for professional training and consulting colleagues.

As far as payment, social security rights and freedom of expression are concerned, the position of literary translators in Turkey is even considerably worse than in many other (European) countries. Fees are low in comparison to western standards, payments are often delayed, advances are rare, figures of sold book copies too often incorrect. Many people who wish to work as literary translators are therefore obliged to rely on various other occupations for extra income. Social security services, like health insurance and pension, are too expensive for most translators to arrange on an individual basis. And ethical abuses like plagiarism or omitting the translator’s name in publications etc. are widespread.

History of Çevbir

The harsh conditions under which literary translators in Turkey have to work led a group of translators in 2003 to establish a professional

network (KÇG; 'Initiative of Literary Translators') in order to protect translators' rights and to provide facilities for professional training and advice. As a first step an e-mail group was founded to share experiences and discuss translation problems. This proved to be an important step in organizing ourselves.

Since every publishing house used to apply its own contract with its translators, and since translator's rights are not properly protected in most of these contracts, Çevbir first prepared a model contract for translators and publishers. Soon after, we published a series of calls in newspapers and magazines to translators, publishers and readers respectively, in order to attract attention to professional questions, and to create interest in readers in certain ethical and intellectual matters pertaining to translations.

To get further media attention for the predicament of literary translators, 83 members from the 'Initiative' collectively translated a thousand-year-old Japanese classic ('The Pillow Book' by Sei Shonagon) using editions in five different languages. The Turkish edition was published in 2006 under the title *Yastıkname*.

In the middle of 2006, the Literary Translators' Initiative was transformed into a professional organisation: Çevbir (Literary Translators' Society). We are subject to the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, in return for which we have the legal right to act on our members' behalf in case their financial or moral rights are violated. Any Turkish citizen who has translated at least one fiction or non-fiction book (or part of it) is qualified for membership. Since 2010, membership of Çevbir is also open to subtitlers. Book translators, however, still constitute the majority of Çevbir's members.

Access to Çevbir's (or more precisely KÇG's) e-mail group is open to everyone interested and/or engaged in literary translation. Presently, Çevbir has around 400 members; some 900 translators are registered with the e-mail group.

Funding and organisational structure of Çevbir

As an independent organisation Çevbir's only revenues are from the monthly fees paid by its members. Considering the poor translation fees paid in Turkey, the membership fee is limited to 15 YTL (about € 4) a month. Furthermore, Çevbir receives a small percentage of the fees it succeeds in collecting from publishers on behalf of its members. However, Çevbir will launch collective rights management and begin to collect royalties and licensing fees when the new copyright resolution is enacted.

Çevbir doesn't receive financial support from the Turkish government or any commercial company or organisation. Due to lack of capital, applications for EU subsidies to start larger, more expensive projects like the foundation of a translators' house or at least a translators' library in Istanbul, could not be submitted.

Because the financial situation of Çevbir doesn't permit employing staff, all activities are carried out by volunteering Çevbir members. Organisational work is carried out by four separate committees, for executive matters, inspection, technical and academic topics, and disciplinary issues. Committees are elected every two years at a general meeting of members.

Contact with members is maintained by means of Çevbir's forum (accessible to members only), our public web site, and the e-mail group. Though most activities take place in the centre of Istanbul, extensive reports are published on the web site for those who are not able to take part. In case of individual professional problems, members can also call to the Çevbir office on the Anatolian side of Istanbul, which was rented in 2006 to do paperwork, store the archives and answer questions and demands by members, the press, other organizations and the Turkish Ministry of Culture. The office is staffed by a group of volunteers.

Çevbir's activities in short

Activities carried out by Çevbir since 2006 can be summarized under the headings of prosecution of legal rights, organizing professional training and advice, finding new publishers for translations that are out of print, and defending freedom of expression.

1) Legal rights

Çevbir took several initiatives to improve the legal status of literary translators as a whole, and to solve legal problems for its members.

- Protocol of publishers and translators Çevbir succeeded in reaching an agreement with the Publishers Copyright & Licensing Society (Yaybir) to sign a professional code regulating the rights and responsibilities of both translators and publishers. The protocol, in which almost all our demands have been met except those concerning translation fees, was signed by both organizations in a press conference in March 2008. According to this protocol:

- the translator is entitled to see and reject any changes in his translation;
- a contract for translation has to include the final deadline for submission, the planned date of publication, the term, conditions and minimum amount of copies for planned reprints, and the net fee that will be paid to the translator.

Çevbir considers this protocol an important first step in achieving the long awaited standardisation of relations between translators and publishers.

- Plagiarism in translated classics

Unfortunately, publishing pirated translations of classics is a very common practice in the Turkish publishing market. Since its beginning Çevbir has tried to fight this. To give an example: in a joint initiative with the Turkish Publishers' Association, Çevbir selected ten classics (including works by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Gogol, Hugo, Flaubert, Cervantes, Defoe, London, etc.) and collected every edition of these titles available on our

market (154 editions in total). Detailed comparison showed that 58 editions were outright plagiarisms, and a majority of the remaining editions consisted of (often arbitrarily) abridged editions. These results were published in a joint report and presented at a press conference. The topic received wide media coverage. Çevbir, in cooperation with Yaybir and the Ministry of Culture, hopes to put a definite end to this scandal.

