

NO. 73 | WINTER 2017-2018

# SOURCE

A QUARTERLY  
PUBLICATION  
OF THE ATA'S  
LITERARY  
DIVISION



Jefferson Memorial, Washington, D.C.

## PHOTOS AND REPORTS FROM LD ACTIVITIES

## ATA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2017



American Translators Association  
*The Voice of Interpreters and Translators*

## FEATURES

THE ACCIDENTAL  
PROTAGONIST

PRESENTATION REVIEWS  
OF LD ACTIVITIES

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# FROM THE EDITORS

The Winter issue of *Source* celebrates Literary Division activities that took place this past Fall at ATA's annual conference in Washington, D.C. In addition to a thoughtful recap of the After Hours Café, including Tips for Readers, we have reviews of four presentations, including Guest Speaker Katrina Dodson's.

Ewandro Magalhaes, in our feature essay, "The Accidental Protagonist," reverses our usual focus on translating literature to consider ways in which books and movies have examined interpreters/translators.

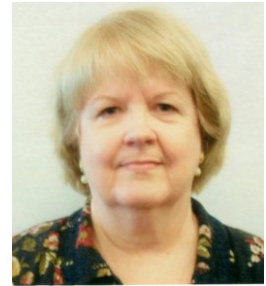
## Spring 2018

Our next issue will feature Portuguese, the nuances of *saudade* and Lusophone literature.

## Special Note

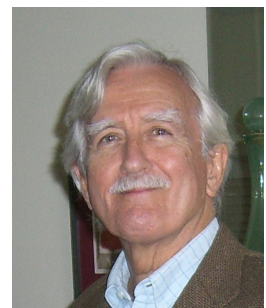
Tony Beckwith, who has been collaborating with Michele for the past ten years, is hanging up his editorial hat after this Winter issue. Though he will no longer be writing his regular By the Way column, readers will continue to find his much loved BTW cartoons in future issues.

Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and especially to outgoing Literary Division Administrator **Jesse Tomlinson** and new LD Administrator **Paula Arturo** for their support.



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# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

As the journal of the ATA's Literary Division, Source is both a forum for the discussion of literary translation and a vehicle for LD members and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit translations of poetry and prose together with their meditations on the process. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.

## FORMAT:

- Submit articles up to 1600 words, Word or text file, single-spaced.
- Minion Pro font, size 12, without indented paragraphs.
- Line breaks between paragraphs but no word breaks.
- Unjustified righthand margin.
- Endnotes please, not footnotes.
- Please include a brief, factual bio and photograph.
- Links and illustrations, etc., are encouraged.
- Submissions may be edited.
- Submissions go to [michele@mckayaynesworth.com](mailto:michele@mckayaynesworth.com)

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# LETTER FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

Dear LitDiv members:

It's been a pleasure serving you over the past two years! I've pushed myself to grow and do things that I never imagined I would be doing as administrator of the Literary Division. Thank you so much for this opportunity! Thank you Patrick, Michele and Tony for teaching me about *Source* and having me as part of your team. My respects go to you and the work you do to produce this high quality journal.

I'm so pleased to announce Paula Arturo as our new administrator. Paula is dedicated and enthusiastic about the division and future projects for her administration, and will be working with new assistant administrator Amanda Williams. There is much to do! Please get in touch with Paula directly if you are interested in working with the Literary Division to further our profession and support each other in one of the largest translation associations in the world.

Volunteering with the LitDiv gives you an opportunity to support a cause you care about. If administration isn't your thing, please consider sharing your knowledge and expertise with the division and ATA! *Source* welcomes your articles and takes a distinct slant for each issue, e.g., Portuguese language and Brazilian literature in the Spring 2018 issue or Arabic language and literature (Summer 2017). The current issue is home to reviews from ATA58 presentations in Washington this past October. You can enjoy commentaries on ATA58 sessions by guest speaker Katrina Dodson (Researching Literary Translations, reviewed by yours truly) as well as Shelley Fairweather-Vega on her own talk "How to Mix Business and Poetry," James McQuay's session "What Makes Literary Translation Successful?" reviewed by Robert Curran, and Rafa Lombardino's session "Too Close to Home" by Melissa Harkin. Thanks to all our contributors and to Paula Gordon for her detailed write up of the After Hours Café.

Paula Arturo is also working on a blog for the division and would be delighted to receive your submissions. You may want to share your opinions on translated literature, your expertise in translation and business, or your personal experiences with literature in translation. However you decide to contribute, I know you'll find your efforts are appreciated by our members!

Sincerely,  
Jesse Tomlinson  
2015-2017 Literary Division Administrator



**Jesse Tomlinson**  
Outgoing Literary Division  
Administrator

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Jesse Tomlinson is an interpreter, translator, editor, and voice talent. Originally hailing from Canada, she now lives in Mexico and translates from Spanish into English and interprets in both languages.

Her special interest lies in Mexican culture, the tequila industry, and literature. Her translation *Trilogía de la luz* (Trilogy of Light) was released at the Guadalajara International Book Fair on December 1.

# A PROFILE OF THE NEW LD ADMINISTRATOR

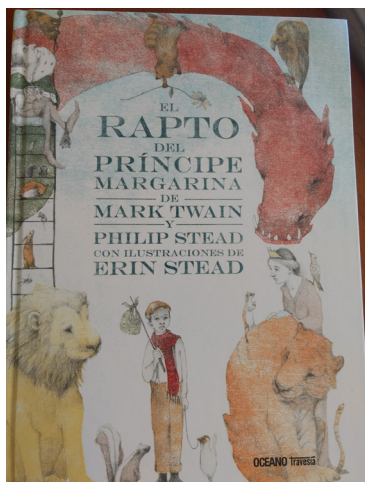


Paula Arturo is a lawyer, translator, and former law professor. Throughout her fifteen-year career, in addition to various legal and financial documents, she has also translated several highly technical law books and publications in major international journals for high-profile authors, including several Nobel Prize Laureates and renowned jurists. She is an independent lawyer-linguist for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process of several Latin American states, as well as a legal-linguistic consultant for various international organizations. She is a co-creator of Translating Lawyers, a boutique firm specializing in legal translation by lawyers for lawyers. She is currently serving a two-year term as Administrator of the American Translators Association's Literary Division, Co-head of Legal Affairs at the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters and member of the Public Policies Forum of the Supreme Court of Argentina.



PAULA ARTURO PRESIDING OVER THE LITERARY DIVISION MEETING

## READERS' CORNER



When searching Mark Twain's Archive for terms related to food and cooking for a recipe book, a researcher came across the notes for a story that was never finished, featuring Prince Oleomargarine. Philip Stead, renowned children's author took those notes and turned them into *The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine*. The story was illustrated by his wife, Erin Stead. The book was published in September, and its Spanish version came out in October, translated by **Mercedes Guhl**.

