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LYRICAL TRANSLATING II



"I miss being able to do only one thing at a time."

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITORS	3
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES	4
READERS' CORNER	5
NEWS AND VIEWS Profile: Anne Milano Appel	
BETTINA WEGNER: THREE SONGS translated by Julie Winter	13
BY THE WAY: DEADLINES Tony Beckwith	17
THE MUSIC OF THE MOON IN THREE OF LORCA'S CANCIONES Priscilla Hunter	21
CREDITS	29

BTW Cartoons by Tony Beckwith

FROM THE EDITORS



Michele Aynesworth Editor



Tony Beckwith Associate Editor



Patrick Saari Chief Copy Editor



Traci Andrighetti News Editor

The Spring issue of Source features a profile of translator Anne Milano Appel and continues our focus on lyrical translations of poetry and song, with translations of German songs by Julie Winter and translations by Priscilla Hunter of poems by Spanish poet Federico García Lorca.

Tony Beckwith's *By the Way* column confronts the thorny issue of "Deadlines."

Coming up in our Summer issue:

• Françoise Hermann's review of *The Translator – A Memoir* by Daoud Hari, a book "that will push the frontiers of your familiar world of interpreting and translation to the outer limits."

• Ruth Crispin's translation of poetry by Spanish writer Martín López-Vega's collection, *Arbol Desconocido* (The Unknown Tree).

About the Editors

Michele Aynesworth *specializes in translating Argentine and French authors.*

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Traci Andrighetti *is a prize-winning literary translator and author, editor, and creator of the Italian language and literature blog* **italicissima.**

Special thanks to Jamie Padula for proofreading and to LD officers Emilia Balke and Clayton Causey for their support.

Call for Submissions

We're particularly interested in contributions relating to:

- translations of religious or more generally spiritual works
- the translation of children's or teen books, crime fiction or thrillers, and subtitles
- real life experiences of literary translators.

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submit articles up to 1600 words, font size 12, Word or text file, single-spaced. Indent paragraphs or put a space between them. Include a brief bio of two or three sentences and, if convenient, a photograph. Illustrations and links, etc., are encouraged. Submissions may be edited.

We encourage submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other cultures less frequently represented in these pages.

Send general submissions for future issues to <u>michele@mckayaynesworth.com.</u> News and Views submissions go to <u>itraci@hotmail.com</u>

Summer submissions deadline: August 1 © Copyright 2012 ATA except as noted.

READERS' CORNER

POETIC EPITHETS

Know any good poetic epithets? Lydia Razran Stone started the ball rolling by recalling two definitions of poetry she found once in a *New York Times* Sunday Crossword puzzle:

"an echo asking a shadow to dance"; "truth in its Sunday clothes."

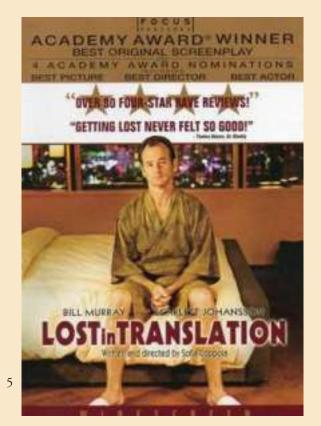
The conversation continued on the LD Listserv, and Tony Beckwith was reminded of another good one: "rippled ponds of undetermined depth."

To describe *translating* poetry, Lydia offered two definitions of her own: "putting imaginary toads in someone else's garden"; "a series of compromises punctuated by miracles."

As Anne Milano Appel points out, these last two can apply equally well to translation in general!

STARRING TRANSLATORS...

If you know of an interesting film or literary work **about** a translator or interpreter, send us a review, interview, or just a paragraph or two.



NEWS AND VIEWS



Traci Andrighetti News and Views Editor

Translated Book Clubs

In March, I stumbled upon an article about Dr. B.J. Epstein, who has set up the UK's first book club to focus on literature in translation. Dr. Epstein, a Lecturer at the University of East Anglia's British Centre for Literary Translation in Norwich, is launching a campaign to spread these "translated book clubs" within the UK and abroad. To this end, she has created a series of documents with tips and advice for those who want to start their own translated book clubs. If you would like to receive these documents, please e-mail Dr. Epstein at <u>b.epstein@uea.ac.uk</u>.

Whether you're planning to start your own translated book club or just want to read some fine literature in translation, I suggest you peruse the Words without Borders' Book Review section at <u>http://wordswithoutborders.org/book-reviews</u>. You might also browse Open Letter's catalog of literature in translation, known as the "First 25," which is currently available for an astonishing 60% off the list price at <u>http://catalog.openletterbooks.org/twentyfive</u>.

Yale University Press Introduces an Online Forum for Literary Translation

The Yale University Press has recently announced an exciting new online forum <u>http://www.worldrepublicofletters.org/index.html</u> as part of its Margellos World Republic of Letters, an initiative designed to engage readers with contemporary and canonical literature in translation. The site offers enthusiasts of world literature the opportunity not only to read excerpts of books, interviews and news pertaining to literary translation, but also the ability to tweet about these readings via Twitter through the hashtag **#wrlbooks**.

Noteworthy offerings on the site include the first English-language collection of poetry from the Kabbalistic tradition entitled *The Poetry of Kabbalah: Mystical Verse from the Jewish Tradition* (translated by Peter Cole) and Can Xue's *Five Spice Street*, a comical yet sharp portrayal of the residents of an unnamed street who speculate about the life of a mysterious Madam X. Also of interest is an interview with Edith Grossman, renowned translator of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and author of the important book *Why Translation Matters*.

NEWS AND VIEWS PROFILE Anne Milano Appel



Anne Milano Appel, Ph.D., is a freelance translator from Italian into English. A former library director and language teacher, she has been translating professionally for over sixteen years and is a member of ATA, ALTA and PEN. Notably, her translation of Stefano Bortolussi's novel Head Above Water was the winner of the 2004 Northern California Book Award for Translation, and in September of this year Yale University Press will publish a U.S. version of her translation of Blindly by Claudio Magris (first published by Hamish Hamilton/Penguin Canada in 2010).

