THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

## LITERARY TRANSLATION
# THE CHALLENGES, CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCESSIONS

by **Gigi Branch Shaw**

In our industry, literary translation does not rank as the most popular type of translation, but it could well be the one that is the most revered. There is no greater challenge for wordsmiths than to work with words that touch the heights and depths of human expression. Words that replicate life. Words that make art. Probably few of us will have the opportunity to work with literary works as translators, but as readers our exposure to these translations has no limits.

As language professionals, we are in a unique position to understand the notion of "translated works" far differently from average readers, who may not even give a second thought to the fact that the work they are reading was not actually written by the author whose name is on the cover, but by another less known writer who has adapted the work to another language.

This past June, the New York Times published two texts on literary translation. One an article "The Pleasures and Perils of Creative Translation" by James Campbell, a Scottish writer and editor, who has worked for the Times Literary Supplement. The other a letter to the Editor about the Campbell article, entitled "The Task of the Translator "by Robert Wechsler.

Of course, the latter was written in response of the former, but I am going to refrain from critiquing or defending either writer's position, even though the two provide ample fodder for discussion and/or debate on the challenges and pitfalls of translating literary works.

In reading these two texts, published just days apart, I was struck by the fact that separately each writer has addressed and defended different yet pertinent aspects of literary translations. Campbell focuses on specific modern classics, their authors, and his joys of reading them. Wechsler 's letter, on the other hand, barely mentions the authors, concentrating on the role of the translator and the challenges he or she may face.

Campbell begins his article reminiscing his university days in Glasgow in the early 1970s and his introduction to foreign literature through his only outlet at the time, translations. Four decades later, Campbell rereads those modern classics, but this time, he is able to read them in French, their original language. During the course of this second reading, he periodically compares the texts in the original novels to that of the translated ones and is surprised and

*(continued on page 3)*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

4 NYCT September Meeting
6 Book Review: The Prosperous Translator
10 For the Love of a Dictionary
13 What your Project Manager is (probably) thinking

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# CALL FOR PAPERS

The Gotham Translator accepts and welcomes contributions of articles about all aspects of translation and translator-related issues. These may include, but are not limited to, **specific translation problems** or **approaches to translation**, **legal issues**, and the **business of translation**. We also welcome **dictionary and hardware/software reviews** as well as **reviews of books, conferences and workshops**. Any ideas or leads on interesting stories and articles for which we may try to obtain reprint permissions are also welcome.

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*(continued from page 1)*

even shocked by the translation choices and liberties taken by the translators.

In Stuart Gilbert's English translation (1946) of Albert Camus's "L'Etranger," Campbell finds instances where Gilbert "adds phrases and changes the meaning of others. Some of his interference is trivial, but any rearrangement of a hero's attributes, … shifts perception of who that character is, however minutely." In one of Campbell's examples, Mersault, Camus' hero enters his usual eating establishment after attending his mother's funeral, the restaurant owner asks him "si 'ça allait quand même," meaning "if things were all right anyway." Mersault answers "je lui ai dit que oui et que j'avais faim," meaning "I told him yes and that I was hungry."

In Gilbert's translation, Mersault answers "no" instead of "yes" to an entirely different question that he is "extremely "hungry. Shortly afterward, when Mersault returns home to take a nap, Gilbert adds that Mersault "smoked a cigarette before getting off my bed." Camus makes no reference in his novel to his character smoking in bed.

Campbell is similarly surprised by parts of Rosamond Lehmann's English translation (1955) of Jean Cocteau's "Les Enfants Terribles." He discovers that the layout is different in the translated version: the translator "dispenses with many of the chapter divisions and line spaces, and introduces her own." Likewise, she "pays little heed to the tempo and rhythm of Cocteau's prose –its French accent." The example he cites involves the character of Elisabeth shortly after her husband's death. In the original version, Cocteau introduces a list of tasks weighing on her: "L'héritage, les signatures, les conférences, avec les administrateurs..." Lehmann dispenses of this list entirely: "Elisabeth felt quite incapable of coping with all the wearisome legal paraphernalia of her widowhood…"

The examples Campbell introduces are undoubtedly shocking to us in terms of acceptable translation choices. Moreover, they question the translators' fidelity to the original works. Campbell does introduce the possibility that the discrepancies in the earlier translations, published some 60 plus years ago, could be attributed to the larger cultural differences between the English and French at that time. Yes, Campbell is admittedly perplexed and disapproving of his cited examples and credits more recent translations of French novels he has read as being closer to the original text.

