

THE ONLINE PUBLICATION
OF ATA'S LITERARY DIVISION

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FALL 2011

TRANSLATING AS COLLABORATION AND CREATION

BTW



"I translate therefore I am!"

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Michele Aynesworth specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. Her current work, translating Season of Infamy: Charles Rist's Wartime Diary (1939-1945), funded by grants from the NEA and the Kittredge Foundation, is nearing completion.
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The Fall issue of *Source* features ATA conference news, an interview and an article about the collaborative process, a contrasting *By the Way* column on the joys of solitude, and a look at "another kind of translation."

News from the Literary Division and from the recent ATA Conference comes from Emilia Balke, our current LD Administrator, Enrica Ardemagni, former LD Administrator, and Montserrat Zuckerman, former LD Assistant Administrator.

George Hochfield interviews Dirk van Nouhuys on the translation by Dirk and his father of *The Danger and the Enemy*, consisting of two novels by Flemish writer Jos Vandelloo. Dirk has also contributed some art work, photographs of a rock lying in shallow water in Åland Finland, photographed under different light and water conditions.

Yvette Neisser Moreno's article recounts her "journey of collaboration" with fellow translator and poetry lover Patricia Bejarano Fisher. Ames Dee once again provides us with a broader view of translation, this time discussing the origin of two poems, "Rashida" and "Chant des Tambours du Congo."

In addition to his *By the Way* column and cartoons, I'm happy to announce that regular contributor Tony Beckwith has agreed to sign on as Associate Editor of *Source*. Special thanks to Jamie Padula for proofreading and to LD Administrator Emilia Balke for her support.

For upcoming issues, we're especially interested in translations of poems or songs.

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FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

Dear LD Members,

I am pleased to announce the names of the Literary Division Leadership Council members: Enrica J. Ardemagni, Michele Aynesworth, Josefina Gareca Healy, Diane Goullard Parlante, Montserrat Zuckerman, Jo Anne Engelbert, Natalie Danford, and P. Clayton D. Causey (Assistant Division Administrator).

The purpose of the Leadership Council is to provide support to the Division Administrator and Assistant Division Administrator in managing the day to day division tasks and ensure continuity of division activities. If you would like to be considered for appointment as a member of the LD Leadership Council, please email me at ebalke@language-web.net.

This year's ATA Annual Conference offered a variety of presentations on literary translation and related topics sponsored by a number of divisions. Our distinguished speakers were Greer Lleuad and Carsten Peters. Your feedback about

the seminars will help our Leadership Council in the distinguished speaker selection process for next year's conference.

Our annual meeting, the Division Open House, and Literary Café provided three more venues at which members of our division were able to learn, meet other translators and have a good time. Those of you who attended the annual meeting already know that P. Clayton D. Causey will be our new Assistant Administrator. I look forward to working with him and the Division Leadership Council.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Enrica Ardemagni for conducting our annual meeting on my behalf and Lois Feuerle for hosting our Open House. If you attended any of the division events, your feedback would be highly appreciated.

I wish you a very relaxing and enjoyable holiday season.

Emilia Balke,
L. D. Administrator



Emilia Balke is a freelance translator, interpreter, and voiceover talent. She translates from Russian, German, and Macedonian into English and Bulgarian, and from Bulgarian into English.

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LD CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

A Synopsis of Presentations by ATA's Literary Division Distinguished Speakers Reported by Enrica J. Ardemagni

In addition to having served two terms as Administrator of ATA's Literary Division, Enrica Ardemagni is Professor of Spanish and Director of the Certificate in Translation Studies at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, is Vice President of the board of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, Chair of the Indiana Commission on Health Care Interpreters and Translators, and President of the Midwest Association of Translators and Interpreters.



This year the Literary Division had one pre-conference workshop and three presentations by two distinguished speakers, both of whom focused on the publishing perspective of literary translation. Carsten Peters, who holds a degree in translation from the University of Hildesheim, Germany, and an MBA from Foro Europeo Business School, Spain, is the owner and founder of Ceditora. This is a publishing house that focuses on collaboration in the areas of literary translation, editing, and global marketing.

Mr. Peters' first presentation, "Translators and Authors in the New Publishing Industry," drew a large crowd. He introduced a new approach to publishing that deviates from the more traditional publishing, such as working with copyrights, editors, and literary agents. In his opinion, self-publishing is the new trend in general, but it has a specific impact on literary translators. After defining how his own company, Ceditora, came into existence, he stated that he went through a large learning curve of exactly how he could work out a niche with regards to "uncomplicating" some of the issues that literary translators face.

When he founded Ceditora, his goal was to work in several markets in several languages, but eventually he decided on the steady stream of work that developed through connections in the German > < Portuguese translation

publishing realm. Mr. Peters discovered that spreading his publishing industry into too many languages was neither cost nor time efficient, and he took a strategic management turn to publish translations only into two languages. This move was based partially on the fact that the Brazilian government had set aside a large amount of money for translation of their literature into other languages with the goal of spreading the knowledge base of their culture outside Brazil. Mr. Peters was able to tap into this market and has since developed a stable publishing industry of literary works to and from German and Portuguese.

Mr. Peters classifies this new publishing industry as one that takes a closer look at the overall processes, including the roles and the tasks of authors, editors, publishers, and marketers. In this new approach to publishing, Ceditora does not keep copyrights, not publish based on royalties. This means that two layers of negotiation are eliminated. This does mean, however, that there has to be up-front money to pay the translator, but then translators do not wait long periods of time to receive payment, or worry if any money will ever be received from royalties. Since the outlay comes at the beginning of the process, the role of marketing the product has been tweaked and it is through extensive and sophisticated marketing techniques that he has made Ceditora a successful publishing industry.