Recent publications include P.O. Box Love, a novel by Paola Calvetti (St. Martin's Press, January 2012) and Maurizio de Giovanni's I Will Have Vengeance: The Winter of Commissario Ricciardi (Hersilia Press, February 2012). Forthcoming later in the year, in addition to the Yale publication, is Goliarda Sapienza's The Art of Joy (Penguin UK and Farrar, Straus & Giroux), a memorable work written over a nine-year span and published posthumously.

When I first tried my hand at Italian literary translation in the late 1990s, Anne Milano Appel instantly became my idol. Her name was in all the right conference programs, literary magazines and academic journals and, of course, on some terrific books. Since then I've continued to follow her career with a mixture of awe, admiration and unabashed envy, but I've never had the pleasure of meeting her. When I was recently asked to profile an ATA member for *Source*, I seized upon the opportunity to interview Anne so that I could finally find out how she has managed to be so successful as a literary translator in the famously unfriendly world of publishing.

Traci Andrighetti: I've seen your name so often over the years, Anne! And because your maiden name, "Milano," is obviously Italian, I've always wondered how you acquired the language.

Anne Milano Appel: My grandparents all came from Italy, and as a child I spent a lot of time with my grandmother who spoke no English. Though I spoke to her in English and she spoke to me in her mixture of Sicilian and Italian, we understood each other perfectly. I guess I internalized Italian, which I call my "*nonna* tongue." Later, I studied Italian in college (my Ph.D. is in Romance Languages and Literature), and over the years I've spent periods of time in Italy.

TA: Literary translation, especially from Italian to English, is an extremely tough field to break into. How did you get your start?

AMA: The first thing I need to say, Traci, is that there is no magic formula, no onesize-fits-all approach. Having said that, I can tell you that there are three key words that represent approaches that have worked for me: serendipity, Machiavelli and networking.

Serendipity, of course, is looking for one thing and finding something else (much like what is usually said about Columbus's discovery), and my own serendipitous moment came when I landed my first U.S. book contract, with City Lights in San Francisco. I had submitted a proposal for one book and got offered another one instead.

Machiavelli's *Fortuna* is a creator of opportunity, not just the ruler of men's actions: if Fortune seems not to be favorable, an individual must create his own destiny. In the case of a later book, I had the good fortune to come upon the author's work while in a bookshop in Rome. I seized the occasion to propose the book to a well-known U.S. publisher, and since the publisher's usual translator was unavailable (more good fortune!), I was given the opportunity to translate it.

Networking! Networking! Networking! The importance of personal contacts cannot be stressed enough. I have always made it a point to cultivate not only agents and editors, but also their assistants and anyone else involved in the production process. A third book, for example, was offered to me years after I first approached the editor (who also happened to be a translator) as a colleague and later submitted proposals (which were never accepted). The editor eventually came to me for a book that was published a few years ago.

So though there is no magic formula, you never know what you might find (serendipity) or what opportunity (*occasione*) you may be presented with. The key is to be persistent while laying the ground, recognizing (or creating) the opportunity and taking advantage of it.

TA: During your career as a literary translator, you've translated fiction, non-fiction and even (gasp!) poetry. But before we talk about your publications, I'd like to know if there are any books you haven't published. I ask because it really bothers me that there are unpublished literary translations on personal computers around the world that may never be made available to the public.

AMA: Yes, it bothers me too, Traci. I suspect every translator has a few things she's translated (maybe not whole books) that have failed to find a home out in the world and have remained *in cassetta*, in the drawer, as we say in Italian. I think of them as

"the ones that got away." In one of the bookcases in my study, I have a special section dedicated to these lost loves, as it were. Some are recent, some go back many years.

Enzo Fontana's novel *Among the Lost Souls* (*Tra la perduta gente*, Milan: Mondadori, 1996) is a project that interested me when I first began translating professionally. Set in 1321, it is a fictional account of the final days of Dante Alighieri. Because of my interest in Dante, I translated seven chapters, but was never able to attract the interest of a publisher. A more recent work that I would love to translate is Caterina Bonvicini's *The Equilibrium of Sharks* (*L'equilibrio degli squali*, Milan: Garzanti, 2008), a novel which in France was awarded the prestigious Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Héroïne *Madame Figaro* for best foreign fiction. The suggestive metaphor of the title allows Bonvicini to portray the struggles of a young woman navigating the shark-infested waters of life. While her father, who films sharks underwater at close range, insists that the demonized shark is crucial to the equilibrium of the sea, Sofia herself requires the equilibrium and protection her father represents.

Each of the unpublished translations on our personal computers is a lost opportunity—not just for the translator, but also for the reader who will never get to enjoy the author's work.

TA: The difficulty in finding a publisher, particularly for less commonly translated languages like Italian, makes each of your many publications that much more important (not to mention inspiring). Which one of these books was your favorite translation project, and why?

AMA: Any time you're asked to name a favorite, it becomes a matter of choosing between apples, oranges and pomegranates. So I'll name three:

Claudio Magris's *Blindly*, because of the linguistic and stylistic challenges the text itself posed, and because of the terrific experience of working with a truly magnanimous author, always supportive and willing to give of his time.

Giulio Leoni's *Mosaic Crimes*, because of the "Dante investigates" angle and its refreshingly irreverent take on the Supreme Poet: hard to resist when you've written your doctoral thesis on the *Divina Commedia*!

Elena Kostioukovitch's *Why Italians Love to Talk about Food*, for its comprehensive approach and underlying scholarship, its delightfully entertaining style, the many charming literary references it contains, and because of the childhood memories it brought back: *cannoli, cassata*, marzipan, *arancini, caponata*, yum!

I know I said I'd name three, but there is one more favorite project I need to mention: Stefano Bortolussi's *Head Above Water*, because of the opportunity it afforded me to learn from one of the best editors I have had the good fortune to work with.

TA: Speaking of Claudio Magris, I couldn't help noticing his provocative quote on your website: "both when one translates and when one is translated, there is a strong sense that the translator is truly a co-author, part accomplice, part rival, part lover...." So, what was it like working with him?