**Paula Gordon's** detailed review of *Selected Serbian Plays*, edited by Branko Mikasinovich and Dejan Stojanović, with afterword by Dennis Barnett (New Avenue Books, USA, 2016), an anthology of ten plays written between 1937 and 2007 (and translated between 1969 and 2016), appears in the fall 2017 issue of *The Mercurian*, a journal focusing on theater translation published by the Department of Dramatic Art, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Available at <https://the-mercurian.com/2017/11/16/volume-6-issue-4-fall-2017/>.



### NEWS BULLETIN FROM PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (December 15, 2017)

"A new report just released by the Authors Guild on working conditions for translators in the U.S. reports that 65% of literary translators earned less than \$20,000 in gross income in 2016 with only about 8% earning between \$60,000-\$100,000. . . . The survey noted that 'on the whole,' income for literary translators has 'not changed significantly over the past five years.' Only 17% reported earning more than half of their income strictly from translation work—although 39% reported spending more than half of their working time on translation projects."

<https://tinyurl.com/y8zqoh37>

BTW



*"In my experience, absence makes the heart go wander."*



# THE ACCIDENTAL PROTAGONIST

By  
Ewandro  
Magalhaes



Ewandro Magalhaes

Ewandro Magalhaes is a seasoned conference interpreter and former chief interpreter in the United Nations system. He is also an award-winning fiction and non-fiction writer and TED author. He is a regular contributor to *The ATA Chronicle* magazine. You can read his blog at <https://ewandro.com>

Endearing, controversial, genuine or stereotypically mean, a relatable character is key to any plot.

It helps if the protagonist's life is eventful and glamorous, or if her job is somehow awe-inspiring or tinged with a hint of mystery. Add a drop of mischief and intrigue, some eavesdropping and world-changing encounters, and the magical spell is cast.

Perhaps partially for that reason, a growing number of works in literary and cinematic fiction that have recently hit the big screen and bookstore shelves revolve around conference interpreters. Interpreters seem to have a spellbinding effect on people.

From a distance, it all looks like magic. Up close, it looks like madness. Two people sitting behind a glass pane in a dimly lit cubicle, listening and speaking at the same time, repeating in a different language words and ideas that are not their own.

They have no control over the complexity, the speed, the clarity, or the logic of the original presentation. They must link their own segments of speech together, mindful of any sentences left dangling, as they strive to correctly close a parenthetical remark opened by the speaker in the subjunctive mood, and then pick up where she left off. They must maintain a speechless side conversation with their booth mate by way of meaningful

looks, gestures, and notes. They may also have to read through a document or look up words in a glossary while they are talking, sometimes delaying the interpretation until the full picture can be formed in their mind.

As if that weren't enough, interpreters are usually at the opposite end of the conference room from the speaker, away from view and unable to slow her down or stop her for clarification. They are not exactly present in the room, but their omnipresent voices are just a click away. It makes you wonder.

This perplexity at one's apparently magical ability to hear speech in one language and render it orally into another, in real time, is akin to the fascination people experience when watching an illusionist's show. You know a trick is being performed, you just don't know exactly how. Eventually, you agree to temporarily suspend your disbelief and give in to the fantasy, lest the thrill should fade away.

Eventually, conference-goers get a handle on the mechanics and training that make it all possible, and the amazement gradually wears off. At that point, their curiosity, once confined to practical and linguistic aspects, slowly gives way to a different type of speculation surrounding the true identity of the men and women behind those evanescent, faceless voices. That secondary fascination has gained traction with a

much broader audience in recent years, as more writers and playwrights explore the peculiarities of these linguistic mediators.

Most of the works employ the cloak and dagger approach. Take the example of Sydney Pollack's *The Interpreter*, which was not only a box office hit but was the first to be filmed at the UN headquarters in New York, a privilege previously denied to Alfred Hitchcock.

In this highly suspenseful film the protagonist, played by Nicole Kidman, is a United Nations interpreter who inadvertently eavesdrops on a plan to assassinate the odious dictator of her imaginary African country. Before long, she becomes the target of the very conspiracy she accidentally uncovers, and spends the rest of the film running for her life—or making out with the cop assigned to protect her (sure, a little love never hurts).

Slightly more realistic and specific, but still in the realm of fiction, is the book by Suki Kim, also called *The Interpreter*. Kim's novel centers on the life of a young Korean interpreter who uses her work to unearth details of her own upbringing. Here the investigation turns inward, in more of a psychological thriller. And in a third book sharing that same title, Suzanne Glass—who was once a conference interpreter—explores the ethical issue of professional secrecy, exposing the drama of Dominique, who learns of a plan to conceal a possible cure for AIDS while interpreting at an international conference. More espionage and mystery.

Another novel, *The Mission Song*, by Britain's John le Carré, features Bruno Salvador, Salvo for short, a competent interpreter of African languages, including Swahili. In a book filled with interesting insights about interpreting and the nature of languages, le Carré graces us with yet another thriller.

Rounding out the action-packed circuit of political intrigue is *Bel Canto*, by American novelist—and former opera singer—Ann Patchett. Modeled on the Japanese embassy hostage crisis in Lima, a group of jet-setters and diplomats gathered for a private opera performance find themselves besieged by terrorists bent on killing the president of an unnamed South American country.

Once the captors realize the president is not in attendance, hours of negotiation and bonding ensue, led by Gen Watanabe, the personal interpreter for a visiting Japanese mogul, who rather conveniently seems to master every language being used in the room, including the terrorists'. The bad guys end up dead, as does Gen's boss. The interpreter saves the day, and gets to marry the opera star. Sorry to have spoiled it for you.

But perhaps the most interesting work of fiction to indirectly address the work of interpreters breaks away from the espionage genre. It is, rather, a love story. According to the author, Nobel-laureate Mario Vargas Llosa, it is a modern romance, as symbiotic and neurotic as the world is today and closer to reality than the stereotypical literary romantic love.

The novel, *The Bad Girl* (*Travesuras de la niña mala*, trans. Edith Grossman, 2006), tells the adventures and misfortunes of Ricardo Somocurcio, a Peruvian in love with a woman whose ever-fleeting love he seeks over four decades on three continents. *The Bad Girl* avoids the cliché that has interpreters cruising the world as international negotiators, rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous.

No more covert meetings in London, New York, and Davos. Forget the occasional world-saving incursions into wild African hamlets and exotic Asian destinations.