In Mr. Peters' second presentation, "Programs for the Promotion of Translation," Mr. Peters broadened his concept of marketing by explaining how many organizations in Europe and Latin America offer programs for the promotion of literature in translation. These programs target foreign publishers who are willing to translate and publish books into their local languages. Most publishers are looking for literary translators, but most literary translators do not know how to get published. He explained a process by which literary translators can offer literary translation services to foreign publishers. He based this on explaining how to maximize collaborations through networking at book fairs. For Mr. Peters, he has found that the establishment of relationships between translators and editors and owners of publishing houses is the crux of being successful in literary translation.

Greer Lleuad is a sponsoring editor for Bridgepoint Education, a provider of online educational content. In her 22 years in the publishing industry, she has worked as a writer, developmental editor, production editor, copyeditor, and proofreader. In addition, she has taught editing courses for UC Berkeley Extension since 1999.

Ms. Lleud presented an “Overview of Editing Basics for the Translation Professions.” This presentation gave an overview of editing basics, including the differences among proofreading, copyediting, and line editing; levels of editing; common problems with punctuation, grammar, and word usage; common problems with style, and tips on how to best use *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Ms. Lleud’s presentation on the different roles of the editors was significant for translators to understand the processes a manuscript undergoes to get to publication. Her examples of grammatical errors were taken from the typical types of errors that many translators do not catch before submission. Overall, Ms. Lleud clarified what an editor does and what the editorial process entails. She provided resources for editorial work, and highlighted the most common problems editors see in manuscripts as a means of helping translators in the proofing of their own work. Montserrat Zuckerman’s article about her pre-conference workshop follows.

EDITING SKILLS WORKSHOP

A report on Lleud Greer’s
Preconference Seminar
Sponsored by the Literary Division

By Montserrat Zuckerman

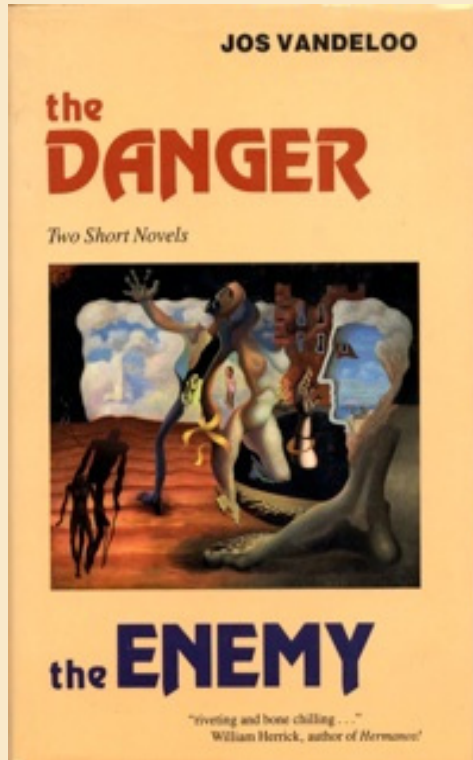
Editors working on texts for publication may be in charge of proofreading, copyediting, or line editing, each of these steps resulting in progressively deeper changes in the text. Ms. Greer’s excellent and well-organized seminar focused on line editing techniques, where the editor’s goal in making improvements to the text is based on striving for clarity, concision, cohesion and coherence. She gave definitions and clear examples of each concept as it relates to editing, followed by a small group exercise and collective discussion of our work.

The seminar was very well attended and attracted translators working in many different disciplines. Those I spoke to were very pleased with the presentation and the speaker. While Ms. Greer does not have experience working with translated texts and so was not able to address issues particular to translators (of the “we are not supposed to change anything” variety), what we learned can be an excellent aid to explain or argue for changes to the translated text that will make it more interesting and clearer to a wider audience.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRK VAN NOUHUYS

BY GEORGE HOCHFIELD

Regarding the collaborative translation by Dirk van Nouhuys and his father of *The Danger and the Enemy*, two short novels by Flemish writer Jos Vandeloo.



Dirk van Nouhuys is a native of Berkeley with a BA from Stanford in creative writing and an MA from Columbia in contemporary literature. After working for decades as a tech writer and manager, he decided to devote full time to fiction, mostly novels, which have been published only in excerpts or serially. About 70 items of fiction and a few poems have appeared in literary or general magazines. He has several author pages, including on Facebook and Amazon.



GH: Are Dutch and Flemish the same language?

DvN: For literary purposes, yes. In everyday conversation Belgian speakers and Dutch speakers can immediately recognize where either one is from and they have occasional difficulties understanding one another.

GH: What about the author? Is he still alive? What is his standing in Flanders and Europe?

DvN: He's still alive. You can check out a brief biography on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos_Vandeloo). He is one of the leading 20th century writers in Dutch and Flemish and has been widely translated into other European languages and non-European languages. At the time *The Danger and The Enemy* was published in English in 1986 *The Danger* had been previously published in 11 languages including Japanese and Serbian. The English-speaking world is often slow to catch up on translations.

GH: Is he principally a novelist?

DvN: Principally, but he has also published short stories, poetry, and written film scripts.

GH: What is the chronology of the publication of these works?

DvN: *The Danger* was published separately in Flemish in 1960, *The Enemy* in 1962. We made our translation in the 70's. Our translation was published in 1986. A translation of our translation was published in Tamil in 1987, and reprinted this year (<http://www.crea.in/>). I republished our translation as an e-book in May (<http://www.wandd.com/Site/D%26E.html>).

GH: Have you translated any more of his work?

DvN: Our translation of his story "The Little Man from Poland" was published in the British magazine *10th Decade* in 1990. My father made a rough translation of his novel *The House of Strangers*; we circulated queries for it, but didn't get any nibbles and never carried the project further.

GH: Why were publishers interested in *The Danger and the Enemy* and not other work?

DvN: *The Danger* has ridden the wave of nuclear disasters. *The Danger* describes the fate of three men exposed to radiation in a nuclear accident. In 1986, after Chernobyl, a publisher picked it up. Unbeknownst to me, the translation of our translation was made and was published in Chennai in 1987. Our original American publisher eventually folded. Earlier this year the Chennai publisher got in touch with me wanting to reprint because of Fukushima and because of specific controversies in India. That reprinting provoked me to republish it as an e-book. *The Enemy* has ridden along with *The Danger*.