AMA: Well, Claudio, of course, is a translator himself so he is sensitive to the process and extremely respectful of the author-translator relationship. I first saw those words quoted in an interview where he recalled his own early experiences as a translator, as well as later when his own work began to be translated. So... An "accomplice"? A collaborator perhaps, a partner in the challenge to recreate the author's work in another language. "Part rival"? Not in an adversarial sense certainly, but maybe as a counterpart or complement. "Part lover"? Here I must resort to that wonderful Italian word affiatato. The dictionary will tell you it means "working well together" but it's more than that. The closest we have to it in English may be "empathy" or "affinity." The etymology of affiatato tells all: from the Italian fiato, breath, it refers to a close understanding or accord suggestive of the harmonious act of breathing in unison. For the translator this means grasping the author's thoughts or feelings *al volo*, in a flash. Beyond *affiatamento*, Magris for his part was a willing and active participant in the translation process, seemingly anticipating every question, every uncertainty, every curiosity that the translator might experience. He did this in a 48-page letter he sent to each of the translators of Alla cieca: in it he offered his translators some very clear guidelines and suggestions, along with a general account of how he came to write the book, explanations of very specific details, and references to citations and sources found in the text.

TA: Working with an author who is also a literary translator sounds like the ideal experience. What would you say are the particular skills or qualities of the ideal literary translator?

AMA: Is there such a thing as an "ideal literary translator"? I mean, since we all agree that the "ideal literary translation" doesn't exist. Remember Borges and his rejection of the concept of *the* definitive translation? For him, every translation is a "version," an approximation, not *the* translation, but *a* translation, one of infinite possibilities. Maybe the ideal translator, like the ideal translation, is like the unicorn that Rilke writes about in his poem: "the unbelievable… the legendary creature," yet there he stands.

But I suspect this isn't a very helpful answer to the question. Antonio Tabucchi, the recently deceased Italian writer and translator of the Portuguese poet Pessoa, said that translating is like journeying toward a work ("Tradurre è viaggiare verso un'opera"). So what skills or qualities might facilitate that journey? The most obvious thing that comes to mind is an interest in literature. Not just literature with a capital "L," but books and reading in general. Being able to write well in the target language is, of course, essential, as is a close familiarity with the source language and culture. A curiosity about language is also key: I love tinkering with words until I find just the right one. To quote an old Gaelic verse (anonymous, Robin Flower, tr.) about hunting mice and words: "I and Pangur Bán, my cat… / Hunting mice is his delight / Hunting words I sit all night." Or as Humpty Dumpty put it in *Through the Looking Glass*: "When *I* use a word, … it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less" (Lewis Carroll, Chapter VI).

Aside from these practical *sine qua nons*, I think being able to listen to the author's voice, to "channel" the voice in your head as it were, is vital. To some extent, all translators are mediums. In a preface to a book by Barbara Lanati (*Pareti di cristallo*, Besa, 2007), Gianni Vattimo wrote that the text to be translated is always an appeal to be heard: "È sempre un appello che chiede di essere ascoltato...."

Finally, Tabucchi gives us two more traits that we legendary unicorns should have. Speaking in a radio interview about his own experience translating Pessoa, he said that creating a translation paradoxically requires arrogance and humility ("Per fare una traduzione ci vogliono paradossalmente arroganza e umiltà"). Arrogance because it is a great responsibility that takes courage and daring; humility because of the impossibility of achieving perfection.

TA: Based on your thoughtful and beautiful responses to my questions, Anne, I would have to say that you're as close to ideal as literary translators come. Grazie mille for the wonderful interview.

For more information about Anne Milano Appel, please visit her website <u>www.annemilanoappel.com</u>. There you will find a complete list of her translations, publications and awards, sample translations of her work, feedback from her authors, publishers and readers, and much more (I particularly enjoyed the quotes about translation!).

T)

OTHER NEWS AND VIEWS

Resources for Literary Translators of Italian

If you are a literary translator from or to Italian, there are three websites you will definitely want to check out:

Associazione Italiana Traduttori e Interpreti (AITI) at <u>http://www.aiti.org</u> The AITI, which was founded in 1950, is also a founding member of the European Council of Associations of Literary Translators (CEATL). In celebration of St. Jerome day, AITI offers an annual prize in literary translation.

Biblit Idee e Risorse per Traduttori Letterari at http://www.biblit.it

The Biblit site, as its name suggests, is a point of reference for translators from and to Italian. Resources include information about courses for translators, dictionaries, sample contracts, legal advice and much more.

Ministero degli Affari Esteri at http://www.esteri.it

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is an important organization for literary translators from Italian, as it offers 100 Italian translation grants per year. The total amount of funding allotted for book translation is 430,000 euros annually.

Call for Contributions to News and Views

Would you like to contribute an overview of recent developments in literary translation or an interview with a distinguished translator, editor, or publisher? Have you come across a translation of a book you would like to review? Have you read a good interview or seen a new blog of interest to LD members? Have you published somewhere recently, received an award, or given a reading?

> If so, please e-mail Traci Andrighetti at <u>itraci@hotmail.com</u> (submission guidelines on last page of *Source*).

BETTINA WEGNER: THREE SONGS TRANSLATED BY JULIE WINTER

Julie Winter is the translator of Freya von Moltke's Memories of Kreisau (University of Nebraska Press, 2003) and lives in Spokane, Washington.



I first heard Bettina Wegner, the East German singer-

songwriter, when I was an exchange student in Germany back in the 1980s. I was struck by her strong, clear voice with the combative edge to it—at times she could sound as soft and clear as Joan Baez and at other times as militant as Buffy Sainte-Marie.

Her famous song "Kinder", sometimes also referred to as "Sind so kleine Hände", is gentle, sweet and pure and has become popular with a worldwide audience. Joan Baez has even recorded it, in German no less. There are several literal translations of the song on the Internet, and I wondered why no one had ever properly translated it, so that it could be sung in English. I wanted to try my hand at it after I attended a workshop at an American Literary Translators Association conference on the topic of translating songs. I felt inspired by the challenge of trying to translate a song that could actually be sung in English.