Vargas Llosa's interpreter is a rather simple, undecided, almost naïve man. Not the type one would expect to weigh in on negotiations that could seal the fate of the planet. He'd be lucky to sort out his own love life.

Ricardo does travel the world and lives in Paris as a staff interpreter for UNESCO. But that is as far as the stereotypes go. His lover, a textbook sociopath—with all the endearing charm that entails—pushes him around and leads him by the nose while exhibiting a shameless derision for interpreting, which she often dismisses as that “profession of phantoms.”

In the words of Lily, the novel's gold-digging femme fatale, Ricardo is “nothing but an interpreter (...) someone who is only when he isn't, a hominid who exists when he stops being what he is so that what other people think and say can pass through him more easily.”

Vargas Llosa, a globetrotting writer who once doubled as a politician and presidential hopeful in his native Peru, has certainly been exposed to interpreters countless times in the course of his career, despite his mastery of Spanish, French, and English. That allows him to cut through the cliché with critical reflections on the impersonal and at times frustrating nature of an interpreter's job. The result is a relatable, if wimpy, main character one can root for.

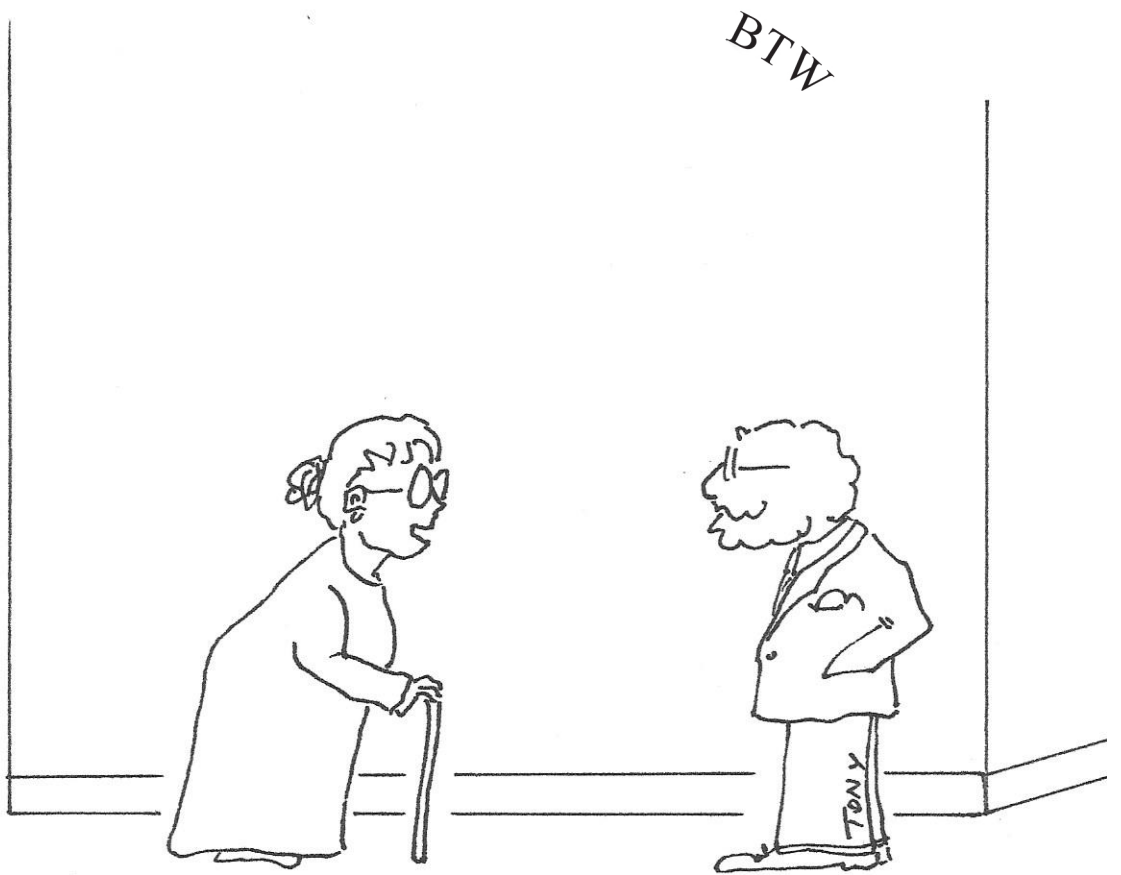
In a progression that is typical of many first- and second-generation interpreters, Ricardo starts his career as a translator and gradually teaches himself interpreting, thus adding another few notches to his belt.

He proceeds in fits and starts, facing enormous difficulties in landing his first gigs as an interpreter, in a professional circle that

is a lot tighter than that of translators, and where the professional associations “admit new members sparingly.”

A tale of thwarted passion, *The Bad Girl* also offers a good overview of the social and political transformations that have taken place in Europe and, above all, in Latin America in recent years, as seen through the creative eyes of Vargas Llosa, one of its real-life protagonists. All of it served up with a certain lyrical detachment, good touches of humor, and the bitter reminiscences of someone who realizes he may not remember any of the millions of words he has had to translate, “because not a single one deserved to be remembered.”

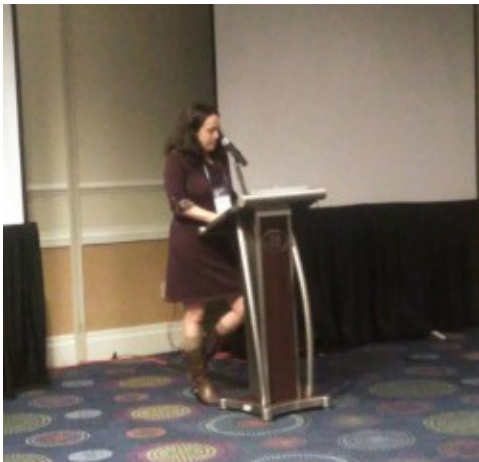
This article was not intended as a book review, but Vargas Llosa's rich and agreeable prose is worth praising, if anything for avoiding the stereotypes and easy suspense formula. And, while dwelling on some of the less flattering nuances of an interpreter's craft, and on the silly mistakes we all make when in love, his realistic assessment of what defines us as interpreters or lovers is, again, refreshing, in a society where sugarcoating and instant celebrities have sadly become the norm.