Unlike Campbell, Wechsler defends translators and the challenges of their job wholeheartedly in four succinct points that will likely reverberate with all translators. First, literary translators do not have sole authority over final translations. Publishing professionals such as copy editors, editors and designers are also involved in language and design changes made to the copy. Secondly, new novels are often translated from proofs or manuscripts that may have been altered by the author, a copy editor or editor, etc. For example, early translators may not necessarily work from the final published copy of the original. Thirdly, translators work with a novel rather than single words or phrasing, and at times specific words or expressions are used because they appear elsewhere in the text. Finally, translators take on an enormous task in trying to encapsulate everything that is present in the novel, and some translators are better at this than others.

The readers of literary translations are also addressed and this is a position we all know. Campbell remembers the excitement of discovering enticing foreign worlds and literary movements through the translations he was introduced to as a young student. He applauds the fact that literary translations do indeed expand our world. Our exposure to censored works that are smuggled across borders and brought to the free world. The eminent works of great and/or ancient writers as well as the renowned authors and Nobel *Laureates* of our own time whose works are available to readers around the globe. However, he admits that if we are not able to read original works, we are dependent on the translators and the quality of the available translations.

Together, Campbell and Wechsler provide a more complete picture of the complex and multi-layered challenge of literary works for both translators and readers. As a translator and reader, I too was surprised by the translation examples cited by Campbell. And as a translator, I could identify with the challenges particular to our professional overall that Wechsler's brings to light. But what I couldn't imagine was not having experienced the joys and highs of having read writers both past and present, whose languages I don't share. ■

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gigi Branch-Shaw is a freelance Fr>En translator who specializes in marketing and editorial translations. She also works as a project/content manager for online projects and is a regular contributing writer for The Gotham Translator, as well as a member of NYCT's Editorial Committee.

## NYCT SEPTEMBER MEETING

# Where are we going?

by **Judy Bard**

It was a full house at ANSI on the evening of September 15, when Hans-Jakob Wilhelm addressed members of the New York Circle of Translators. Mr. Wilhelm heads the translation department at Kenyon & Kenyon, a law firm specializing in intellectual property, and spoke about the position of the in-house translation department (something of a rarity in the business), the type of work he handles on a daily basis and the role of the freelancer. He also discussed translation memory and machine translation and whether these tools have a place in the translator's arsenal.

Mr. Wilhelm opened his engaging and informative presentation by asking some questions: Where is the work for translators, how do we obtain it, and how is the nature of the work changing? He stated at the outset that he did not have the answers but hoped that the presentation would be an opportunity for those of us in the profession to discuss these issues together.

Providing some background on his role at the firm, Mr. Wilhelm explained that the lion's share of his time is spent on patent prosecution, i.e., preparing patent filings in the United States. The vast majority of all patents are from Germany, Japan and the US, and his firm's clients are primarily German. These patents have already been filed with the German and European patent offices, and must be translated for the attorneys to review and amend before they can be filed in the US. A smaller share of his work involves patent litigation. German-to-English translations are handled by Mr. Wilhelm and his in-house staff of three, and when necessary by a trusted group of freelancers.

In patent prosecution, the task of the translator is to transmit every last detail to the attorney. Mr. Wilhelm cited the example of a patent in the automotive industry: the content may include semiconductors, programming, mechanical devices and chemical processes. The attorney then revises the translation to ensure that it conforms to US patent application standards. A patent application can take years and can involve considerable back-and-forth between the US examiner, the attorney and the inventor, with some claims allowed, some questioned and some requiring additional details.

To preface the discussion on translation memory and machine translation, Mr. Wilhelm described a situation that occurred last spring when, quite exceptionally, he faced an onslaught of litigation translation with impossible deadlines. It was suggested that the translations be done by machine and that the translation department then review and "fix" them. The outrage in the room was palpable, and Mr. Wilhelm hastened to assure us that he made it clear that this was not an acceptable solution.

This led to a lively exchange on how translation is often misunderstood (it's just typing in the other language, right?) and how, as a profession, we need to educate the world at large on the dangers and uses of machine translation. We can acknowledge that it has its place. For example, an attorney may want to determine if an invention is truly new and, at the push of a button, can have some semblance of a translation. At the same time, a machine can clearly not do the same work as a professional translator.