This is, of course, a very difficult thing to do. One can manage to translate songs with the proper number of syllables, stress patterns and rhyme scheme to fit the music, but after twisting the English in all different ways to make it fit, one ends up with a flat sort of thing, nowhere near as beautiful as the original song in German. I understood why Joan Baez recorded "Kinder" in German.

However, as a translator, I believe that the attempt to make a beautiful text accessible in English is a worthwhile endeavor, and thus I persevered in trying to come up with English versions of several Bettina Wegner songs that were true to the meaning and conveyed the aesthetic qualities of the originals as well. The beauty of the German syllables with the music may not be matched, but one cannot be sure that this is not because we have the original German version in our heads. So I offer my translation of "Kinder" and two other Bettina Wegner songs—all meant to be sung. Of course, the reader will first read them and not hear them in English, and thus they are meant to be read as well.

Bettina Wegner, born in West Berlin in 1947, grew up in East Berlin and trained to become a librarian. An outspoken critic of injustice, in 1968 she spent time in detention and was expelled from school for distributing flyers protesting the intervention of the Warsaw Pact countries in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. She worked in a factory and in the city library and continued her studies in the evening as well as training to become a singer. She achieved fame and success in the East and the West and was allowed to perform outside the East. In 1983 the German Democratic Republic forced her to leave the East, whereupon she settled in West Berlin.

From 1973 on she has performed her own songs and lyrics on the stage, alone and with other artists, while continuing to protest injustice. She has performed with Joan Baez, Konstantin Wecker, Angelo Branduardi, and Karsten Troyke, produced numerous LPs, CDs and books. Her song "Kinder" has become an international hit, and the LP it was featured on "Sind so kleine Hände" received Germany's golden record award.

Kinder

Sind so kleine Hände winzge Finger dran. Darf man nie drauf schlagen die zerbrechen dann.

Sind so kleine Füße mit so kleinen Zehn. Darf man nie drauf treten könn sie sonst nicht gehn.

Sind so kleine Ohren scharf, und ihr erlaubt. Darf man nie zerbrüllen werden davon taub.

Sind so kleine Münder sprechen alles aus. Darf man nie verbieten kommt sonst nichts mehr raus.

Sind so klare Augen die noch alles sehn. Darf man nie verbinden könn sie nichts verstehn.

Sind so kleine Seelen offen und ganz frei. Darf man niemals quälen gehn kaputt dabei.

Ist son kleines Rückrat sieht man fast noch nicht. Darf man niemals beugen weil es sonst zerbricht.

Grade, klare Menschen wärn ein schönes Ziel. Leute ohne Rückrat hab'n wir schon zuviel.

Such Little Hands

O such little hands, tiny fingers small. Please don't ever hit them, they will shatter all.

O such little feet, tiny toes to run. Please don't ever crush them, hurt can't be undone.

O such little ears, sharp, and without fear. Please don't shout and bellow, then they will not hear.

Lovely little mouths, made to talk and sing. Please don't ever shush them, they'll not say a thing.

Shining little eyes, that see earth and sky. Please don't ever bind them, then they won't ask why.

O such little souls, don't yet know how to ache. Please don't treat them cruelly, for surely they will break.

O such little backbones, a narrow ridge in back. Please don't ever bend it, for surely it will crack.

Upright human beings, a fine thing indeed. People without backbone, we've more than we need.

Es ist so wenig

Es ist so wenig, was ich hinterlasse, Was bleibt von mir, wenn ich mal geh? Mit Sicherheit wird bleiben, was ich hasse auch, was ich liebte und des Winters Schnee.

Nur meine Kinder werden mich vermissen und wer mich liebte kurze Zeit. Es hat noch nie jemand das Herz zerrissen und von der Einsamkeit befreit.

Als Kind hab ich geglaubt, ich wär unsterblich. Ich wollte ewig sein und mehr und alle liebten mich und waren zärtlich nur selten träumte ich schwer.

Vielleicht ist es genug, da β ich gelebt hab zu sehen, da β meine Zeit verrann. Und meine Wärme, die ich manchmal hergab ist, was ich hinterlassen kann.

Mutter-Rock

Ach, zög mir meine Mutter den roten Rock doch an. Vielleicht würd er dann sehen, wie schön ich aussehn kann.

Ach, kämmte meine Mutter mein Haar, wie sie es hat. Vielleicht würd er mich nehmen an jener andern statt.

Ach, hätte meine Mutter Mich schöner doch geborn. Da wäre meine Liebe An ihn nicht so verlorn.

There Is So Little

There is so little that I leave behind. What will remain of me when I go? What I hated will certainly endure and what I loved, and winter's snow.

Only my children will care that I'm gone and whoever chanced to love me. What human heart has ever been torn apart and from loneliness been freed?

When I was a child I thought I was immortal. I wanted to be eternal and light, And everyone loved me and was tender, bad dreams seldom disturbed the night.

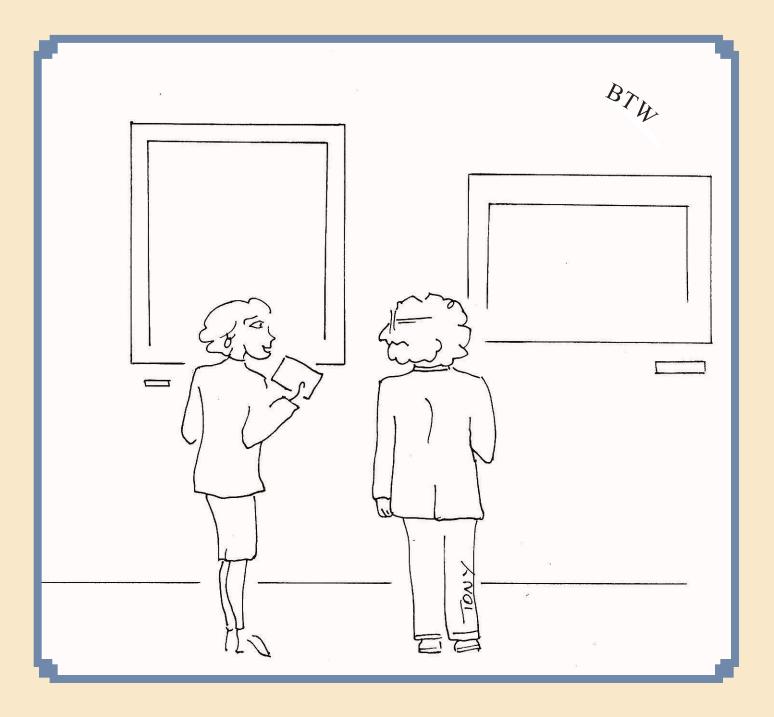
Perhaps it will be enough that I have lived to see that my time will wane. And the kindness and warmth I sometimes gave is the part of me to remain.

