

This is the most incredible honor and not one that I could possibly have envisaged just a few years ago. Not one I envisaged at all. I only got involved in literary translation in 2012. Up until then I spent a long time working mainly as a journalistic translator. I worked about 14 years as a freelancer for the Goethe-Institut (I am not sure whether the Goethe-Institut is aware of this). I was a translator and a copy editor for a magazine called *Fikrun wa Fann* or “Art & Thought” in English, which unfortunately folded last year. My other work was for Deutsche Welle, and still is, in part. I worked as an editor, journalist, and now as a translator for them. But getting into literary translation was something that came about only five years ago. I visited the British Center for Literary Translation (BCLT) Summer School where I met other literary translators and it transformed my life. I was trying to work out what could make translation more interesting because I quite enjoyed it but it wasn't really something I felt passionate about. Someone had said to me “What do you feel passionate about?” And I said, “Acting?... Journalism?... Literature...? That could be a way.” Doing the BCLT summer school and meeting all of these literary translators, finding that passion for translation when it came to literature: that was what set me on this path. It is a tremendously supportive community, and I found that my colleagues both at BCLT and in something called the Emerging Translators Network (ETN) have been fantastic in helping me along. We all help each other along, we all give each other the support we need, and I would say they have been very much a part of what has put me on the path that's brought me here.

I would like to thank very much from the very bottom of my heart the Goethe-Institut (I'm getting a bit tearful), the jury of the Helen & Kurt Wolff Prize for awarding this to me. When I look at the other translators who were on the longlist, and the translators who won this in the past, it's extraordinary to me to see myself on that list. I would also like to thank Farrar, Straus & Giroux (FSG) in New York and Laird Gallagher, my editor, for entering the book for the prize. The publisher in the UK, Picador, and especially Kate Harvey who edited the book beautifully, very delicately, and who believed in me enough to ask me to translate it even though I had never translated a novel before. This came about because she asked me to do the reader's report. She didn't read German but was interested in the book. When I read the book and the reader's report took the form of a conversation over the phone and when she was saying, “do you think we should buy it?”, I said “You have to buy this book, it is amazing! Please, can I translate it?” So that's sort of how it came about. I would also like to thank Matthew Garrett who created this beautiful cover for Picador. I think he really needs to be named, and his name needs to be known far and wide because I am sure that this cover part of the reason this book has done so well. And I want to thank my Munich family who is here to support me. It's through going to Germany, living in Munich and then living in Cologne that I came to speak German.

This brings me to something that I felt I really wanted to say which has already been touched on by a couple of the speakers. This is an important day not just for me,

obviously, (though I am enjoying it being an important day for me). It is an important day for many in America, for reasons we just heard. It's an important day for my country. The British people have been voting in an election that will more or less decide on what terms we will leave the European Union. That is a sentence that is very hard for me to say. I say "my country" but I think of myself as European. I have always thought of myself as European. And it's very, very hard for me to consider the possibility, (the probability) that what I have always taken for granted: the freedom to move around Europe, the freedom to cross borders, the freedom to go and live and work in another country, as I did in Germany. That those freedoms might be rolled back, that the next generation may well not have them, that we will not have them anymore. As someone who clearly remembers 1989 (the fall of the Wall, the opening up of Eastern Europe) I find it quite extraordinary that just one generation later these walls are going up again and not only in Europe. One of the reasons why I chose to study languages at school (I did English, French and German for my A-levels school leaving exams) was because it was clear to me that I was going to need to be able speak other languages if I wanted to communicate with people, if I wanted to make connections with people beyond my immediate circle. I was desperate to get off the island, to go and cross the channel (which was not as easy in those days), and to get to all those countries and cultures that were out there waiting to be discovered. I feel passionately that the learning of languages is tremendously important for breaking through these walls, for making these connections, for understanding other cultures. I think it's a tragedy that the learning of languages in the UK (I don't know what it's like in the states) has gone down. It's gone down through cuts, through lack of interest, through lack of support from successive governments. I understand that only 3,500 people in the whole of the UK did German A-level last year and of course not very many of those are actually going to go on to study it at university. That's not many people learning to speak German anymore. And it's the same for other languages. I think Spanish is doing better, but still the interest in learning foreign language now is going down and down. It's part of the sense we're getting, from our leaders, particularly, of drawing back, of shutting down, of going to this kind of spurious isolation of not wanting to communicate, of not wanting to reach out to other people, other cultures. Learning languages is so much a part of that, and so is reading translated fiction. I think that fiction has a fantastic role to play in this, and especially translated fiction because when we read a book about another country, or another culture, or just another person, we enter into their head, we enter into their world, we are taken into their imagination, into their culture, into their feelings. We empathize with them; it creates a hook. We become that person when we're reading, at least I do. When I'm immersed in a book, I become that person, I'm living their life through them. And because of that I think fiction can do something that news or factual books can't do. We can learn from them yes, but we can't actually live that life. When I think of books that I read growing up, I was transported to the Czech Republic, to France, to Italy, to Mexico. I had a little insight into that culture and I became curious. Once

you become curious and once you have that hook, that little bit of insight, that little interest in another country, you see a report about it in the newspaper, you maybe read *that* report and not another one. Because of that I want to see more fiction translated. I want to see more people getting hooked, getting drawn in. I think it's important particularly now that we read well, that we read wisely, and that we read translations.

That said, I thank Robert Seethaler for writing this book. I completely fell in love with this book when I first read it. As I said for the reader's report, I gather it quite often happens that translators say "I've read this book. It's my book. I have to translate it." And that is how I felt about this. Not only because it is a beautiful book and for the reasons I think that most people who read have loved it and have been moved by it. There are two particular things about it that resonated with me. I'll read you a little bit from it first and then I'll explain why.

[Charlotte reads excerpt an excerpt from her translation]

I think what Robert does so beautifully is the description of detail. To me, Andreas Egger is the epitome of mindfulness. He looks at things, and he really sees them. He sees the dew on the grass. He sees a knife and the sharpness of a blade. He sees the mountains cut out like a stencil against the sky. He sees the detail. That meant a lot to me because the reason why I changed direction in my career was because I had to stop doing what I had been doing ( a lot of the journalism and the acting) because I became very ill and I spent almost a year in hospital recovering. In that time I spent a lot of time in a hospital room, then at home, not able to walk very far and not knowing whether I would really recover. When I went outside, on crutches, walking along the road, I remember looking at a flower, and seeing a bird, and seeing them with new eyes, with completely different eyes. And that's what this book did for me.

The other thing about this book is that there is a lot of death in it. And some people found that disturbing, upsetting, or depressing. I found it tremendously comforting. I found it uplifting. What Robert does in this book is present death as part of life. It's part of the natural world. It's not something that's suddenly there, that you're suddenly confronted with. It's always there, it's always with us. It's always with Andreas. When he reaches the end he knows that he's lived his life, and now his death is coming, just as everybody's death is coming. But in between he's lived this life of moments. That life is just one moment after another. They might be big moments or small moments, but everyone is precious. And I think what this book

transmits (and I hope I achieved this in the translation) is that joy in life. The extraordinariness of any ordinary life and any moment in that life, and that what we have to do is live each moment and observe each moment and cherish each moment. And that's certainly what I am doing today. Thank you.