GH: Do you know if there was some specific event that made him interested in radiation sickness?

DvN: No, I don't know.

GH: How did you come to be interested in translating his work?

DvN: I should say word about my father's history. At the end of the First World War he left the Dutch army with some severance pay and came to California "where they said the sun shone so much". Those of you who know about weather in the Low Countries can understand his motives.

In the US he had a successful career as an entrepreneur, but he was always a serious reader. Like many Dutch people he spoke and read comfortably in German and French. His favorite poet was Rilke. In his retirement he ran across Vandeloo's work and thought it would be a service he could do to translate him. I was glad to collaborate with him. He corresponded with Vandeloo and met him on a trip to Holland.

GH: How did the two of you work?

DvN: My father wrote out a rough draft by hand. I typed it into a computer system (Because of my work I was one of the first people to use computers for word processing). Then he read and corrected the printout and so on back and forth until we were both satisfied.

GH: Was Vandeloo involved?

DvN: No. He read English and later read and approved the text, but he did not contribute to it.

GH: Have you told him about these reprintings?

DvN: I don't have an e-mail address for him. I sent a letter both to him and to his Belgian publisher, but they have not responded.

GH: What was the hardest part of translation?

DvN: Flemish is much like English so there weren't a lot of big issues of syntax or vocabulary. Flemish is an SVO language like English. Vandeloo has a plain style so there weren't much in the way of issues of idiomatic expressions or of metaphor. It's a bit more agglutinative than English, but my father took care of finding equivalents to the compound words. We must have occasionally puzzled together over getting one just right, but I don't recall it. Probably the most consistent problem was with voice and punctuation.

GH: What do you mean?

DvN: There are many, many sentences (By 'sentence' here I mean something beginning with a capital and ending with a period.), especially in *The Danger*, that consist of a series of passive independent clauses that could be punctuated as separate sentences. What my high school English teacher would have called run-on sentences. That sort of structure seems to be a little more natural to Flemish than to English.

First I had to decide whether to keep the voice. Contrary to *Strunk & White* I almost always left it passive. These characters are victims, and the passive seemed to me appropriate to their condition.

Second I had to decide how to punctuate. I'm afraid I was inconsistent. On gut feel I sometimes left them as they were, sometimes separated the clauses with semi-colons, sometimes divided them by punctuation into short sentences.

GH: How did he acquire the rather detailed clinical knowledge exhibited in *The Danger*?

DvN: I don't know. Before he became established as a writer he was a mining engineer and executive, so his engineering background may have helped.

GH: Did you have to do any research in order to manage the translation?

DvN: No. We just took what was on the page.

GH: In a story like *The Danger* there would seem to be a problem with balancing clinical information and character portrayal. How well do you think Vandeloo

managed this balance? Do you agree that it's a problem?

DvN: It doesn't seem to be a problem to me. It is like *Star Trek*, where the technology in a way dominates. It's part of what victimizes the characters. That's not true in *The Enemy*, which is a very real-world coming-of-age-story, but other work of Vandeloo's dwells in a realm that suggests at once surrealism and science fiction. *The House of Strangers*, for instance, begins with an office worker who arrives home on a commuter train to find that his wife and children, who live in his house and treat him as their spouse or parent, are different, unfamiliar people.

GH: Can you comment on the difference between *The Danger* and *The Enemy*?

DvN: Yes. Both are melancholy tales but the melancholy in *The Danger* is colder. It depicts a desperate world, and part of the pressure is that the people don't really care for one another very much, and, perhaps consequently, we don't care for them very much either. The inability of people to console one another makes the melancholy more desperate. The melancholy of *The Enemy* is more poignant. The village is a close community. We care for the boy, for his father, for the American soldiers that befriend him, even for the mute wounded German who provokes the catastrophe. The presence of human closeness makes the melancholy more painful.

GH: The introductory chapter of *The Danger* reminds me of a scene from a German Expressionist movie. Is that a bad idea?

DvN: That's a smart observation. I hadn't thought of that. I thought of it as influenced by surrealism - the disembodied eye, like Dali. It works well for me; some other people I know relish it, some are put off by it.

GH: What idea or thought do you think is at the core of *The Danger*? Does Vandeloo have something in mind about human helplessness under the pressure of external contingencies?

DvN: Yes. Vandeloo often writes about people's psychological struggles to deal with woeful events they cannot control. It is the accidental radiation over-dose in *The Danger*; it is the shifting battle lines of the Second World War in *The*

George Hochfield is Professor of English, emeritus, State University of New York at Buffalo, and a translator of Italian prose and poetry. His most recent publication was Songbook, Selected Poems of Umberto Saba (Yale, 2009), done in collaboration with Leonard Nathan (d. 2007). We also began, and Professor Hochfield has completed, The Poems of Luigi Pirandello.

BY THE WAY

FREELANCER ENVY

BY TONY BECKWITH



Tony Beckwith was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, spent his formative years in Montevideo, Uruguay, then set off to see the world. He came to Texas in 1980 and now lives in Austin, where he works as a writer, translator, poet, and cartoonist. E-mail: tony@tonybeckwith.com

In the late 1960s I worked at an advertising agency in Madrid. It was a multinational shop and I was the account executive for the international accounts. It was a great job, and a good fit for me. I was the daily liaison for my clients, which was rather like being a project manager. I had to keep up with any movement on the account, shepherd projects through the agency, interpret the client's brief to the creative department and, of course, take my clients to lunch.

