



### **Fifty Sounds**

Original title:

Publisher: Fitzcarraldo Editions , 2021

Genre: Memoir

Pages: 360 pages

### **Awards**

Shortlisted for the 2022 Edward

Stanford Travel Writing Prize |

Longlisted for the 2022 Ondaatje  
prize



**Polly Barton**

## *Fifty Sounds*

Why Japan? In *Fifty Sounds*, winner of the 2019 Fitzcarraldo Editions Essay Prize, Polly Barton attempts to exhaust her obsession with the country she moved to at the age of 21, before eventually becoming a literary translator. From min-min, the sound of air screaming, to jin-jin, the sound of being touched for the very first time, from hi'sori, the sound of harbouring masochist tendencies, to mote-mote, the sound of becoming a small-town movie star, *Fifty Sounds* is a personal dictionary of the Japanese language, recounting her life as an outsider in Japan. Irreverent, humane, witty and wise, *Fifty Sounds* is an exceptional debut about the quietly revolutionary act of learning, speaking, and living in another language.

"Read more": <https://fitzcarraldoeditions.com/books/fifty-sounds/>

*This book: a portrait of a young woman as language-learner, as becoming-translator, as becoming-writer, in restless search of her life. It is about non-understanding, not-knowing, vulnerability, harming and hurt; it is also about reaching for others, transformative encounters, unexpected intimacies, and testing forms of love. It is a whole education. It is extraordinary. I was completely bowled over by it.*

Kate Briggs, author of *This Little Art*

*'In Barton's revelatory and candid memoir, she frames her experiences in Japan in 50 dictionary entries, journeying through her vulnerabilities, otherness and identity in a foreign place and finding solace (and humour) in writing.... Grappling with emotion through the medium of language is, however, what Barton does best.'*

Ben East, Observer

### **Polly Barton**

Polly Barton is a Japanese literary translator. Her translations include *Where the Wild Ladies Are* by Aoko Matsuda, *There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job* by Kikuko Tsumura, and *Spring Garden* by Tomoka Shibusaki. She won the 2019 Fitzcarraldo Editions Essay Prize for *Fifty Sounds*. She lives in Bristol.