Mr. Wilhelm rightly noted that this is a scary topic. Alarmist articles appear periodically, citing examples of software taking jobs from humans, from assembly line operators to attorneys. Earlier this year, AP reported that Google had made a deal with the European Patent Office to translate 50 million patents. The article did note, however, that they would be used for informational purposes

only and would not alter the need for professional translations for legal purposes.

Mr. Wilhelm could not but wonder, though, if the job of the patent translator will become superfluous. The advent of machine translation has led clients to believe that translations can be had on the cheap. To a professional translator, the idea of machine-translation is naturally absurd, but to the layman it looks quite different. Why not have the machine do the initial translation and then have a human edit it? Mr. Wilhelm put this question to the room. One member of the audience, a project manager, said that if one of her editors suspects that a translation was originally done by a machine, she expects them to send it back and state that it needs to be fully translated. There was general agreement that we need to maintain a united front. Mr. Wilhelm said that he will always say no to machine translation, given that translation is about meaning and context, and the machine has no experience of this or of the world.

Touching briefly on the topic of translation memory, Mr. Wilhelm said that his department uses it but that it has not proven particularly helpful. For one thing, inventions are, by their very nature, always new! Terms may not yet exist for certain processes. Translation memory software does, however, help maintain consistency within the department and provides a way for his translators to share their research with one another. In concluding his presentation, Mr. Wilhelm expressed some puzzlement at the difficulty of filling his in-house position. A member of the audience suggested that many translators are intimidated by patents, which Mr. Wilhelm acknowledged, while stressing that he is willing to train and that the candidate need not have a technical background. It is true, however, that a passion for the technical is a must. An interest in how things work and an ability to visualize the invention, along with a facility for language, are the foundations of a good patent translator. Mr. Wilhelm noted that his own background is in philosophy, not engineering, and that one member of his department is a musician by trade.

Mr. Wilhelm provided a clear picture of a day in the life of a patent translator, and his experience and insights into the profession gave those of us with a philosophical bent much food for thought. ■

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judy Bard is a freelance French-to-English translator, specializing in financial translations. She has worked in-house for Exane, Inc. and for Credit Lyonnais Securities (USA) Inc., and has more than 10 years of experience in equity research.

## NYCT September Meeting Photos

BOOK REVIEW

# The Prosperous Translator

by **Sarah Dillon**

The Prosperous Translator: Advice from Fire Ant & Worker Bee, compiled and edited by Chris Durban, is simply jam-packed with wisdom. It answers questions on every imaginable scenario under the sun, including many you may recognise but would never dare to admit. It's not a guide to translation, nor is it a manual on getting up and running in business. What it does offer though, is a realistic, well-balanced view of the profession and the wider industry in which we operate.

The book is based around problems, yet these sticky wickets are transformed into golden opportunities. Challenges are reframed in a practical and insightful way. Advice usually comes with suggestions of concrete actions or scripts, which apply regardless of language combination, specialism or circumstance. Every path, every option, every scenario is considered with the following in mind: Is this where I want to be as a professional translator? And I kid you not, this mindset alone could change your life. (Or your bottom line, at the very least.)

I got this book late last year with the intention of reviewing it before Christmas, but it was a victim of its own awesomeness. When it came to writing up a review, I needed some serious time and liquid preparation before I could even attempt to do justice to the quantity and quality of information contained within its covers. But enough about me: you're here for the book.

## The Prosperous Translator

Chris Durban and Eugene Seidel, aka Fire Ant and Worker Bee (FA & WB), have run an agony-aunt column for practising translators in Translation Journal since 1998. All the questions are real, which is funny, impressive and just a bit scary. In this book, Chris Durban has edited and updated a compilation of some of the best of these columns, across 267 pages and 12 chapters:

1. Is this a real option for me?
2. Getting started
3. Doing the job
4. Client/supplier relationship
5. Pricing and value
6. Marketing and finding clients
7. Payment issues
8. Specializing
9. Ethics
10. Quality of life
11. Professional associations
12. Kitchen sink

I'll admit to not being a regular reader of the column for a couple of reasons. First, while I've always appreciated the advice, as an only occasional passer-by I didn't immediately "get" the FA & WB style (probably the only thing I have in common with Professor Peter Newmark then, cf. pg. 263). Second, I'm not a regular reader of Translation Journal, not because I don't like it (I do – a lot), but for the same reason that I don't tend to frequent email discussion groups or the ITI website: if it's not RSS-ed, it's likely to slip off my radar.

So I think the book is an excellent idea. It may sound strange coming from a self-confessed technophile, but compared to the column's original online format, this book allows for a more thorough reading experience, which is definitely warranted given the quality of the information contained within.