I was twenty-something, and by my standards at the time, life was pretty sweet. And yet I was consumed with a most unseemly envy. In the agency world at that time the account directors and account executives wore suits, or at very least a smart blue blazer, preferably double-breasted, and sharply pressed charcoal-grey flannel trousers. This set us apart from the creative department—the writers, illustrators, storyboard artists, and assorted trend-setters, most of whom wore cool (occasionally outlandish) outfits and loafers with no socks. I had not yet learned that, with a bit of luck, we can be anything we want to be if we are prepared to work for it, and I longed to be someone who could come to work dressed as I pleased. I also longed to be someone who wrote things for a living, even if it was jingles for laundry detergent. I was truly living a life of quiet desperation, though perhaps not quite as Thoreau meant it.

And then one day it got worse. One of my clients, a French car manufacturer, commissioned a campaign to introduce a new model, and the ads were to feature gorgeous full-color photographs of the car in a variety of exotic settings. The art director called in a well-known photographer to join our account team and we all spent a few delightful days in those exotic locations. Just as in movies about actors on location, even our very modest version of that scenario involved long, often intense hours of work, followed by late nights talking about Hemingway and Pamplona over cigars and brandy (“leave the bottle, por favor.”) As the two foreigners on the trip, the photographer and I bonded, and gradually told each other the story of our lives. My new friend was an American freelancer who came to Spain on assignment for a magazine many years ago and never went home. He and his American wife lived in a spacious apartment in a very nice part of town; he took only the assignments that interested him, and charged huge fees for his work which was highly sought after by all the top agencies in the country. His time was his own, it appeared to me, and he never wore a suit. That was when I realized that what I most wanted to be was a freelancer.

About twenty-five years later, after a varied career in various parts of the world, I was living in Austin, Texas working at a job that was not a good fit and doing some translation on the side. Employed and self-employed, I had one foot on either side of the line and felt ready to make my move. I asked veteran translator Harvie Jordan what one needed most to become a successful freelancer and he said, “A wife with a real job.” I luckily met that qualification, and one day I let go of the safety net that was the ill-fitting employment and struck out on my own as a newly minted freelance translator. That was twenty years ago, and I’ve never regretted the decision.

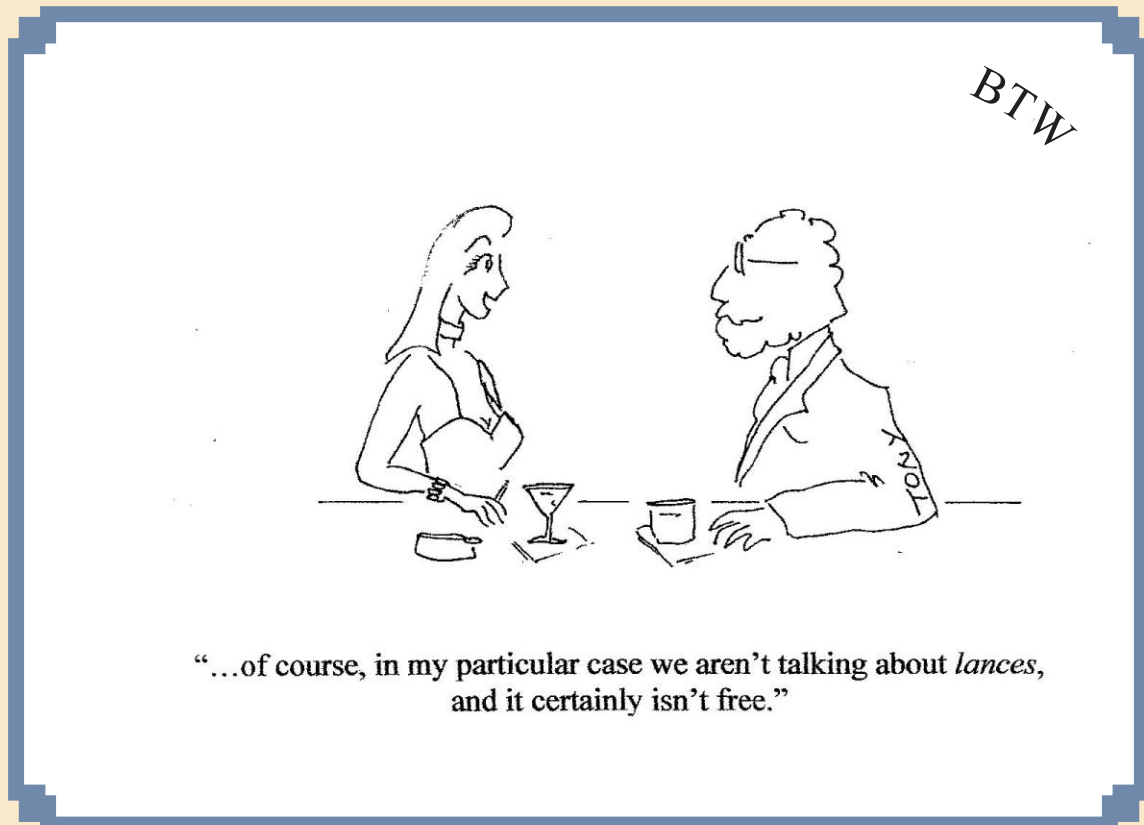
It was like going back to school, and led to a crash course in survival skills that showed me more vividly than ever that—like it or not—I was master of my own domain. I never want to stop being a freelancer, but the experience has not been exactly as I had imagined it. How could it be? It was the journey into the unknown that every freelancer has taken, a journey of exploration and resourcefulness, of nerve-wracking highs and lows (Harvie was right!) It was a journey into a new reality.

I thought back to the photographer in Spain. He was always relaxed, and made freelancing look easy. He never seemed concerned with chasing a paycheck, but he too had his nerve-wracking highs and lows. What freelancer doesn’t? Late one night, in a bar on the outskirts of Granada he confided that, for him, the thrill of the freelancer’s ride was the unpredictability, the lack of guarantees, the

sudden appearance of projects that materialized out of the blue. He wagged his finger and said, “You must never panic—remember that making money is like catching a cold; you just have to stand in the draft.”