*"Looking back, I wish I'd learned to cuss a blue streak in Italian."*



# LITERARY DIVISION PRESENTATION REVIEWS AND RECAPS





# RESEARCHING LITERARY TRANSLATIONS

BY KATRINA DODSON  
ATA58 GUEST SPEAKER

Katrina Dodson is the translator from the Portuguese of *The Complete Stories*, by Clarice Lispector (New Directions, 2015), winner of the 2016 PEN Translation Prize, the Lewis Galantière Prize from the American Translators Association, and a Northern California Book Award for translation. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, & Sexuality from the University of California, Berkeley, with a dissertation on Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil. She has written for *Guernica*, *McSweeney's*, and *The Millions*, and her translations have appeared in *Harper's*, *Granta*, *Lapham's Quarterly*, and elsewhere. She is currently adapting her Clarice Lispector translation journal into a book and working on a new translation of the 1928 Brazilian modernist classic, *Macunaíma, the Hero Without a Character*, by Mário de Andrade, for New Directions.  
(<http://www.katrinakdodson.com/>)

## REVIEWED BY JESSE TOMLINSON

On Saturday October 28, 2017 in Washington D.C., ATA58 Guest Speaker Katrina Dodson shared her experience on “Researching Literary Translations.” Her latest translation, *Macunaíma, the Hero without a Character*, by the Brazilian novelist Mário de Andrade (*Macunaíma, o herói sem nenhum caráter*), first published in 1928, involves several source languages (for example, Tupi—Brazil’s most important indigenous language—and words from other indigenous and Bantu languages), and therefore requires considerably more research than a text with a single source language.

Katrina began her presentation by asking us to reflect on the forms that researching literary translation takes. Translation is research in many ways. In what context is literary translation considered scholarly work?

This is a great point for generative thinking. Is all literary translation scholarly work? How does the academic side of translation fit into the actual meat and bones of translation? Are translation and academia the same proverbial meal? Dodson pointed us toward a couple of resources to stretch our learning in this area: *Translation as Scholarship* by Catherine Porter, and *In Translation: Translators*

*on their Work and What It Means* edited by Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky.

Dodson is approaching her current translation with a scholarly lens, looking into various ways the work has been received previously in Brazil. Researching translations involves language and context and understanding what influences the author. The research context can be historical, social, political, or regional.

Geography, topography, flora, and fauna also play a big part in shaping her current translation. In my own translations of Mexican art texts and local authors from the state of Jalisco, I have also found that these environmental considerations, as well as regional cuisine, play a leading role in shaping the flavor of the work. So much is regional—including how the food and surroundings make characters feel, and how the characters in turn influence these elements. So much of an exciting story or description is in the details of a setting, and the ‘magic’ of translation happens when this is accurately conveyed in the target text. This research is pivotal.

Katrina on researching literary translations: “You can get lost in the woods if you go down one path too far.” At the same time, sometimes there are, “echoes you want to keep in the text from the original.” Knowing the author’s story and framing the text with parallel references and the author’s publishing history bring additional richness to our work. Some considerations when you’re looking into influences on the author when writing:

“Is the book inspired by another text? Is it riffing off other works? In terms of related texts, how does the author fit into their time? What are the style cues? What is the literary-historical sense of the work?”

Katrina invited participants in her session to share how they approach research for their translations. Although some members only wanted to hear from Katrina, there was an engaging participation dynamic in the session. Through this discussion we also learned how some of our colleagues have benefited from using research to deepen the meaning of their translations.



Jesse Tomlinson is an interpreter, translator, and voice talent. Originally hailing from Canada, she now lives in Mexico and translates from Spanish into English and interprets in both languages. Her special interest lies in Mexican culture and literature. Her translation of *Trilogía de la luz* (Trilogy of Light) was released December 1 at the Guadalajara International Book Fair and includes the volumes *Luz y Sombra* (Light and Shadow), *Luz Propia* (My Own Light), and *Tácita Luz* (Implicit Light).



## IS LITERARY TRANSLATION (ANY OF) YOUR BUSINESS? HOW TO MIX BUSINESS WITH POETRY

A recap of their presentation by  
Shelley Fairweather-Vega and Katherine E. Young

Shelley Fairweather-Vega is an ATA-certified Russian-to-English and enthusiastic Uzbek-to-English translator in Seattle, Washington, the vice-president of the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society, and a co-founder of the Northwest Literary Translators. Her translations have been published by AmazonCrossing and in *Words Without Borders*, *Translation Review*, *Image*, and *Chtenia*.

Katherine E. Young is the author of *Day of the Border Guards*, 2014 Miller Williams Arkansas Poetry Prize finalist. She is the translator of *Two Poems by Inna Kabysh*. Her translations of Russian and Russophone authors have won awards in international competitions and been published widely in the U.S. and abroad; several have been made into short films. Young is a 2017 National Endowment for the Arts translation fellow and currently serves as the inaugural poet laureate for Arlington, Virginia. Learn more at <http://katherine-young-poet.com/>

This session was presented by two working literary translators: Shelley Fairweather-Vega, a full-time freelance Russian-to-English translator who started her career working mainly for agencies, and Katherine E. Young, a Russian translator and published poet who is currently the poet laureate of Arlington, Virginia. Because the two speakers arrived at this juncture in their careers from different directions, they were able to provide different perspectives on the business of literary translation, especially in terms of how it differs from other types of translation.

Within a year of first meeting each other, Young and Fairweather-Vega found themselves working on a project together, a bilingual poetry book called *100 Poems About Moscow*, winner of the 2017 Books of Russia poetry award. As they turned in their translations of Russian

poetry for the anthology, they realized that two of those 100 poems had been accidentally assigned to both of them. Now they had two translations of those poems and an awkward business situation on their hands. Fortunately, that situation was easily resolved and also led to discussion of the two English versions of the poems presented at this session (one of which is included below).

Before the talk turned to poetry, though, the speakers had to define their terms. Everyone seems to understand what literary translation is, but what do we call that “other” type of translation, the kind of work that most ATA members perform on a regular basis? Most commonly we use “commercial translation” or the narrower term “technical translation” when we talk about translating texts that aren’t being written and read mainly for the sake of their



literary merit. Some call this work “practical translation” or simply “professional translation,” but those two labels hint that translating literature is impractical or unprofessional, respectively, and can seem a tad insulting as a result.

Still, there’s no denying that there are differences between literary translation and commercial translation. Fairweather-Vega laid out some general differences on the business side of the two fields. These differences stem from the different starting circumstances to the work: literary translators work for authors, rather than clients, and they focus on texts that are valuable in and of themselves rather than merely as a means to an end (a driver’s license, instructional manual, or legal deposition).