It is also infinitely more accessible and easy to refer back to. And believe me, this is the kind of book you will want to refer back to throughout your career. As a result, this book should and will bring the combined wisdom of FA & WB to an even wider audience.

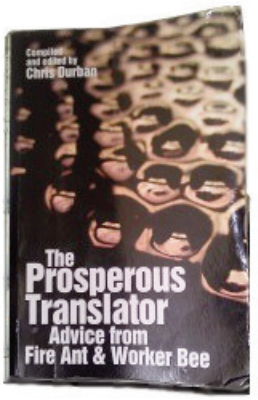
## Something for everyone

The Prosperous Translator has something for everyone.

For aspiring translators and translation students, there's plenty of advice on what to look for in a translation programme, as well as food for thought for anyone considering further qualifications in translation.

There's even more to mull over for the established translator. Chapter 6 contains over 40 pages of ideas and suggestions on identifying lucrative sources of work and increasing income, in hard times and in good.

There is an entire chapter on professional associations, and plenty of advice for translation companies and translation buyers too.




**My well-thumbed copy of The Prosperous Translator**

This 360-degree perspective is an education in itself. It encourages an increased level of professional self-awareness and an ability to look at oneself through the eyes of a range of different industry stakeholders. Fascinating stuff.

Best of all, many of the tips require no investment of money: just time, initiative, and energy. And there's no country-specific tax, accounting or legal advice to trip over either. Just honest-to-goodness, cross-border applicable opinion and advice from two very savvy and experienced professionals.

## The devil is in the detail

On positioning and marketing, Durban and Seidel drive home the fact that the way you pitch your services helps define the kind of clients you end up with. We already know that if you look, smell and sound like a monkey, you'll get paid peanuts. What this book will tell you is how to look, smell and sound like a rockstar.

I was also especially interested in the points on internships. The work placements I've undertaken have all been extremely valuable, both at the start of my career and later, when I moved into translation. I've long considered how I might be able to offer the same opportunity to up-and-coming translators, and this book has helped me see how it might be possible, even as a freelancer.

I found the section on client outreach especially inspiring, as will anyone interested in

*(continued on page 8)*

*It is also infinitely more accessible and easy to refer back to. And believe me, this is the kind of book you will want to refer back to throughout your career.*

*On positioning and marketing, Durban and Seidel drive home the fact that the way you pitch your services helps define the kind of clients you end up with.*

*(continued from page 7)*

learning more about getting out there to meet the end-users of our translations.

On networking, three key points in particular stood out for me:

- No serious business is going to outsource high-paying, critical work to an anonymous supplier.
- Even in today's global economy, physical proximity to target market matters. (As an Australia-based translator who has just spent six of the past 24 months on working trips to Europe, I can attest to that.)
- Networking with fellow translators exclusively is a waste of time at best, counter-productive at worst.

This last point is one that needs making. A quick poll in a recent CPD webinar on working with direct clients revealed that 54% of translators in attendance had never been to a business meeting unrelated to translation or interpreting.

In addition to all this, the book contains specific and actionable advice on:

- getting into subtitling (pg. 11), literary translation (pg. 24), and academic book translation (pg. 112)
- working in teams of translators (pg. 47) and outsourcing for agencies (pg. 53)
- two different ways to deal with the fallout when your client's family members start to meddle (blunt or diplomatic, on pg. 61)
- how to offer feedback as a reviser without being perceived as a smart-ass and alienating clients (misplaced this page no. I'll let you find it for yourself)
- the best ways to work with other translators to manage peak times (pg. 228)
- handling dismissive comments about translators on the cocktail circuit with grace and style (pg. 256)
- drafting letters to the editor that make the cut (pg. 261)

## Show me the money

As you might expect, pricing loomed large in this book, with a range of strategies to ensure your pricing reflects your experience and not your desperation. The negotiating techniques were also powerful, and were sprinkled throughout the book.

Particularly interesting was the suggestion to calculate your per-hour net earnings (i.e. not your per-word gross rate) for each of your clients on a regular basis. This will give you a good idea of the areas you might want to develop further, but also highlights the real cost of any predilections for certain client or translation types.

In addition, there was an entire chapter dedicated to payment issues, covering payment scenarios of every kind imaginable.

I also liked the pointers I picked up on terms and conditions. Specifically, how to turn them from a stick with which to beat the heads of my clients into a valuable tool for managing client relationships and satisfaction.