During the years that I coveted the freelance life I entertained a naïve yet insistent fantasy that it entitled one to work as much or as little as one wanted, whenever one wanted. As every established freelancer knows, that amusing fiction is entirely dependent on things like a mortgage and putting food on the table. Fishermen know that you put out your nets when the fish are running, and you keep working the nets until you’ve caught all the fish and it’s time to go home. And when you’re not fishing, you’re mending nets and painting the boat.

As a freelance translator, I mend my own nets and paint my own boat, which has gradually turned into a fulltime job that sometimes keeps me busy seven days a week. It is a solitary occupation, involving long hours in front of a computer. But, much as I like people, I enjoy the solitude, and appreciate all the time and energy that I don’t spend interacting with others in a workplace of almost any kind. This is a precious gift, for I think the greatest lesson I have learned from freelancing is that time really is of the essence.



ANOTHER KIND OF TRANSLATION

BY AMES DEE



Ames Dee is a poet, fiction writer, and former editor whose work has appeared in previous ATA publications: Source No. 51 and No. 52 (2011) and Beacons X (2007).

Transfer and translate have the same root meaning, since *latus* is simply the past participle of *ferre*, to bear or carry, though their connotations are quite different in modern English. In the Catholic Church, where Latin has never been a dead language, this close relationship can still be seen in church English: the feast of a saint that falls on a Sunday is said to be “translated” to the next available weekday; and a bishop is said to be “translated” from one diocese to another.

A broader view of translation is revealed in the origins of two poems written in 1977, about six months apart: “Rashida” in English and “Chant des Tambours du Congo” in French. They are translations not of each other but of a complex experience. They stem from the same root.

Seeking refuge from the civil wars that were plaguing Central Africa, a Congolese dancer and choreographer named Malonga Casquelourd came to America and brought his culture with him. He founded an African-American dance company, Fua Dia Congo, and with the accompaniment of drummer Thomas Boukaka he taught Congolese dance in Palo Alto, where I lived. The students in his class were white, but often a few black women from Malonga’s East Palo Alto dance troupe would join us. For us it was exercise and an exotic experience; for them it was serious business, an Alex Haley-esque search for their roots and the dignity of their origins.

One black dancer sometimes brought her children, a little boy and his bright-eyed, curious, mischievous sister Rashida. For some reason this four-year-old took a shine to me, and I was charmed by her innocent affection. It was the era of Black Power and racial tension. Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, alike in name and adjacent in geography, were as different as suburb and ghetto. The day Rashida held out her arms to me, I simply had to translate

that experience into words in order to memorialize it. It's said that writers write in order to discover what we think. The free verse style of "Rashida" has the feel of a journal entry. The concern I express at the end of this poem — "Will you love me when you grow up?" — surprised me, bringing my drum-inspired reveries into a more realistic perspective. As it was, this question turned out to have a prophetic edge.

Malonga could leap like Baryshnikov, but he seldom treated us to a performance of his powers. He would demonstrate a simple step and then return to his place beside Thomas, drumming. The sound of the drums was mesmerizing. Taka taka taka, Malonga called it, or pah pah pah. It seemed to transport me, transfer me, translate me from that school gymnasium to a river bank I'd only read about in Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* or Vachel Lindsay's poem "The Congo" with its Boomlay boomlay boomlay BOOM.

During the breaks, Malonga and Thomas would converse. I had recently spent three months in France, so I sometimes chatted with them in French. Thus the pleasure of speaking French in California became interwoven in my thoughts with the appeal of dancing to the African drums. When I began to set down my feelings and impressions, the French language offered itself as the natural vehicle; its easy rhymes facilitated my attempt to make my poem sing taka taka taka. In English, I think my exaltation of African culture would simply sound naïve, but in French, at least to my ear, it conveys the dreamlike quality of the dancing.

Malonga invited members of his small Palo Alto class to practice with his Fua Dia Congo rehearsals in East Palo Alto. In addition to the women dancers, he was training a large corps of young men as drummers. When I appeared at the rehearsal one evening, half a year into my Congolese dance adventure, I was the only white person in the room. Some of the women dancers gave me friendly smiles, and others pointedly ignored me. Since Malonga had told me I was welcome, I decided to participate as if that were true. I didn't realize that to these young black men I represented The Enemy. They evidently needed to believe that what they were doing was something only they could do, and my blue-eyed presence gave the lie to that. In the heat of the dancing I was oblivious to hostile stares and rude remarks, but when the rehearsal was over I overheard threats that were clearly about me. As we finished dressing in that large room, the menace became more pointed. I was grateful when a few of the women dancers surrounded me and urgently ushered me to my car, whispering apologies and telling me regretfully that they didn't think it would be safe for me to return.

My two poems, one in French and the other in English, are both necessary to translate the totality of my experience in Malonga's Congolese dance class. In French, I daydreamed that I could become an African. In English, I celebrated a moment of acceptance and wondered if it would continue. Whatever the final outcome, whatever the disappointment and the sense of rejection and loss, these poems represent occasions of grace, instances of the goodness that comes when we meet one another in innocent inquiry and mutual delight.

Twenty years later, I picked up the *Palo Alto Weekly* and was excited to read its cover story praising a talented young African-American singer and dancer who was starring in a local musical. Her name was Rashida. And although Thomas and Malonga are sadly no longer among us, the Fua Dia Congo company (now in Oakland at the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts) continues to this day, "committed to serving as a cross-cultural bridge by promoting exchange and understanding." A link on its website leads to a Congolese dance class currently being offered in Palo Alto.



Rashida

I'm shy with kids,
never know what to say to them.
Just want to pick them up and hug them.

When I saw you, Rashida,
you were a dark angel in a starched dress,
so pretty you startled me.
You played and ran
quietly except for trying out the piano
until your mother said no.
(Later you tried again.
I loved your trying again.)