These circumstances result in different expectations. Someone working in literary translation is generally expected to take a scholarly or demonstrably artistic approach to the activity. Literary translators write notes and introductions to their published work, speak at conferences, lead workshops, and generally present themselves as artists or intellectuals. Other translators, Fairweather-Vega argued, tend to see themselves primarily as businesspeople. Pay is another important difference. Most literary translators have sources of income outside of translation (as professors or editors, for example) and traditionally have not expected to receive decent money for their work, whereas commercial translators have every expectation of making a good living with their craft. For literary translators, that expectation has started to change, but old ideas about money are still prevalent.

Perhaps because of these divergent expectations regarding compensation, the two types of translators also seem to have different expectations when it comes to time. In literary transla-

tion, deadlines are longer (nobody ever seems to need a sonnet or a short story translated overnight), and email communication generally takes much longer. Some correspondents of literary translators, notably publishers, are known for never responding to emails at all.

The last difference in expectations is the one that works most in the favor of the literary translator: people successful in this field can expect their share of glory. Literary translators see their names on book covers and in poetry journals. Commercial translation, on the other hand, is usually anonymous and often confidential. When commercial translators crave that kind of recognition, they can’t expect it to come directly from the work they do. Commercial translators seeking fame have to become thought leaders, bloggers, or volunteers in big professional organizations like the ATA.

All these differences mean there are different techniques for success in the two fields.

Corporate-style networking is more emphasized in commercial translation. Commercial translators are the ones with certifications on their CVs and fancy business cards. But networking also plays a vital role in literary translation, where translators are often judged by who they know, who they translate, and whether they can get access to journals, publishers, and interesting work.

Literary translators also pay less attention to translation technology; few use translation environment tools; and there’s little threat of machine translation taking over the translation of literary prose. Literary translators handle multiple source languages more often, including languages they don’t actually know very well. And education and training work differently for literary translators, too.

It may be that, in terms of differences, the translation of poetry is on the outermost edge of the literary translation spectrum. Poetry translation focuses intensely and almost exclusively on the text itself and the poet, is rewarded with extremely low pay, and relies almost entirely on the translator's intellectual and artistic prowess.

After the business section of the talk, Katherine E. Young spoke about the craft of translating poetry in general, and the two Russian poems both speakers had translated in particular: first, two stanzas from Mikhail Lermontov's "Sashka," and then Anna Akhmatova's "Tret'ii Zachat'evskii" ("Third Zachat'evskii," the name of a street in Moscow).

Young laid out the structure and rhyme scheme of each poem, as well as the cultural and literary background against which each was written. She read the original Russian poem, then each translator read her translation to give the audience a sense of the sound.

Young stressed that the cultural and historical background of the poem and intended audience of its translated version must influence translation choices. Lermontov's poem was written at the height of the Romantic era, around 1836, and is infused with the style and sensibility of Romanticism, quite different from the style or sensibility of contemporary American poetry. That means that translators, in addition to all the nuts and bolts of translating the verse, need to consider the issues of "translating" that sensibility, which necessarily involves considering the audience for the translation. Akhmatova's poem was written a century after "Sashka" in a very different world: in 1940, in the Soviet Union, on the eve of Soviet involvement in the Second World War and in the midst of the purges that began in 1937 and swept up so many of Akhmatova's associates and loved ones.

Young then summarized the specific approaches each translator took to each translation, first in terms of form. To what extent, and in what way, was the rhyme scheme kept or adapted? What about the use of enjambment? Stress? Capitalization? Next to be analyzed was tone and diction, including word choice (elevated vocabulary or everyday English?). In keeping with the era, the diction in Lermontov's poem is quite Romantic, whereas Akhmatova's verse sounds much more current.

The discussion then turned to specific points having to do with interpretation. The speakers emphasized their hope that their distinct translations "perform" the poem in ways that honor the poet's original spirit and intent. However, within that performance, differences are apparent. For example, in Lermontov, Young reads Moscow itself, the city, as the "age-old Russian giant," whereas Fairweather-Vega reads the giant as "my Russian land of legend." There are slight variations and shades of meaning for various verbs and adjectives, and the grammatical constructions also vary with the translator. Overall, however, the two translations are quite close in their interpretation of Lermontov's work. There were more differences in interpretation in the two Akhmatova translations. The translators coped with Akhmatova's short lines, holding emotionally laden, related but self-contained images, in varying ways, in everything from translating the title to describing what is happening with the bells and maple tree.

Those points drew the most questions from the audience, and although not much time was left for discussion in the session, audience members seemed pleased and interested in all the topics covered. The text of each English version of Lermontov's stanzas are reprinted below (Young's translation is on the left, and Fairweather-Vega's is on the right).

Mikhail Lermontov, "Sashka" (fragment from the first chapter)

(written between 1836 and 1839)

7

Moscow, Moscow! I love you like a son,  
I love you like a Russian – strongly, ardently,  
Tenderly! I love the sacred shine  
Of your gray hairs and your crenelated Kremlin  
Serene. A foreign sovereign thought in vain  
To match wits with you, age-old Russian  
Giant, to deceive and throw you down.  
The stranger struck at you to no avail:  
Because when you shuddered – down he fell!  
The universe fell silent.... Majestic, only  
You live, the inheritor of our glory.

8

You live! You live, and every stone of yours  
Is a legend cherished by generations.  
I used to sit in the shade of a corner  
Tower and watch an autumn ray of sun  
Play with moss that grew in a damp fissure,  
And from their nest hidden in the eaves,  
Out flew swallows – strangers to human beings –  
Up and down, circling, swirling, dashing  
Around. And I, so full of the will of passions,  
Envied them their life of obscurity,  
A life celestial, like hope – and free.

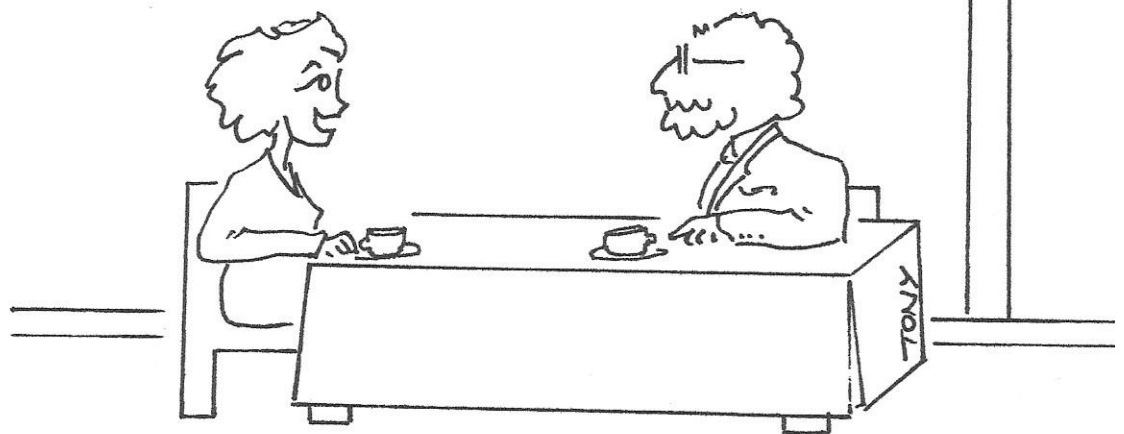
7

Moscow, my Moscow! I love you like a son,  
A Russian son, with strength, and fire, but sweet!  
I love your gray gleam, sacred, in the sun  
That Kremlin, staunch, with toothed walls replete.  
All in vain did any foreign chieftain  
Undertake, my Russian land of legend,  
To move against you, and with vile deception  
Overthrow you. Worthless was the blow  
the stranger struck; you stirred, and laid him low!  
The universe was mute... But you, your Highness,  
The heir to all our glory, you survived this.