## Tough love

Fire Ant and Worker Bee's tough love approach gives them a high degree of credibility, in my eyes. To a translator

complaining about being forced to accept low rates, they say *"if you accept, you become an enabler, which makes you just as guilty as they are – only more so, since you ought to know better"* (pg. 113). To a another who paints translation agencies as the sole source of all evil and their career dissatisfaction, *"if you are still laboring in agency hell…, it's clear that you have made a few bad choices over the years"* (pg. 120). Heck, yeah!

That's not to say they're not sympathetic to the challenges of the profession. On dealing with freelancer burnout or overwhelm, FA & WB suggest some simple but effective steps to clear your plate to enable you to focus on what really matters, without giving in to the crash-and-burn.

What's more, they're funny. Very funny, in fact. They diagnose Stockholm Syndrome and educate us on the symptoms of "translator twitchiness" (*"alternating bouts of belligerence and forelock-tugging, with regular time-outs"* pg. 65). Their wise words on translation discussion groups should appear in a pop-up window at the top of every online forum:

Take online discussions with a grain of salt. Some of these guys are teasing, playing devil's advocate. Others are whiling away a lazy summer's afternoon on the wifi-enabled air-conditioned porch before pottering off to the golf course. Still others are bullshitting from their abandoned trolley car under a bridge. (pg. 93)

Incidentally, the same might be said for bloggers.

## Conclusion

Fire Ant and Worker Bee's down-to-earth approach means they don't suffer fools. Yet a willingness to offer genuinely helpful advice and a perceptive grasp of what is really at stake, combined with a healthy dose of humour, makes them akin to a wise old grandma. The kind of grandma who has lived and loved well, who won't tolerate any nonsense and who cares for you through the ups and the downs, no matter how much of an ass you make of yourself. Every self-respecting professional needs and deserves one of those.

Because of the Q & A format of this book, it would be easy to dip in and out of various sections, willy nilly. But busy professional and personal lives notwithstanding, I think it deserves to be pored over, cover to cover, with a pen and paper to hand to capture all the amazing business ideas that will explode into your head as you read it.

These guys KNOW what direct clients want and are willing to pay for. If you read this book, you will too. And if you follow their advice, you can't fail but be a prosperous translator.

Seriously – you need to buy this book. ■

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Dillon is a freelance translator of French, Spanish and German, originally from Ireland but currently based in Brisbane, Australia. She has been providing freelance translation services to businesses all over the world since 2004. She is also a co-director of eCPD Ltd, a company which facilitates online seminars for professional linguists, translators and interpreters.

Sarah is a member of the UK's Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) and the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), and the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT).

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# For the Love of a Dictionary

by **Agnes Meilhac**

Translators love words. We are like fine art collectors, always in awe of the sheer beauty emanating from language. No wonder dictionaries have such a magnetic pull over us. To language buffs, dictionaries represent treasure chests full of riches, the things we most admire. Once in a while, the discovery of a new dictionary will take on an epic meaning in the life of a veteran wordsmith, and the rarer the work the more dramatic its impact.

For French and English translators working in the cosmetics industry, the publication of the Beauty Talk Dictionary of Perfumery, Cosmetology & Beauty Products[1] was a major milestone on the road to gaining greater attention and recognition in this field. Although published by a reputable French publisher of multilingual and specialized dictionaries and books on translating, Beauty Talk is a point in case of why a specialized work of reference should undergo stringent scrutiny and review, especially by the very professionals for whom it is intended. The dictionary has considerable value and appeal, but it also shows weaknesses.

## Background

For many years, the only bilingual French-to-English and English-to-French reference for cosmetics and beauty care was a thin glossary[2] published by La Maison du Dictionnaire, also the publisher of Beauty Talk. The limited scope of this earlier compilation may have simply reflected a lack of interest for an area of translation regarded by some – similarly to the industry of cosmetics itself – as somewhat frivolous and shallow.

Yet, the beauty care and cosmetics industry has experienced far-reaching growth, making incredible leaps in the past three decades. The changes it underwent were partly due to the whirlwind of technological progress in the 1980s and the communication revolution of the World Wide Web and mobile telephones in the 1990s. Once a scattered cottage industry, cosmetics have grown into a multi-billion dollar business by adapting to this changing market environment.