Our energy filled
that large cold gym
as we danced to the Congolese drums —
your mother, majestic,
her hair worked in whorls like crochet
with bright beads clacking;
you and your small big brother;
and two white people trying to be Africans.

I danced and smiled,
sweated, panted, ached,
danced until I forgot you, quiet Rashida.

O
tambours

The dance stayed warm and happy in me
as I talked grownup talk with the drummers,
so I don't know how long you waited
before I noticed you.
You held out your arms to me
and I picked you up, Rashida,
as if you were mine.
You rode on my hip
and played with my pale, damp hair.
You placed a moist kiss on my pink cheek
and whispered a secret in my ear.
You told me your name.
Together we admired your black braids.
You said it took a long time to braid them all.

A loving child
is a gift to the world.
Will you love me
when you grow up,
dark angel
Rashida?

"Rashida," by Ames Dee was previously published in *Poet's Ink* vol. 2, no. 1, a chapbook of the NW Poetry Coalition, as a memento of their Poetry Connection public reading Feb. 25, 2001.



Chant des Tambours du Congo

grands,
tambours puissants,
j'entends votre musique.
Et elle me dit:
Oui, vous aussi
êtes enfante de l'Afrique.

Pour être Noire,
il faut savoir
la vie est dure, est dure.
Mais lorsque on danse
on se met en transe,
et puis la joie est pure.

Américaine
ni sage, ni saine,
qui travaille tout le jour,
venez danser!
jouez! sautez!
écoutez les tambours!

O conquérants
des continents,
tous vos trésors en paume,
Le luxe, la richesse,
et la paresse
ont assourdi vos âmes.

Vous fabriquez
vos polluées
empoisonnant la terre.
Vous oubliez
la vérité:
c'est elle qui est notre Mère.

Congo Drum Song

Hey Congo drum,
you big strong drum,
I dig your music, man.
It's telling me —
Yeah, you can be
a groovy African.

Jus' bein' black,
you know — "Get back!" —
our life is tough, oh boy.
But dance like this,
man, it is bliss,
it's like a drug of joy.

You ain't so smart,
you bureaucrat,
working the whole day long.
Come move your feet!
Jump to the beat
of the taka taka song.

You billionaires
like emperors
with hands chock full of gold —
you lazy
crazy s.o.b.'s
don't know your souls are sold.

With every breeze
your factories
spread poison on the dawn.
You owe a debt
'cause you forget
this earth where you were born.

Rappelez, rappelez
le soleil doré
brillant sur la rivière.
Quittez le bureau,
bougez vos os!
Courrez vers la lumière!

Chantez! Dansez!
Ensoleillé,
votre esprit montera en haut.
Vous rêverez
le monde entier
des tambours du Congo.

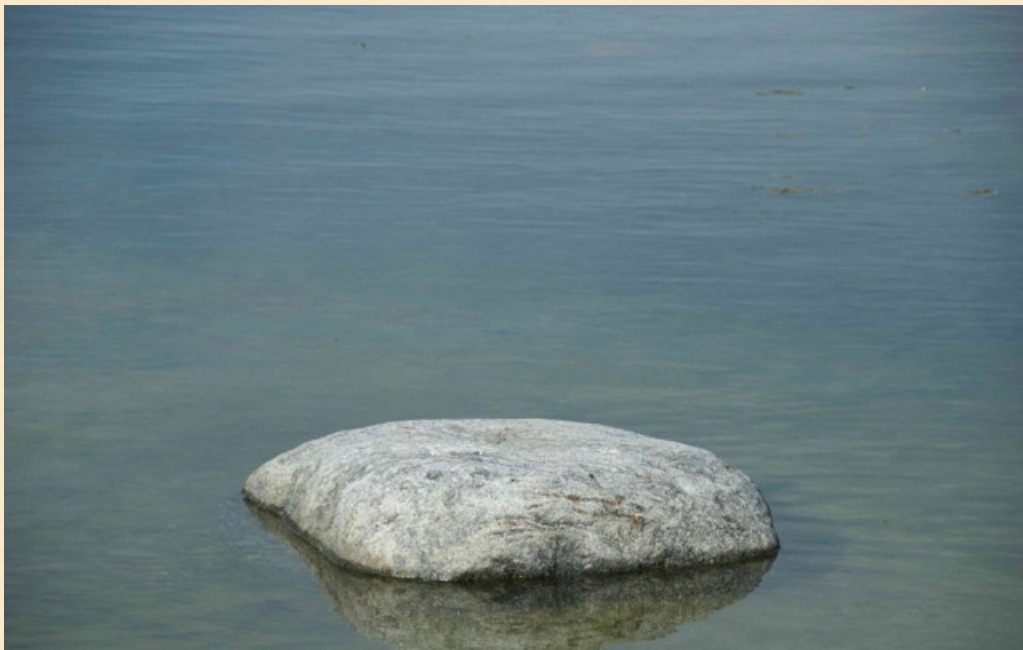
Et si après
vous vous sentez
mi-dieu et mi-humaine,
en ce moment—
pour un instant—
vous êtes une africaine.

Remember that
ol' sun is fat
and shining on the stream.
Put down that phone
and move your bones.
Run to the light, I mean.

To dance and sing
in sunshine brings
that spiritual high.
Your dreams repeat
what drummers beat —
that Congo flowing by.

Jus' dance your best —
then when you rest
you'll feel immortal, man.
The drums that made
you like a god
will make you African.

"Chants des Tambours" was written and translated by Ames Dee.