Red Skirt

If only mother had put the little red skirt on me. Perhaps he'd finally see how pretty I can be.

If only mother had combed my hair, like hers, in curls. Perhaps he would prefer me to all the other girls.

If only mother had born me prettier than I be. My love would not then be lost on such a man as he.



"Isn't every ism just another prism?"

BY THE WAY



DEADLINES

By Tony Beckwith

Translators must be versatile, resourceful, and creative. We must also keep our feet on the ground and be able to deliver a project on time. Deadlines are an integral part of our discipline, and we ignore them at our peril.

Webster's dictionary defines a "deadline" [dead + line] as:

1) A line drawn within or around a prison that a prisoner passes only at the risk of being instantly shot;

2) A line or mark made on the bed of a cylinder press to indicate the limit to which the printing surface may extend;

3) A fixed time limit: a date or time before which something must be done and after which the opportunity passes or a penalty follows (i.e., the deadline for filing income tax returns); or the time limit after which copy is not accepted for use in a particular issue of a publication (i.e., 3 a.m. is the deadline for the newspaper's morning edition);

4) A group of military vehicles put aside for repair or periodic maintenance.

According to Wikipedia, "a time limit or deadline is a narrow field of time, or particular point in time, by which an objective or task must be accomplished."

Neither source so much as mentions the word "unreasonable" which tells us that neither speaks on behalf of a full-time freelance translator.

I live with deadlines. Some are unreasonable, but they are strictly take-it-or-leave-it propositions. I don't have to accept them. But then I wouldn't get paid. I'll receive an email that says something like: "Yet another project for you, sorry for no notice." It's from a video production company that makes training videos for all manner of tasks and situations in the workforce: kitchen sanitation, chicken handling, team spirit, warehouse protocols, and so on. Once a project is under way the implacable recording schedule governs the lives of all concerned and the translator must keep up or the project falls behind. The deadlines are brutal and unforgiving.

Wikipedia's "narrow field of time" closes in on me in suffocating waves of claustrophobia as I grasp the magnitude of my incoming workload—and resulting limited personal time—and gasp for air. Although I am usually subscribed to the third definition listed above, I can easily relate to the first one and think of a deadline as a merciless horizon: if I do not deliver on time I will be dead. But on projects like this one I'm as good as dead *until* I deliver.

The assignment is to translate a batch of scripts, and since the video has already been shot in English, the Spanish voiceover has to be short or long enough to fit into that little space of time. Easier said than done. True, some frames are straightforward and take little unraveling. But others are convoluted and wordy to begin with and must be distilled down to their essential meaning, which is usually all that the time will allow. My mind focuses on these frames and shuffles and winnows the words in the script, searching for the essence, looking for that ideal articulation that captures the meaning in a natural, colloquial way that sounds like native Spanish and fits in the time allowed. Phew! Then on to the next frame. There are 22 pages. And 12 more scripts. And the clock is ticking. I can't talk now, I'm on a deadline.

An alternative to that grim scenario is the sweet, sunny email that attaches a guide for young children visiting a museum, with delightful texts about paintings and artists and works of art from New Guinea. "And there's really no rush, by about the end of the month, will that work for you?" The text is great fun to translate, if you like that sort of thing. There is the same shuffling and winnowing, but here, instead of fitting the translation into a space of time, it has to be fitted into a child's point of view. It's a translator's lagniappe, an opportunity for one's inner child to come out and play.

Book, poetry, and art catalogue translations are complex projects in and of themselves and bring the added pressure of greater visibility, the sense of having one's work on display. This pressure is, of course, pushing back against the client's publishing deadline, and the translator gets squeezed in the middle. Sometimes extreme pressure produces marvelous results—like diamonds!—and the translation is exquisite, a thing of beauty. At other times the words in the source text are assembled in what seem to be illogical sequences that don't quite make sense. No matter how simple or complex the text, there are always knots in the threads that must be teased out, unraveled, and untied. Natural complexities are fair game, but when the writing is mediocre or—worse!—downright sloppy, I am wont to simmer,

and struggle to refrain from railing at the screen. There's no point, I tell myself; it's a waste of precious time. Some texts are sublime, some make me furious. That's how it is.

And then there are variations on the theme, mostly of a literary style, in a variety of categories. By literary I mean that there is an element of literary creation involved in the translation process, made necessary when the source text evokes images or tickles connotations that must be expressed—can only be expressed—in a language inspired by literary considerations. By that definition, of course, some institutional newsletters can be considered literary translations; so can websites, and parental consent forms, and advertising brochures. That doesn't mean that I'm ready to translate *Don Quixote*, but I'm closer than I was a year ago.