8

You still survive! and every stone of yours  
Is sacred, an inheritance and a birthright.  
I used to sit among the angled towers  
In the shade; a ray of autumn sunlight  
Touched a crack, and played with moss for hours,  
And from this nest, well sheltered all around  
Swallows flew, some upward and some down,  
They whirled, spiraled, strange to human fashion.  
And I, so full of all the will of passion,  
Envied them their life of anonymity,  
An assurance, on this earth, of free proclivity.

BTW



*“Did you hear they’re bringing out a new Oreo, with an electronic chip  
and sensors embedded in it? They call it a smart cookie.”*



# WHAT MAKES LITERARY TRANSLATION SUCCESSFUL?

A Presentation by Jonathan McQuay  
[Jsvend.mcquay@gmail.com](mailto:Jsvend.mcquay@gmail.com)

Reviewed by  
Robert Curran

During the 58th ATA Conference in Washington DC, I attended sessions in many different fields: “Language Professionals Living and Working Abroad,” “The Importance of Translating Punctuation and Typographic Conventions,” and “An Introduction to Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Neural Networks,” to name a few. My translation interests are eclectic so the sessions I attended were all over the map (of the Washington Hilton!). When I first got involved in translating, I was advised by senior colleagues to avoid literary translation because it would be more difficult and pay less than other fields. I heeded this advice but kept the possibility in the back of my mind. Several years ago, I translated original correspondence for a book called *Waterloo Betrayed*. The author used my translations from early nineteenth-century French military correspondence to support his premise that Napoleon was misled by his staff leading up to and during the Battle of Waterloo. I was curious about the literary topics. So, on the last conference day, Saturday, I decided to have some fun and visit the literary sessions.

Presenter Jonathan McQuay’s opening slide was a quote from my favorite author, the father of American literature, Mark Twain.

*Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.*

I understood this as an invitation to venture.

Throughout the session, we covered:

- Why does literary translation matter?
- Trends in the American literary market
- Who publishes translated literature?
- Ideas on how to be a part of the process of change

Jonathan explained that the demand for publications translated into English is on the rise. In the past, however, publishers were hesitant to publish translated works. One of the most interesting slides begins with: “Things get \_\_\_\_\_ in Translation.” Then he said that, when Albert Camus’ *The Rebel* was translated into English, it was done rather poorly. For example, the Camus quote, “Le seul poète de son temps, elle le guillotine” became “The only poet of the times was the Guillotine.” Actually it should have read: “[The Revolution] guillotined him, the only poet of his day.”<sup>1</sup> Missteps like this resulted in

1 Konrad Bieber, “Traduttore, Traditore : La Réception Problématique de L’Homme Révolté Aux Etats-Unis - ProQuest.” N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2017.

critical reviews and publishers became hesitant to publish translated works. Jonathan concluded that, “Things get reinvented in Translation.”

Jonathan pointed out that Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*, a modern classic, is a translated work, along with E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* in 1952 and Alexandre Dumas’ *The Three Musketeers*. What came to my mind was *The Diary of Anne Frank* which was originally published in Dutch by Otto Frank, Anne’s father, and eventually translated into 60 languages. We viewed a bar chart revealing that the number of original works published is far greater in Europe than in the United States: in Europe, out of 500,000 original publications, 80,000 were translated compared to the United States where, out of 300,000 original publications, only 9,000 were translated. That figure of 9,000 accounts for 3%, or a “Three Percent Problem.”<sup>2</sup> But then, after we understood the problem, we were presented with opportunities.

Jonathan mentioned that, from 2010 to 2016, the number of published books that were translated had doubled. He shares the names of a number of publishers: Archipelago, Dalkey Archive Press, Deep Vellum, Europa Editions, Open Letter, and New Directions, as well as resources for the literary translator: ATA’s Literary Division, authors, embassies, journals, national cultural institutes, Three Percent, and *Words Without Borders*.

Jonathan discussed self-publishing and suggested the Amazon.com CreateSpace page. He said that AmazonCrossing is a “new giant” in translation and that we could approach them to propose a book for translation. And there is a contract resource drawn up by the PEN Translation Committee to protect the translator’s property: A Model Contract for Literary Translations. The PEN Translation Committee has useful FAQs such as:

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2 Chad W. Post, *The Three Percent Problem: Rants and Responses on Publishing, Translation, and the Future of Reading* (Rochester: Open Letter, 2011).

- How do I obtain rights to a foreign title I am interested in translating?

- How do I obtain permission to publish my translation...?

- What is the public domain?

- How can I assess the amount of work and time involved in a translation project?

Jonathan answers his leading question: “What makes literary translation successful? You do!”

The session generated lively questions and comments: Is non-fiction part of the Literary Division? Yes, but there is less chance for royalties but more chance for payment up front. There are many members of the Literary Division involved in non-fiction translation. Edgar Allen Poe became popular after his books were translated into French. Editorial Freelancers Association is a good source for book translator editors.

I found this session to be an entertaining and useful resource for a translator like myself. I am now better prepared to explore the literary translation field.



Robert Curran

Robert is a professional French and Italian translator and editor of social, medical, and technical projects. He also supports the Belgian humanitarian group, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières. He translated original French correspondence for the book *Waterloo Betrayed* by Stephen Beckett, published in June of 2015 on the 200th anniversary of the famous battle. [rcurran1851@yahoo.com](mailto:rcurran1851@yahoo.com)



## TOO CLOSE TO HOME

A Review by Melissa Harkin  
of Rafa Lombardino's session:  
THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING  
A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S MEMOIR

Rafaela Lombardino, an ATA-certified English to/from Portuguese translator, has worked in the profession since 1997. She is also certified in Spanish>English translation by the University of California San Diego Extension, where she teaches "Tools and Technology in Translation" and "Introduction to Swordfish." She began working with literary translations in 2011 after reaching out to self-published authors. She has completed over 20 books to date, with three more currently in the works. She is the president of Word Awareness, a small network of professional translators and runs a literary translation effort called [BrazilianShortStories.com](http://BrazilianShortStories.com), in addition to curating content for [eWordNews.com](http://eWordNews.com).