ONE POET, TWO TRANSLATORS: TOWARD A SINGLE VOICE

BY YVETTE NEISSER MORENO



Yvette Neisser Moreno is a poet and translator whose work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, including Foreign Policy in Focus, The International Poetry Review, The Potomac Review, and Virginia Quarterly Review. She has translated two poetry collections from Spanish: South Pole/Polo Sur by María Teresa Ogliastri (co-translated with Patricia Bejarano Fisher) and Difficult Beauty: Selected Poems by Luis Alberto Ambroggio. She teaches creative writing and translation at The George Washington University and The Writer's Center in Bethesda, Maryland. South Pole/Polo Sur will be released by Settlement House in December 2011.

http://www.settlementhouse.us/books/south_pole/

When María Teresa Ogliastri asked me to translate her book *Polo Sur* (*South Pole*) into English, I said yes but with the caveat that I would like to find a native Spanish speaker to co-translate with me. Since Ogliastri resides in Venezuela, and part of the book is set in Colombia, I decided to ask fellow translator and poetry lover Patricia Bejarano Fisher—a native of Colombia—to partner with me in the translation. Thus we embarked on a journey of collaboration that lasted about 18 months.

Broadly speaking, I came to the task as “the poet,” and Patricia as “the linguist.” I had been writing and publishing my own poetry for many years, and had recently completed my first translation of a book of poetry: Luis Alberto Ambroggio’s *Difficult Beauty: Selected Poems* (Cross-Cultural Communications, 2009), relying on my own near-fluent Spanish skills and the help of the author. Patricia brought to the journey 20 years of experience as a professional translator, Spanish instructor, and language-learning materials developer in government and academia. Since retiring, she had pursued her life-long passion for literature by taking courses in literary translation, where she had begun translating poems by a variety of poets. Thus, going into the project, Patricia’s

strength as a translator was her wealth of knowledge of both languages, and mine was an ear for poetry.

Nonetheless, we approached the translation as full partners, both of us contributing equally to every stage of the process. In the initial stage, each of us drafted the translations of half of the poems; then we would get together to discuss and revise. My draft translations often “sounded like poetry,” but missed the deeper meaning of a word or two, while Patricia’s drafts impeccably conveyed the meaning, but had some lines that didn’t quite ring poetic. This process allowed us to work on the poetic, linguistic, and stylistic elements of the translations simultaneously.

Our monthly meetings—usually over morning coffee at my dining room table—were the most critical part of the translation process. Prior to getting together, we would exchange our newest draft translations by e-mail and make written notes of any suggestions or questions. At the meetings, we would typically start by reading the poems aloud—first in the original Spanish, then in English—to get a feel for the sound, the tone, the overall gist, and the inter-connections among the poems in this book-length sequence. Then we would go through each translation, reviewing each other’s suggestions, researching context and specific words, and tackling specific phrases.

One of the most useful elements of these meetings was our discussion of specific images in a poem, or the overall setting/situation in a poem. Ogliastri’s poems are subtle, often giving only the barest clues to suggest the setting and what is happening. In such cases, when the initial translator felt “stuck” on a certain puzzling image—that is, we felt unable to translate certain lines because we did not understand the image—it was inordinately useful for us to discuss it. For example, the poem “La Flecha” (“The Arrow”) uses the metaphor of an archer shooting an arrow to describe the process of writing a poem. But the poem begins and ends with an image that we found ambiguous: “El poema es la flecha que tamiza el miedo / represado en el falso pudor del espejo.” Literally, these lines can be translated something like this: “A poem is the arrow that sifts the fear / held back by the mirror’s false modesty.” The greatest difficulty in these lines was the word *tamiza* (sifts). What image did the author wish to convey here? How can an arrow “sift” anything? Typically an arrow penetrates or pierces. Discussing these questions together, we probed the image. Through this collaborative brainstorming process, we came to the conclusion that the importance of the “sifting” image was not the sifting process, but the result—if the mirror contained fear but had concealed it (under “false modesty”), the sharp impact of an arrow would disturb that false equilibrium, bringing that fear to the surface. Thus, we ultimately decided to use the word “expose” for *tamiza* (thus deviating somewhat from the literal meaning of sift):

A poem is the arrow that exposes the fear
welled up in the mirror's false modesty

In other cases, we had to do some research—either online or by contacting the author—to determine the appropriate image. Again, we often found it helpful to do this research together. For example, *Polo Sur* includes several poems about encountering wild animals—including the crocodile and the anaconda—in and around the Amazon River. Since the context was quite unfamiliar to both of us (as well as to the author, interestingly), we felt the need to do some research in order to make sure the language we were using accurately conveyed the behavior of the animals in question. For example, the poem “Asuntos del saurio” (“Reptile Matters”) describes a crocodile hunting for prey in these opening lines: “El cocodrilo se deja arrastrar / para engañar a la presa.” A literal prose translation might read, “In order to trick its prey, the crocodile allows itself to be dragged along [by the current].” However, the phrasing “allows itself to be dragged along” was too clunky for this short lyric poem, so we needed to come up with a different verb. In order to do so, we had to be able to visualize the crocodile’s movements in a river and how it lures its prey. So we went on the Internet and read about crocodiles’ predatory habits, as well as watched a few videos of crocodiles. Once we both had a clear image in our mind, we were able to revisit the lines in question, searching out the English words that would best evoke the same image. In this case, we finally determined that the key to the crocodile’s technique for surprising its prey is not movement, but lack of movement. Furthermore, while the Spanish lines do not mention the current, this image is implied. Thus, we translated the lines as follows:

To fool its prey
the crocodile drifts with the current

Arguably the most critical element in literary translation is re-creating the author’s voice in a new language. In the case of a collaboration, where each of us has her own writing voice or style, it was critical to identify the essential elements of Ogliastri’s style so that we could maintain consistency in the voice of the translations, regardless of who was working on it. To accomplish this, in the early stages of the translation process, we read the first section of the book over and over and discussed this at length. In fact, it took us a full six months to complete the draft of the first section alone. Ultimately, we determined the following key elements of Ogliastri’s style: using as few words as possible to convey the desired image or feeling; using line and stanza breaks to indicate syntactical relationships in lieu of punctuation; minimal use of capitalization; and ambiguity of pronouns. We came to rely on each other to make sure the translation of each poem retained these characteristics, as in the poem “Odysseus, Son of Laertes”:

Since confronting the cyclops
an evil spell has ruled my days

the sun so distant
the day so wrong

I escaped Circe's witchcraft
and Calypso's raging fire
but can I someday find serenity?

the only voice that speaks to me is fear

The third stanza of this poem in Spanish reads as follows:

si pude escapar de la engañosa Circe
y del arrebatador fuego de Calipso
¿podré algún día hallar sosiego?