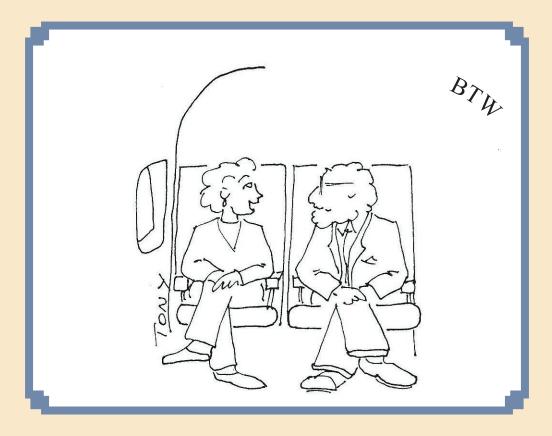
Deadlines are an inevitable part of every project—the "death and taxes" of the translation industry. The more excruciating the deadline, the more likely that it will include a night shift. I like working at night; there are fewer interruptions. The later the hour, the more the mind is immersed in the translation, with occasional furtive excursions to a parallel universe of thoughts and memories and other distractions. Some nights I have an out-of-body experience and seem to be standing right behind me, peering over my own shoulder, looking at my process, scrutinizing what I'm doing. My process has three stages: reading, writing, and revision.

I look at one sentence at a time and identify the various "elements" in each one. These could be clauses or ideas or parenthetical comments, that sort of thing. I let those elements float around in my mind as I absorb the overall gist of the sentence and wonder how I would express it in the target language. I rearrange the sequence of the elements in my mind, trying to make the translated sentence sound as though it was originally written in the target language. Then I write it, which is the second stage, in which a translator is a writer no matter what he or she does for the rest of the day.

The third stage involves tweaking and pruning and polishing the text until it sounds right from start to finish. How do we know when it sounds right? Our ear will tell us, if we cultivate our awareness of how people talk, how they string words together, so that we can "hear" what we are writing and know whether it sounds convincing. Among other things—such as an ability to write and a firm command of grammar, rules of syntax, dangling participles, and so on—good translation flows from a finely attuned cultural sensitivity that absorbs and identifies forms of expression and patterns of speech. How long does that take? Some say that a translation is never really finished; it is merely abandoned at some point. The success of a translation owes as much to the choice of words as to their assembly. The articulation—the selection and arrangement of "connecting" words like verbs, conjunctions, prepositions—is what gives a text its fluency and its particular colloquial quality. It is what makes a sentence sound as though it was written by a native speaker. The third stage—quality control—may be lacking in glamor and might seriously challenge my patience, but it is arguably the most crucial.

In the grand scheme of things, some translations are important; many are not. But every written word has its own particular permanence: the potential to leave a trace of one's passing. The translator's work is thus part of the fabric of history.

Why do we do it? Why do we translate? Many reasons come to mind, but one thing is certain—there would be fewer translations if there were no deadlines.



"They said my bid was too high, so I told them, 'You pay peanuts, you get monkeys,' and the next thing I knew they accepted my proposal."

THE MUSIC OF THE MOON IN THREE OF LORCA'S CANCIONES



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At the age of eighteen, Spanish poet Federico García Lorca gave up years of training as a classical pianist and, now at university, began to write plays and poems. Music remained fundamental to his creative endeavors, and he infused his music and poetry with effects of classical and folk music traditions that were part of his privileged upbringing in southern Spain. When he moved into the vibrant, progressively interdisciplinary learning environment of the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid in 1918, he was quickly taken under the wing and into the friendship of Manuel de Falla, who also resided there and whose tutelage fostered in Lorca a deeper knowledge of flamenco and Gypsy music and culture as well as a dedication to exposing the living conditions of the underprivileged. At the Residencia, Lorca made friends with Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel and also caught the attention of theater men and of poets, like Juan Ramón Jiménez, who nurtured his literary gifts. By 1919, Lorca, then 21, had joined the flowering of Spanish literati that would eventually be known as the Generation of '27. Within ten years he would become a leading figure of Spanish surrealism.

Lorca's first books of poetry, *Libro de poemas* and *Primeras canciones*, drawing on work started in 1918, were published in 1921 and 1922 respectively. In 1921 he also published his famous Andalusian folkloric, *Poema del cante jondo*. Over the next three years he polished and deepened his approach to the *canción*, producing the new song-styled poems published in 1927 in *Canciones*. They demonstrate Lorca's controlled incorporation of musicality into story and voice and conventions characterizing the twentieth-century European Art Song, an urban song form that requires a collaboration of artistic imagery and musical score and needs "repeated hearings for full comprehension and appreciation" (Malloy). The poems I translated, "Murió al amanecer," "La luna asoma," and the second of two poems that Lorca combined under the title "Dos lunas de tarde," come from *Canciones*.

In these three 16-line poems Lorca framed meaning in a minimalistic dramatic moment of setting, crisis, and climax. Within this efficient structure, the narrating voice's language, pared to simple essences and conjoined in powerful surrealist imagery, suggests complex themes and situates the reader (translator) as co-creator. New modulated rhythms and

nuanced phonic effects enhance the *canción*'s meaning and avoid the clunky maneuvers, empty rhymes, and linguistic add-on's he had settled for in "Canción menor" (*Libro de poemas*), for example, in which a rejected lover considers his fate for 48 lines as he rambles through the city one night, comparing his situation to Cyrano's and Don Quijote's, making 24 couplets end in a single repeating *rima aguda* [acute accent]: ó. When Lorca composed the compact lines of "Murió al amanecer" a few years later, another distraught lover—his sexuality more ambiguous now, his pain rawer—contemplates his abandonment in the night. Sharpening his narrative focus, fusing thought and intuition with disrupted imagery, intuitive rhymes and modulated rhythms, Lorca had found the perfect conjunction of music and poetry that the Art Song itself aspires to.

Difficulties for translators of these *canciones* are exacerbated by their surrealism. The language of "Murió al amanecer," "La luna asoma," and "Dos lunas de tarde: 2" rests deceptively on familiar objects and phenomena of nature and culture: moon, sunset, little sister, sea, oranges, tree, bird, shadow, bells, a coin, a kiss.... But intruding into this familiar ground are coalescing images that disturb a modern reader's preference for connecting the dots through reason and linear logic. These poems bring us into unapologetically irrational scenes and focus our attention on the familiar through startling images. How does one understand a night with four moons, a word carried in the palm like an artificial lemon, a love or a lover (impaled and?) spinning on the point of a needle? Should the translator reduce the ambiguities and tensions enmeshed in the vagaries of images like lost bells and impenetrable paths, ripe fruit forced aside by green fruit, a coin sobbing in a pocket—all of which appear when the moon of a hundred equal faces rises? What direction should the translator take in images that reason wants to accept as insurmountable nonsense, easily rationalized as being not meant to be understood?