The industry is now heavily dependent on R&D and innovation, the two driving forces behind growth in any sector. In line with general expectations of constant upgrades and improvements, cosmetic products have fallen into the same incessant and repetitive pattern of new launches, relaunches and redesigns, gaining a reputation for notoriously short life cycles. Today's market-savvy cosmetic consumers want to be impressed with new breakthrough formulas on a regular basis. Gone are the days of a simple three-step skin care routine consisting of a cleanser, toner and face cream. We are now in the era of high-performance multi-purpose and multi-functional products that can purify, moisturize, fight the aging process, and nourish the skin all at the same time.

1 Beauty Talk Dictionary of Perfumery, Cosmetology & Beauty Products, Michel J. Husson and Sylvie M.C. Husson, éditions La Maison du Dictionnaire (2008), 498 p., $250 (amazon.com)

2 Lexique de l'esthétique et de la cosmétique français-anglais de Jean-Marc Blot, éditions La Maison du Dictionnaire (2007), 95 p., €16.50.

Along with these technological advances came a proliferation of specialized terminology and hence the need for expert linguists. Product claims, written by business professionals trained in technical writing, must be substantiated by evidence obtained from documented pre-clinical and clinical trials. These claims are later translated into many different languages, along with other marketing documents produced in the process of guiding a product from the test tube to the final consumer. Most cosmetics companies eventually look beyond their original country of business to increase market share, creating the need for highly focused, professional translation services.

## The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful

A long-overdue reference text that fills an undeniable void in the arsenal of tools available to cosmetic translators, Beauty Talk suffers from an unfortunate number of crucial flaws. The apparent lack of input from native English speakers seems to be in part responsible for these shortcomings. Beauty Talk is the brainchild of a marketing and sales professional and a former international press and public relations manager with Dior. While both stress their multi-cultural background and linguistic proficiency, the native fluency standards demanded of translators are clearly not reflected in their work. This has led to the great paradox of this dictionary – its unabashed delivery of word-for-word translations aimed at final users whose professional mantra is to avoid them!

In terms of scope, Beauty Talk is a relatively comprehensive up-to-date guide to cosmetic lingo. The straightforward entry-per-entry equivalents in terminology give access to a wealth of knowledge. However, some vocabulary items are supplemented with definitions that can only be described as direct translations. Modern-day translation theory perceives literal translation as one of the more noticeable breaches in understanding the translation process. Even clients are now indiscriminately using "word-for-word" as a catchy description for translated material they are not happy with. We can only hope that La Maison du Dictionnaire[3] will take a closer look at this issue for future editions of Beauty Talk.

A good example of this literalness is the definition of "headspace" or "living flower technology" ("technologie de la fleur vivante" in French). Developed by International Flavors & Fragrances Inc., the technology captures the fragrance of living flowers by placing a large glass globe over a blooming bud with a retractable needle positioned as close to the flower as possible without touching it. The molecules emitted by the flower are collected with the needle, providing a computer with an accurate reading used to define a fragrance profile, which is in turn used to recreate the fragrance. The scented atmosphere immediately surrounding a flower is called "headspace."

This fascinating technique would require research if referenced in a document to be translated. Having Beauty Talk as a handy lookup tool, with the correct French and English terms only a page-turn away, makes the translator's life easier. Yet reading the definitions associated with those terms proves a great disappointment:

*« Une technique qui consiste à capturer l'arome dégagé par une plante en croissance. L'air parfumé est analysé en utilisant une chromatographie (cf.) au gaz qui détermine la composition chimique de la fleur pour reproduction en laboratoire. L'idée est d'obtenir une senteur aussi proche que possible de la fleur vivante sans altération causée par la chaleur durant le processus d'extraction. »*

*"A technique used to capture the aroma given off by a growing plant. The scented air is analyzed using a gas chromatography which gives a breakdown of the flower's chemical composition to be reproduced in the lab. The idea being to capture a scent as*

(continued on page 12)

3 Founded in 1973, La Maison du Dictionnaire is a famous French publisher and bookseller of specialized dictionaries with a landmark shop on Boulevard de Montparnasse in Paris.

(continued from page 11)

*close as possible to the smell of the living plant without alteration due to heat during the extraction process."*

Even to someone with the most rudimentary knowledge of French, the English translation is very much a trace-paper version of the source text.

In another example, "ptosis" is defined in Beauty Talk as "falling of some organ parts; the drooping of upper eyelid caused by the paralysis of the muscles holding it." While the Greek term ptosis means "falling" or "fall" (from the verb piptein), to refer to the condition as "falling of some organ parts" brings to mind gory images of spilling innards. The "falling" would in fact be more aptly referred to as "abnormal lowering" or "abnormal downward displacement" of an organ, particularly an eyelid. Similar awkward examples abound.