The Holocaust is becoming part of a distant past, but we must keep dragging it back to the present.—Nanette Blitz Konig

Several months ago, when Rafa Lombardino shared on her personal Facebook page that she would present a session at ATA 58 about her experience translating the memoir of a Holocaust survivor, I knew I would attend that session! That hit too close to home.

Both sides of my family come from European ancestry, but my mom's side includes Holocaust survivors. Many of my childhood friends also come from families of Holocaust survivors.

Not only that, but Brazil, my country of origin, along with the rest of South America, was a destination for all types of survivors of the WWII. There are countless documentaries and books about the Nazis who went into hiding in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, etc., and even more about the survivors who escaped the horrors of the war and got a second chance in life.

I grew up with their stories. My brain and my heart carry their memories, word by word, tear by tear.

Rafa explored the challenges of translating Nanette Blitz Konig's memoir, *Eu Sobrevivi Ao Holocausto* (*I Survived the Holocaust*), into English.

Based in São Paulo since 1950, Nanette, 88, took decades to feel safe enough to tell her story. The Dutch survivor was a classmate and friend of the German-Dutch writer Anne Frank and was with her in the last days of her life.

Rafa talked about the process of researching quotes originally written in English and making sure the vocabulary was faithful not only to the author's account but also to the many audiovisual materials available. However, consciously or not, she did so much more than that... She took us on a journey. A journey of suffering and pain, indeed, but the journey of a life that cannot, must not, be forgotten. And that was the very reason why Nanette decided to write her memoir.

I look around nowadays and wonder where did we go wrong. As a society, we are still making the same

**With my testimony, I want to give voice to those who have been silenced and can no longer share their stories and sorrows. -- Nanette**

mistakes. Wars are still happening. Refugees are still desperately trying to find a place they can call home and feel safe. People are being arbitrarily killed. Kids die in bombings or are left behind with no surviving relatives. Families, with their babies in arms and their elderly alongside them, are still walking thousands of miles, with no food, water or shelter, trying to find safe haven. Wars have no winners.

When will it stop?

Nanette wants her story to live on. And so, Rafa did the only thing she could to provide a faithful translation and help make her story unforgettable: she dove into research.

She mentioned feeling a bit confused with the writing style of the book. It did not belong to an 88-year-old woman. The language was too simple, yet modern, to belong to such an elderly person. But Rafa knew two things: that Nanette used a ghostwriter to help her tell her story and that she has been lecturing at schools for many years now, telling kids and adolescents about her life story, which may be the reason behind the simplicity and almost pedagogical tone of voice in her writing.

I watched a few of her interviews and lecture online, and I think that, because she is an immigrant who learned Portuguese in adulthood, the simple structure used in her communication is understandable.



However, I believe, and I mentioned this to Rafa at her lecture, that a simple writing style is not problematic. Languages evolve. They merge with other languages and change over time. If what Nanette seeks is to immortalize her story, so we don't forget about what happened to millions of people like her, having books available in a writing style that is familiar and understandable to future generations is critical.

Rafa's other challenge was ensuring consistency of terminology. A lot can be found online about that evil time in our history; therefore, so much can get lost in translation. However, a good translator like Rafa Lombardino knows where to start her research and where to look for official sources of information, to make sure she uses "typhus" in her translation, and not "typhoid fever," for example. And she did just that! Not only researching online or reading reference books about the Holocaust and the places mentioned by Nannette but also resorting to movies such as *Conspiracy* (TV movie, 2001) and *The Relief of Belsen* (TV movie, 2007).

I have yet to read the translation (it hasn't been published yet), but if timeless memory, awareness, and recount is what Nanette wants to achieve with her book, so that we can have one more testimony of the horrors of wars and hope to, one day, learn the lesson and stop making the same mistakes, then Rafa is on the right path to do her justice.



Brazilian translator residing in the United States, Melissa Harkin holds a Bachelor of Laws and an MBA in Strategic Management from FMU and specializes in technical translations, primarily legal and environmental. She has been working as a translator since 1997 and, over the years, has specialized in this area, while engaging in cultural studies and experiences in other countries. Melissa is a member of the American Translators Association and the Brazilian Translators Association and has worked for several years in various sectors (oil & gas, aviation, pharmaceuticals, HR, construction, energy, and the environment), before focusing full time on translation.



Paula Gordon

Paula Gordon translates from Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian into English. Her translations of short stories, poetry, and interviews have been published in *Words without Borders*, *Copper Nickel*, *Lunch Ticket*, and *St. Petersburg Review*.

Quoting the Winter 2008 issue of *Source*, the Literary Division's After Hours Café has been a tradition at the annual ATA conference "for years" (*Source*, no. 44, page 23). Previously called the Literary Café, the event gives participants a chance to read and hear the translations of ATA members and guest presenters. Readings are not restricted to Literary Division members—all conference attendees are welcome to participate and listen. Lately, the After Hours Café has been scheduled on the Friday night of the conference, starting at 9:00 pm.

This year's event was held on Friday, October 27th. Jesse Tomlinson was the master of ceremonies until she had to put her little girl to bed, then Paula Gordon took over. Eleven people presented their translations and three read their own works in English. Coffee and tea were available at no charge. There were some technical difficulties with the mic at first, but we began anyway with a volunteer reader unconcerned with distractions or lack of amplification (me).

## THE AFTER HOURS CAFÉ

### A RECAP BY PAULA GORDON

This was the first time in recent memory in which participants had to show conference badges to attend the reading. This new policy caused problems for attendees who arrived without their badges and for Saturday-only attendees. Luckily, however, the hotel staff member assigned to us accepted ATA registration e-mails (which members happened to have in their phones) as proof of registration. As well, there were no arrangements for spouses or friends of conference attendees. If this is to be ATA policy going forward, we should contact conference planning staff in advance to find a way to allow conference attendees to bring family and friends to the event.

#### Readers

**Paula Gordon** read "My American Hanuma, Špuro, and the Dentist," her translation from Bosnian of a short story by Nebojša Šerić, a.k.a. Shoba (unpublished).

**Martha Kosir** read her translations from Slovenian of selected poems by Josip Osti from his collection *Vse ljubezni so nenavadne* [All Loves

Are Extraordinary], Maribor, Slovenia: Študentska založba Litera, 2006.