Each of these translations exemplifies the work of rhythm and phonetic effects needed to express as fully as possible in English the meanings that inhere in the signifying systems of the original. The expressivity of rhythm is easily discernible in "Dos lunas de tarde: 2," which Lorca dedicates to his sister Isabelita. Two initial couplets, using repetition and an *a-a* end-of-line assonance, represent a dialogue of the poet and his sister that is a serenade \acute{a} *duo* to the sunset and oranges, and perhaps the orange groves of southern Spain, suggesting the fertility and beauty produced on the land by the sun's light. This idyll is interrupted by the appearance of the weeping, jealous moon. The poet sets the scene, then the drama begins:

La tarde canta une *berceuse* a las naranjas.

Mi hermanita canta: "La tierra es una naranja".

La luna llorando dice: "Yo quiero ser una naranja". The first line of each couplet has a jazzy, variable rhythm: 5, 7, then 8 syllables that return to a steady second line of 9 syllables. But the shift from the first two couplets' *a-a* assonance and two beats per line, to an unrhymed *i-e* line end and three beats in each line of the moon's verse, reflects a shift in tone and introduces the poem's crisis, the rising of the moon. When the poet's voice regains control of the poem and addresses the moon directly in the final verse, his first three lines have adopted the out-of-sequence 8 syllables and 3 beats associated with the moon in verse 3, as well as a harsher, comic tone like the bitter moon's, that contrasts the sweet sounds and rhythms of the poem's first two couplets. In verse 4 he does not return to the 9-syllable line of the couplets, however, but caps his apparent cynicism by interrupting this anticipated rhythm with a final, surprising 3-syllable line that emphasizes his false exclamation of sympathy for the self-absorbed moon and establishes his position as Boss Clown to the moon's position as the Auguste clown and butt of the joke.

Much of this is reproducible in the translation, which finds equivalencies in the distribution of rhythms of 2- and 3-beat lines, helped by the original repetitions. Lacking an equivalent assonance here, English relies on semantic dissonance to re-order the interrupted scene and bring the moon down a peg, accomplished by the implied belittling of the moon ("honey bun," "not even a little lemon"). A difficulty here is to identify equivalents that will convey the poet's condescension and ironic tone in verse 4, without undercutting it or overdoing it. The irony of calling the moon "honey bun" ("hija mía") in conjunction with the reference to a "little lemon" ("limoncito"), carries the necessary diminishment of the moon's ego and self-aggrandizement, avoiding levels of sarcasm that would distort the fine line of satire Lorca manages to walk as he addresses the frequent nemesis of his narrators, the moon.

Just as it would be short-sighted to think Lorca's *canciones* were written primarily for children, despite their musicality, primitivism, and frequently appealing surprises, it would likewise be an error, as others also argue (Kessler), to ignore that the naturally and professionally musical Lorca used the sound of language as a magnet to words that would satisfactorily reinforce certain ideas and suggest others he wanted to awaken in his readers — and, being an intuitive seeker of *duende*, perhaps discover or explore in himself. The same strategies of rhythm and rhyme that invest meaning in Isabelita's poem function for the same purpose in "La luna asoma" and "Murió al amanecer." Again the expressivity of English in both these poems is facilitated by the unifying power of word repetition in the original. Comprehension and word choice are aided by the original signals of deviation and association.

With "La luna asoma," unified by the line "Cuando sale la luna" appearing in verses 1, 2, and 4, and by the presence of the moon in every verse ("la luna llena" in verse 3), "The Moon Comes Up" matches the original disruptive power of Lorca's surreal images by finding equivalent effects without straying too far from the off-centering language of the original: "se pierden las campanas" ("bells get lost"), "aparecen las sendas / impenetrables" ("impenetrable / paths appear"), "la luna / de cien rostros iguales" ([the moon's] hundred equal faces"). The miscuing and diminishment that the now formidable, hundred-equal-faced moon brings with it, become immediately evident and emerge again in each verse of both the original and the translation. Under this overwhelming, time-masked or manyheaded moon, the senses become confused, earth's features flatten like a sea into infinity, the heart feels isolated, and all earth's pleasures disappear: ripe fruit is displaced by unripe,

the moon's own fallen replica cries in the dark pocket. The translation, unhampered by a strong pattern of end rhymes in the original, is able to confirm the original sound effects that give unity to the poem and add weight to the moon's disruption of reality. For example, a subtle net of ironic associations develops through an a-a line-end assonance in the original, linking, on one hand, lost bells ("campanas," v. 1, l. 2) and displaced oranges ("naranjas," v. 3, l. 1); and, on the other, their substituting principles, which begin to emerge when the oranges are displaced in verse 3 by any fruit unripe and cold ("helada," v. 3, l. 4) and end in the pocketed coin of silver ("plata," v. 4, l. 3). In the translation similar associations function on an alliterative open -o- linking "lost" (v. 1, l.2) and "oranges," then building the climactic melodrama of the "coin" that "sobs" in a "pocket," reminding us of the whining moon that will never achieve even the vitality of a little lemon in the poem Lorca dedicates to Isabelita.