A second source of disappointment in using Beauty Talk is the unfortunate number of errors. These, in addition to lax punctuation and grammar, exceed the acceptable limit for typographical gaffes. Greater attention to detail would have made this dictionary a more valuable resource.

## Speaking of Beauty

In spite of its failings, Beauty Talk can be commended for its relative versatility. Cosmetics is an industry sector with a highly technical discipline-specific vocabulary and codified terminology. However, the language of cosmetics is also very expressive and imaginative, giving free rein to creativity. There is never only one way to convey an idea. Some of the more science-based terms may be confined to strictly one-on-one equivalents, but a vast majority of marketing concepts used to sell cosmetic products are based on a wealth of evocative synonyms and idiom-like expressions, which are not true idioms but figurative collocations.

To its credit, Beauty Talk does a good job of showcasing – and making available – the richness of the language of cosmetics. The sheer volume of entries in the dictionary is impressive. Each language section is divided into a general dictionary and a series of "themes", in which entries are categorized as follows: body, botanical ingredients, colors, essential oils, eyes, face, hair, lips, packaging, perfumes, skin and sun.

Many individual entries and sub-chapters of themes (e.g. "A perfume can be…") list descriptive qualifiers that are a wonderful source of inspiration. Six pages are devoted to the color palette, listing not only descriptive qualifiers of colors in general but also the names of different shades (moonlight white, mallard blue, russet brown, misty gray, honey yellow, etc.). Similarly, there is a dazzling panoply of descriptive adjectives for the skin, hair, nails, product textures and fragrances. This dictionary is teeming with great ideas that can be used to jump-start imagination and creativity.

Cosmetic translation is an engaging and vast field with tremendous potential to be a profitable source of income, a great way to learn and hone one's craft, and an outlet for creativity. While waiting for a revised edition of this long-awaited dictionary, we can only hope that it will help foster growing interest in this area, serving as a starting point for beginners and a quick, at-a-glance reference for the more seasoned translators. ■

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Agnes Meilhac is a graduate of Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) in Paris, where she earned a degree in translation. She also holds a Master of Arts in German literature from University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Arts in French literature from New York University. In 1997, she started working full-time as a freelance translator in Paris, specializing in the cosmetics and beauty care industry. Over the past 14 years, she has translated for many leading companies in the field. She is also the current editor of the New York Circle of Translators' newsletter, the Gotham Translator. Please write to agnes@beautyterm.com with any questions.

# What your Project Manager is (probably) thinking

by **Kimberlee Thorne-Waintraub**

Before I create any false expectations on this article, I want to make my own disclaimer before you read this. There is no way that my thoughts may be completely representative of any other Project Manager (hereafter "PM" or "PMs" in the plural form). However, based on my own experience doing this as my professional activity for many years, I would dare say that my opinion is not too far off from a fairly good view of what many other PMs think from time to time...

So here we go, in our attempt to get inside a PM's brain! Wish me luck…chances are you could use some.

Unless your direct client list is beating a well-trodden path from their location to yours, often breaking your door down, begging you to do language services for them that should have been delivered yesterday, chances you could use some of this helpful advice. However, if your door has been ripped apart and resembles your client's silhouette on it (like an episode from Cartoon Network), by all means, write ME back ASAP and give me your advice, which I will gladly take and run with it, not mentioning your name, for confidentiality sake!

If your path looks covered with snow (or leaves (plural of leaf) like mine), well then, let's face it - your main income sources most likely come from at least one or two PMs (hopefully more) who represent a translation agency or another similar organization, or surprise, surprise, other translators like you…

And you are most likely considered one of their "resources", meaning you are one of their "worker bees" or "soldiers", as I prefer to call members of my wonderful linguist team, or as I am often found telling my people, "Carry on faithful soldier", while encouraging someone to keep going at an odd hour of the morning, when most of the world in my parts of the Americas should be sleeping… After all, I'm the "queen bee" cracking that whip and the one who will be sending out their payment in the end, right?

Wrong! My collaborators are my partners, an extension of my own self and of the services I have to offer, and form a powerful fusion and force that when in action, is pretty unstoppable!

First of all, let me tell you who I am, and that means revealing myself at the personal level. I'm the owner of a small niche agency called Small World Language Services, whose services specialize in just 3 languages, English, Spanish and Portuguese. I'm originally from the United States, but I have lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina enough to say that my breakfast regularly consists of an Argentine drink called 'mate' and 'medialunas' (croissants in English) and 'dulce de leche' (milk jam, coined by exporters from Argentina).