- Prosecution of our members' legal rights

At the beginning of 2007, we set up the necessary legal structure to realize one of our main missions, namely to negotiate with individual publishers on our members' behalf. Since then a remarkable number of publishers have been persuaded or legally forced to finally pay translation fee arrears and thus redeem long-standing debts to our members. Activities related to pursuing our members' legal rights take up most of the time of Çevbir's board.

2) Professional training and advice

Since most translators work from home and have no regular opportunity to discuss professional topics with colleagues, Çevbir has organized a series of activities and facilities for professional training and advice:

- Public discussions on translating: when possible, Çevbir organises public discussions on translations and translating, where translation scholars, translators, publishers, men and women of literature are invited to talk about topics that have to do with literary translation. Examples of topics that have been addressed so far:

- History of translation in the Ottoman period
- A historical look at the conceptual problems in Turkish social science translations
- Cartoon translations
- The history of translating classics in Turkey
- Developments in Turkish publishing (1990-2007)
- What do publishers expect from translators?

- The languages of Anatolia
- The relationship between theory and practice in translation studies
- From Turkish to languages of the world: literary translation in Europe
- The language of Rumi: Masnawi translations in Turkish
- Conversations with doyen literary translators

- **Internet discussion group** Çevbir hosts an e-mail group used by around 900 members (including Çevbir members) on a wide range of issues relating to translation. Topics include questions on contracts with publishers, discussions on terms and linguistic issues, fees, etc.

- **Translation workshops** For a while Çevbir organised workshops for members and non-members where different aspects of translating literature or non-fiction texts were scrutinized. Using various translations of a single fragment, either published or made by members for the purpose of the workshop, the translators' strategies, choices and preferences were discussed.

3) Finding new publishers for out-of-print translations

For different reasons, translations of interesting books might not be reprinted by their original publisher. In order to keep these titles available for Turkish readers, Çevbir tries to find new publishers in case a translation by one of its members is sold out and will no longer be reprinted. The available translations are announced on Çevbir's website.

Publishers interested in printing one of these finished translations can contact Çevbir's office. On the condition that the publishing house complies with the standard contract adopted by Çevbir, the Association mediates between the new publishing house and the translator. Çevbir gives no guarantee on the quality of the translation.

4) Freedom of expression

As a society of translators and citizens of conscience, Çevbir considers it their duty to raise their voice against violations of the freedom of expression.

According to the Turkish penal code (art. 301 and others), translators who are accused of offending Turkish identity ('Turkishness') or the Turkish Republic can be put on trial and sentenced to imprisonment. Launching national and international campaigns, Çevbir has protested against the opening of court cases against translators on these grounds, for example in 2011, when the Turkish translators (and their publishers) of the novels *The Soft Machine* by William Burroughs and *Sniff* by Chuck Palahniuk, were charged. Similarly, Çevbir raised its voice when, in 2016, translator Necmiye Alpay and author Aslı Erdoğan were arrested and put on trial, because of their work for a daily newspaper, on charges of damaging the unity of the country and writing terrorist propaganda (for more detailed information in English on these legal cases, see the section 'Turkey' on CEATL news page: <https://www.ceatl.eu/tag/turkey>).

Apart from issues directly related to the freedom of expression, Çevbir occasionally issues manifestos on topics concerning the general democratic status of Turkey. In this context Çevbir presented press releases to express its abhorrence of the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink on 19 January 2007, and on the police violence against demonstrators on 1 May 2008.

Future plans

In the coming years, Çevbir hopes to continue its activities both on a national and an international level. In Turkey Çevbir wishes to continue the activities mentioned above concerning improvement of the legal status of literary translators, freedom of expression and the prosecution of legal rights of Çevbir's members. There are still many more publishing houses to be

made aware of translators' rights, and steps have to be taken to come to a full standard contract, including financial issues. Furthermore, we will continue to organize professional training and facilities for colleagues in the form of public debates, workshops, panels, and the internet.

On an international level Çevbir strives to intensify projects with sister-organisations of literary translators. In the future Çevbir hopes to be able to found a translators' house equipped with a library in the vicinity of Istanbul, where translators and writers from abroad can stay to work on their projects. However, considering the financial situation of Çevbir, realisation of larger projects depends to a great extent on external financial sources like subsidies.

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CEATL (Conseil Européen des Associations de Traducteurs Littéraires) AGM

The 30th Annual General Assembly of CEATLS' national representatives was held in Utrecht between 11-13 May. There were 36 delegates representing 24 countries with the ITIA representing Ireland. CEATL's Board opened the meeting by giving an account of all its activities and events since last year's AGM in Barcelona. These included the updating of both the public and internal sections of the website, results of

consultations and surveys and a protest letter to the Turkish authorities in relation to the imprisonment of translator Necmiye Alpay and writer Asli Erdogan. Each association's delegate sends an annual report of their activities prior to the meeting which is then posted on the internal website.