The difficulties for the translator presented by Lorca's use of musicality in combination with uncompromisingly spare, surrealist images, are clearly seen again in "Murió al amanecer" / "It Died at Dawn." The scene of the poet's crisis, galvanized in verse 3, and the shocking climax in the last two lines of verse 4, are set in an other-world night of four moons and their lonely accoutrements (a tree, a shadow, a bird, v. 1; a spring, v. 2). It's a world of absent events (the poet's and the spring's now unfulfilled kisses, v. 2; a word of rejection still held on to, v.3), and of isolated objects imaginatively removed further from reality by rhetoric (a "No" like an artificial lemon, white as a moon in the hand, v. 3; a lover or love reduced to the size of an insect spinning on the point of a needle, v. 4). A reliance on the original's strong pattern of *a-o* assonance initiated in the second and fourth lines of the first verse is foreshadowed in "cuatro" ["four," l. 1], the defining trait of the night's nonuniformity, then phonetically linked to the singular tree (twice) and bird ("árbol," "pájaro"); to loss echoing in the missing lover's lips ("labios"), the spring's longed for touch ("sin tocarlo"), the almost white ("casi blanco") lemon of the "No" left in the unwanted hand ("mano"), and the stunning, final image of the poet's love(r) spinning ("¡girando!") on a sharp needle. The undisturbed pattern of assonance in the original reminds us of indelible forces of separation and sterility at work in this world and their influence over events at the heart of the drama enfolded in the resonances between the scene's desolate physical features and the painful emotions of the abandoned lover. Like the associations of the a-o rhyme, unequaled in the translation, another dominant feature of the phonic underlay of the original poem—its unusual, impressive web of reverberating sounds that seemingly link every alliteration and assonance of the poem back to a single source: verse 1; often specifically to line 1—is also missing in the translation.

English metrics in the translation of "Murió al amanecer" more successfully accommodate the original effects of rhythm. They begin emphatically with 3 strong beats in the first line, hung on a bizarre image ("Nóche de cuátro lúnas" / "Níght of fóur móons") and then ground the first verse in a marcato but oddly sensual rhythm of 7- and 5-syllable alternating lines of three beats that hold a series of seductively repetitive elements of isolation: "un solo árbol" / "one lone tree," "una sola sombra" / "one lone shadow," "un solo pájaro" / "one lone bird." The dehumanized moonscape suggested by the repetitions produces a mechanical tone in verse 1 of both versions of the poem. The tone and rhythm immediately modulate in verse 2; 7- and 6-syllable alternating lines increase the sensuality ironically underlying the abandoned lover's and spring's unanswered desire, an effect enhanced in the original and the translation by a shift to 2-beat lines. The force of three beats in the strong

rhythms of verse 1 returns in the first line of verse 3 in both versions of the poem: "Llévo el Nó que me díste" / "I cárry the Nó you gáve me." The repetition in verse 4 of language from verse 1 in the two versions again focuses on the four moons and the solitary tree, draws our attention to the inescapable desolation under a moon whose power is multiplied by four and, as verse 3 suggests, is given even more force by the lover's "No," which sits in the hand like an artificial, white lemon that takes us back to the unhappy, intrusive moon in Isabelita's poem.

Lorca's words and a musician's creative response to them have created astonishing beauty. Many composers of art songs and folk music have used Lorca's poetry to set choral or vocal music. Portland, Oregon composer Craig Kingsbury studied Lorca's poems and based his 2006 commission for the Southern Oregon Repertory Singers on the *canciones* translated here, producing three of the most beautiful pieces in the choir's and the composer's dossiers. The poems, presented in concert performances in a bilingual reading (using my initial translations), were sung in Spanish and can be heard on the CD *On the Trail of Beauty*. Finnish modernist composer Einojuhani Rautavaara has also set "La luna asoma" (Wikipedia); other composers working with Lorca's poetry include the Americans George Crumb and Stephen Edward Dick, the Greeks Mikis Theodorakis and Thanasis Papakonstantinou, and the Italian Corrado Margutti. Leonard Cohen and Joan Baez have arranged and performed Lorca's poems, and his verses have been performed by flamenco singer Camerón de la Isla and the Spanish rock band Marea.

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La luna asoma

Cuando sale la luna, se pierden las campanas y aparecen las sendas impenetrables.

Cuando sale la luna, el mar cubre la tierra y el corazón se siente isla en el infinito.

Nadie come naranjas bajo la luna llena. Es preciso comer fruta verde y helada.

Cuando sale la luna de cien rostros iguales, la moneda de plata solloza en el bolsillo.

The Moon Comes Up

When the moon rises, bells get lost and impenetrable paths appear.

When the moon rises, sea covers the land and the heart feels it is an island in the immensity.

No one eats oranges under the full moon. You must eat only fruit green and cold.

When the moon raises her hundred equal faces, the silver coin sobs in your pocket.

Murió al amanecer

Noche de cuatro lunas y un solo árbol, con una sola sombra y un solo pájaro.

Busco en mi carne la huella de tus labios. El manantial besa al viento sin tocarlo.

Llevo el No que me diste en la palma de la mano, como un limón de cera, casi blanco.

Noche de cuatro lunas y un solo árbol. En la punta de una aguja, está mi amor ¡girando!

It Died at Dawn

Night of four moons and one lone tree, with one lone shadow and one lone bird.

I search my flesh for the print of your lips. A spring kisses the wind, not touching.

I carry the No you gave me in the palm of my hand, like a wax lemon, almost white.

Night of four moons and one lone tree. On the point of a needle is my love, spinning!





Dos lunas de tarde: 2 *A Isabelita, mi hermana*

La tarde canta una *berceuse* a las naranjas.

Mi hermanita canta: "La tierra es una naranja."

La luna llorando dice: "Yo quiero ser una naranja."

No puede ser, hija mía, aunque te pongas rosada. Ni siquiera limoncito. ¡Qué lástima! **Evening Moon 2** *To Isabelita, my sister*

The afternoon sings a *berceuse* to oranges.

My little sister sings: "The earth is an orange."

The moon, weeping, says: "I want to be an orange."

It will never happen, honey bun, even if you turn pink. Not even a little lemon. Such a shame!

Credits

p. 5 Lost in Translation http://aimdanismanlik.wordpress.com/2011/11/08/movies-abouttranslation-interpreting/

p. 25 Misty Moon image http://blackholesandastrostuff.blogspot.com/2010/06/where-to-findastronomy-videos-and.html

p. 26 images <u>http://www.lunarhash.blogspot.com/</u> <u>http://lonelytreegroup.blogspot.com/2006_02_01_archive.html</u>

p. 27 Earth is an Orange image Courtesy of Stephen E. Danish <u>http://icsfruitgallery.wordpress.com/2010/12/14/earth-orange/</u>