Literally, these lines can be translated, "If I was able to escape from the tricky Circe and from the raging fire of Calypso, will I someday be able to find serenity?" In order to keep these lines as concise as possible in English, Patricia suggested that we use the simple past tense for the verbs along with the conjunction "but" to convey the conditional, uncertain nature expressed by the *si* (if) construction in Spanish. As in this example, again and again we found ourselves looking for creative ways to make a line or phrase more concise in order to retain the transparent, liquid nature of Ogliastri's writing—whether by slightly changing the syntax or by eliminating a single article or preposition to reduce the syllable count of a particular line.

In this process, the translation of each poem evolved from being "my translation" or "Pat's translation" into our translation. Over the course of 18 months, we both touched and retouched the poems so many times that in some cases, we honestly don't remember who did the initial translation.

After completing the initial drafts, discussing them in depth and coming to a full understanding of the meaning—both of each poem and of the arc of the entire sequence—the next stage of the translation process involved refining, polishing, and heightening each image or phrase to bring it to the highest level of clarity and literary quality. We repeated this process over and over until we were satisfied that a poem had been born.

After 18 months of working together—and finally seeing our efforts come to fruition in our forthcoming book—we have come to realize that the collaboration would not have been successful without another key element: trust. For us, trust took shape in the following ways: acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses that each of us brings to the table; respecting each other's views and approaches that may differ at times, and resolving disagreements in favor of the best solution for the poem; being

firm but flexible with deadlines; and being able to laugh together at our occasional misreadings of the text.

For me, an extra benefit of the collaboration experience has been the opportunity to improve my own understanding of Spanish grammar and syntax by hearing Patricia's many patient explanations of various technical points and by observing how she handles certain Spanish constructions in English translation. In the process, I gained more confidence in my ability to translate difficult passages, and I believe that Patricia, likewise, furthered her ability to render a line poetic in English.

Nonetheless, we enjoyed working together so much that we decided to continue as collaborators. In fact, we already have begun translating Ogliastri's next fascinating book of poetry, about to be released in Venezuela: *Del diario de la Señora Mao* (*From the Diary of Madame Mao*).

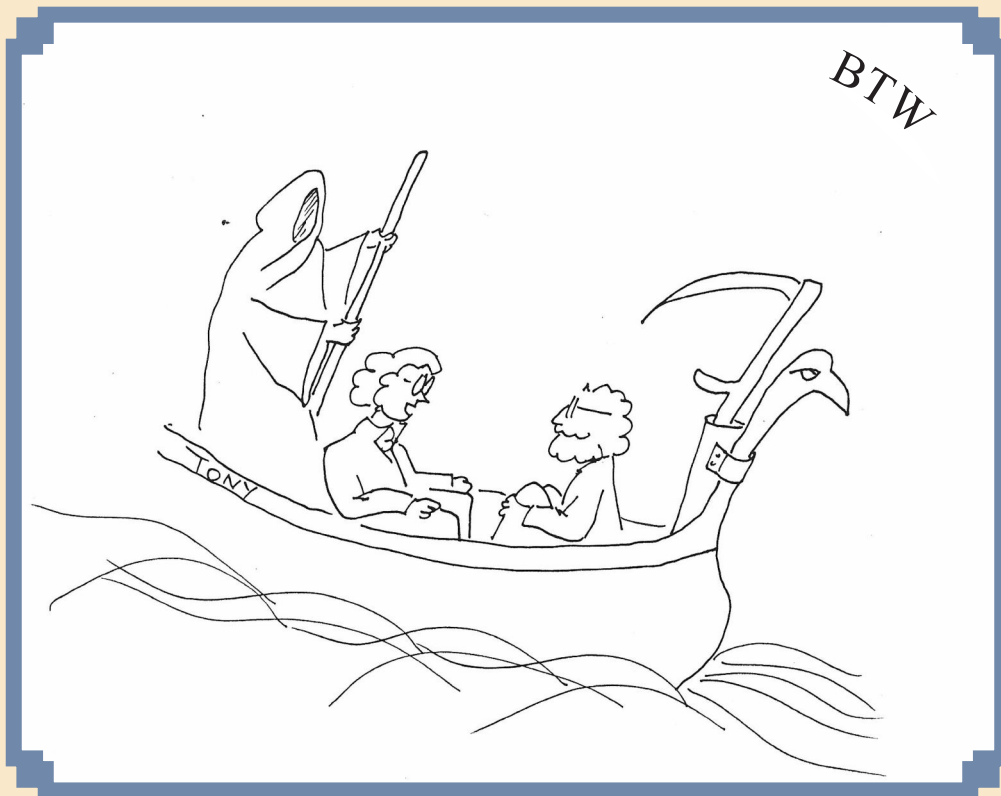
DC AREA LITERARY TRANSLATORS (DC-ALT)

Calling all literary translators in the Washington, DC area!!

I am forming a listserv for local literary translators (and others interested in literary translation). The listserv will be a vehicle for sharing information about local translation-related events, as well as to coordinate occasional get-togethers to:

- discuss articles/books about translation
- discuss recent works in translation (i.e., translated books or literary journals featuring translations)
- exchange and comment on each other's work (i.e., workshop)
- discuss issues of interest.

If you'd like to be added to the listserv, please e-mail Yvette Neisser Moreno:
yvettenm@gmail.com



"I just hope they have Wi-Fi!"

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Submissions (Word document or text file) for future issues
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Please include a photo and brief bio
of two or three sentences.

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