**Ting Wang** read her translations from Chinese of two lyric essays by CHEN Li from *The Collected Prose of Chen Li: Four Decades (1974–2015)*, Taipei: INK Literary Monthly Publishing Co., 2016:

“Torpide Delivery of Love” (published in *Denver Quarterly*, 51/1, Fall 2016) and “I Catch Sight of Many Chaplins on the Street” (published in *The Iowa Review*, 46/2, Fall 2016).

**Lydia Razran Stone** presented four translations from Russian—she read three poems, “Hippo-po-poem” (ГИППО-ПОЭМА) by Vyacheslav Kuprianov, “The Lion” (Лев) by Boris Zakhoder, and “The ranks of real humans have dwindled” (Настоящих людей так немного) by Bulat Okudzhava, and **Larry Bogoslaw** sang “The Paramount Song” (Главная песенка), also by Bulat Okudzhava; the latter two were published in both original and translation in *Чтения/Readings (Okudzhava Bilingual)*, No. 31, Summer 2015.

**Shelley Fairweather-Vega** read an excerpt of her translation from Russian of a mystery novel by Daria Desombre, *Призрак небесного иерусалима* [The ghost of heavenly Jerusalem], Moscow: Eksmo, 2014; the book has just been published in English as *The Sin Collector*, Seattle: Amazon Crossing, 2017.

**Andrea Nemeth** read “Rob Ruby, the Sneakthief,” her translation from Hungarian of a children’s story by Ervin Lázár, from his book *Bab Berci kalandjai* [The Adventures of Benny Bean], Budapest: Móra Könyvkiadó, 1989, 2nd ed. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1997.

**Joan Shnier** read her translation from Spanish of several poems by Negra Deheza included in an anthology of works by survivors of state terrorism in Argentina entitled *Huellas: Memorias de resistencia (Argentina 1974–1983)*, San Luis, Argentina: Nueva Editoria Universitaria, Universidad Nacional de San Luis, 2008; her translation of the book was published in English as *Traces: Memories of Resistance (Argentina 1974–1983)*, Stuttgart, Germany: Abrazos Books, 2013.

**Sharon Neeman** sang two songs she translated from Hebrew: “A Butterfly Can’t See That He Has

Colors On His Wings,” a poem by Barak Feldman, which she translated and set to music, and “Sad Song (Can You Hear My Voice),” a poem by Rachel Bluwstein from the 1920s, subsequently set to music by Yosef Moustaki—the translation of “Sad Song” appears on Sharon’s CD, “5000 Words.”

**Sharon Vincolese Brinker** read her translations from French of “Barbara,” a poem by Jacques Prévert, from his 1946 book *Paroles*, and “J’suis Snob,” a song written by Boris Vian in 1954 (the latter translation was published in Indiana University South Bend’s Literary and Visual Arts Journal, *Analecta*, Volume 43, 2013).

**Vladimir Reznikov**, with help from **Larry Bogoslaw** on guitar and singers **Paul Erling** and **Anna Ivanchenko**, presented his translations of three Russian songs.

**Larry Bogoslaw** read “A Summer in Parentheses” and “As Pushkin writes in neat iambic verse,” his translations from Russian of two poems from Aleksandr Veytsman’s 2011 collection, *Leto, vzlyatoye v skobki* [A Summer in Parentheses].

**Jonathan McQuay** read from his prose piece “Sun and Moon Letters,” an excerpt entitled “Dear Sun . . .”

**Carmen Mendoza** (pen name Cisne) read three of her own works: “I Refuse to Say...” (prose), “The Box” (poem), and “Emerald” (poem).

**Carol Shaw** read her personal essay “Of Camels and Cabral,” published on her blog, “Listening Between the Lines.”

The evening ended with **Anna Ivanchenko** singing, by request, the original of one of the Russian songs Vladimir Reznikov presented earlier in English translation.

As can be seen, after all participants with translations into English had a chance to read, we had time for readings of original English works. (Readings of translations into other languages are also permitted.)

### Tips for readers

Having run over the allotted time myself, I thought I would include in this recap some tips for selecting readings, preparing in advance, and presenting in front of a crowd. I failed to time my reading properly this year, and the consequence was that I had to rush through some of the text and even then did not have time to finish my story. Don't be like me—follow these tips:

- Select a piece (or two shorter pieces) that can be read in 5–6 minutes, and perhaps an additional piece that can be read in 2–3 minutes, in case there is time for more readings after everyone has had a turn. Be forewarned that the MC will call time when your time is up and you will be asked to yield the microphone to the next reader.
- Practice reading your piece out loud, in full voice, with an audience if possible (family member, pet, strangers on the bus...).
- Time your reading. Read slowly and, if you think people will laugh or react vocally, pause in those spots to get a more accurate sense of how long your reading will take.
- When timing your reading or readings, include your own introduction (name, language pairs, anything else you want to say about yourself) and your introduction to the work. You might want to write that out if you get nervous or if there is anything you don't want to forget.
- When introducing the work, include the name of the author, language of the work, title of the work, and title or type of publication it is taken from.
- Other information you might include in an introduction: Anything notable about your author, how long you have been working with them, when the piece was written, whether your translation has been published (and where), why you were attracted to the work, and any interesting challenges.

(But be sure to leave time for the reading!)

- If your piece is too long for the 5–6 minute limit, mark text that can be skipped or summarized. Or plan to stop before finishing, maybe at a cliffhanger? Practice the abridged version as well.
- Another way to time your reading is to record yourself from start to finish (that is, introducing yourself, introducing the work, and reading the piece out loud), and then time the playback as you listen to the recording. This is also useful for improving enunciation, pronunciation, pacing, etc.

In addition to the above, if your selection is a song, decide in advance if you want to read it or sing it. If you will sing it a cappella, devise a way to start in the correct key for your voice. If you intend to accompany yourself on guitar or another instrument, consider a quick run-through just before the event begins so that the music is fresh in your mind. If you recruit others to accompany you or to sing while you accompany them, please practice before the event. If you can only meet that evening, please be considerate of the other readers and the audience and hold any discussions or rehearsals outside the room, out of earshot of any open doors.

Finally, when reading: Smile! Breathe! It makes a difference. Look up from the page and engage the audience, especially when introducing the work. You are among friends and colleagues; it is one of the most sympathetic and encouraging audiences you'll ever have. Everyone wants to hear you and is eager for you to do well.

Thank you to everyone who attended this year's After Hours Café! Have you selected your piece for next year yet?

# CREDITS

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PHOTO OF LD meeting, Paula Arturo presides,  
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