As well as the work carried out by the Board, there are 6 'Working Groups' made up of both Board members and members, all of whom contribute their time and effort on a voluntary basis:

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Working Conditions | Training and Education |
| Visibility | Best Practice |
| Authors' Rights | News and PR |

During the AGM the delegates heard extensive reports from the working groups on their specific activities over the year and their future projects. Bulletin readers might recall 'The Skull Thing', the multi lingual 'To be or not to be' video being one of the Visibility Group's achievements. CEATL was in discussion with Amazon Crossing and some of their objections to the terms and conditions for translators were taken on board, pushing AmazonCrossing to be a more professional publisher.

The meeting also included a round-table discussion on various aspects of working conditions, authors' rights and translators' visibility.

After the Board Report and the Treasury Report had been accepted, as well as the minutes of the last AGM in Barcelona, a new Executive Board was elected:

Morten Visby – chairman of the Board / président du conseil d'administration (Danish Translators' Association)

Lara Hölbling Matković – secretary-general / secrétaire général (Croatian Literary Translators' Association (DHKP))

Shaun Whiteside – treasurer / trésorier

(Translators Association, UK)

Bjørn Herrman – vice-president / vice-président
(Norsk Oversetterforening, Norway)

Kateřina Klabanová – secretary of the Board /
secrétaire du conseil d'administration (Obec
Překladařelů, Czech Republic)

The third day of the assembly concluded with mandates for the Board and working groups, which included that the CEATL website would have its own quarterly newsletter, and each association was requested to provide links to its own newsletter. Hopefully this will mean a wider readership of this particular publication! It was also agreed that each member association would provide a hardlink to the CEATL website.

Most interesting is the plan to have a room at La Maison des Auteurs in Brussels, which will allow for a base for effective lobbying of EU bodies in relation to copyright, authors' rights, and the Creative Europe Programme, etc.

The AGM coincided with the International Literary Festival Utrecht (ILFU), where among other things the festival guests could attend a translation slam with Shaun Whiteside and Laura Watkinson who translated a poem by Hannah van Binsbergen. Utrecht is a candidate city for the European Literature Capital status.

The CEATL AGM was hosted by the Dutch association Auteursbond (Boekvertalers and Literair vertalers), and the Expertisecentrum Literair Vertalen, the Nederlands Letterenfonds (Dutch Foundation for Literature) and Lira .

Anne Larchet

Worth-a-click

The articles in the Law Society Gazette:

Interpreting by Dr Mary Phelan: April 2017
(page 52)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9etlug8>

Translation by Dr Annette Schiller : May 2017 (page 54)

<https://tinyurl.com/y785362w>

Why translators have the blues

<https://tinyurl.com/yaz3rgj2>

What's hot, what's not

What's HOT...

United Nations recognises role of professional translation. May 24, 2017 marks an historical milestone for all professional translators, interpreters and terminologists as the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution A/71/L.68 recognising the role of professional translation in connecting nations, and fostering peace, understanding and development. [...]

...What's NOT

As the UK negotiates its withdrawal from the EU, one of the first casualties appears to be the staff at one of the UK's most prestigious universities for translators and interpreters, Heriot-Watt in Edinburgh, where at least 100 redundancies are being planned.

Joining the ITIA

The *Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association* is pleased to welcome new members to the association. We currently have the following categories of membership:

- Professional
- Associate
- Affiliate
- Institutional
- Student
- Honorary

Professional Membership is awarded to translators or interpreters who meet the strict criteria of the ITIA based on qualification and level of experience.

Applicants must also achieve a PASS in the annual Professional Membership Examination (translator or interpreter) set by the ITIA.

Associate Membership may be granted to holders of a third level qualification in translation and/or interpreting and/or languages or to holders of a third level qualification with relevant experience.

Affiliate Membership is generally availed of by people with a professional interest in translation and interpreting, by those with a general interest in these professions or by professionals from other sectors who wish to work in the area of translation or interpreting and do not currently have a specific qualification or experience in the area

Institutional Membership is available to bodies that do not function as commercial agencies, for example university centres for translation and interpreting studies or cultural institutes. Application documents for Institutional membership are currently being prepared.

Student Membership is available to persons undertaking undergraduate studies in any discipline or those undertaking postgraduate studies in translation or interpreting.

Honorary Membership is awarded by the ITIA AGM to persons in Ireland or abroad who have distinguished themselves in the field of translation or interpreting.

New ITIA Members Apr - May 2017

New ITIA professional members

Erich Fischer

German from English

Piotr Kucharski

English from Polish

Amanda Mannix

English from French

Martyna Szymczak

English from Polish

Joanna Juszcak-Hurley

Has added: English from Polish (already PM for Polish from English)

New ITIA associate members

Moya Gorman

Irish from English, English from French

Uta Haas

German from English

Stéphanie Nouailhetas

French from English

Mariachiara Pecchiara

Italian from English and French

New ITIA affiliate members

Nazmul Istiak

Cathal Monaghan

Beatrice Monciunskaitė

Mitsuko Miyake Nelan

Simon Urbanski

Contacting the ITIA

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