Another thing – I don't have enough work to give everyone who reads this, simply due to the fact that my organization is still small, but we're powerful because we work hard, believe in what we do and have great potential to grow more than what we have done in a year (200%)! We are currently among the top 5 on proz.com this year (2011), but it's not because we're the biggest agency out there. We're just focusing on what we do best in the languages we can handle and aren't interested in offering all the world's languages and services that the others do.

Nevertheless, just because we won't always get the chance to work together doesn't make you any less valuable to me. On the contrary – my organization also does research on multicultural people, which guess what? If you're a translator, project manager, traveler, expat, or similar, you fit the mold, and I want to get to know you too! Chances are your story

*(continued on page 14)*

*(continued from page 13)*

could be on our "YouTube" channel someday if we're able to establish a relationship of trust and make it happen.

I have learned some ways to keep clients coming back over the long-term, and believe me, I want and need my clients and if possible (which I know it is), I want and need more of them...

Nonetheless, I consider myself a dedicated linguist, project manager and excellent reviewer in English. I care about quality and I want anything entrusted to us to come out as impeccable as possible, and I try to do everything it takes to get the job done, and believe me, you don't want to know what that has required so far…

This is what I've learned over the years about PMs, who, by the way, are perfectly normal people like any of us, but who have the role of being responsible for all the aspects of a project, which usually means it has been sold by a sales person, confirmed and accepted, handed over to a PM, who will then decide who gets put on each step of the project, what requirements are needed, within the budget constraints and deadline requested, oh, while pleasing the client along the way until the end, crossing their fingers and often praying that things will turn out well, meaning everyone will still have their hair and hasn't killed anyone in the process...

Geez, that whole mini job description was exhausting in itself! And believe me, it is. A PM's job is not easy at best. To the contrary, it's a high stress job that few are capable of doing well and one that requires an attention to detail, good communication and you know what else? A good sense of humor! Yes, folks, can I tell you how important that has become? You have no idea how much...

This is something I learned from a very valued collaborator located on a sunny island in the middle of the Caribbean. He knows who he is, but since he's so good, I'm keeping his name top secret or he'll get so many job offers that he'll never be available for me ... But we have grown professionally together throughout the last few years, and he has been the perfect collaborator: trustworthy, good communicator, excellent team member, and does all this with an extremely eccentric sense of humor, even when he sends his invoices. He, along with his wonderful and loving partner in crime (his wife), who is also a great translator, make a great partnership and are people who I have learned to love and appreciate so much…

My wonderful collaborators have taught me how to be a more effective PM, better person and have blessed my life greatly in so many ways, gotten me some cool gifts from other places and some very delicious meals, by following these steps that could easily be named "The Top 10 top secret tips of Working in the Translation Industry":

1) Create a relationship of trust from the beginning. This goes for both sides. Can you yourself do the job well or not? You need to tell me the truth of what's going on with the project, any questions you may have, and if anything goes less than perfect, let's work together to try and make it better. Don't lie to me and tell me that you can do a job when you're lying in a hammock in the middle of the Bahamas, or put one of your substandard colleagues on the project instead of you. That creates mistrust and makes me think you're only in this for the money, which by the way cannot be hidden once we do the Quality Assurance step… On the other hand, if you do a great job, you'll not only get paid for the first job, but you'll get repeat work from me, and probably lots of it...
2) Respond quickly to job offerings. The saying, "The early bird gets the worm" is so true. If you need to, invest in a mobile device that allows you to communicate quickly. Then be communicative throughout the project until the end. Please, don't leave me hanging in the middle of a project wondering whether you've either been checked into the hospital or your private jet has been hijacked to the middle of some unnamed island that's not even on the world or local map. Which leads me to my next point…
3) Communicate! Through an email, a phone call, a public computer, text message, mobile device, through someone else or smoke signals if necessary. As long as you can breathe, you can communicate somehow to me and

let me know what's going on with the project I've entrusted to you. I as a PM cannot fathom how you can just disappear off the face of the earth, unless you really did get sucked into the inner bowels of the earth, due to some natural disaster, i.e., an unforeseen circumstance has truly happened, which does happen once in a blue moon anyway, and those circumstances do happen. I just hope it doesn't happen while you're committed to one of my projects!

4) Make me remember you, but for good things. I've worked with so many people over the years, but unless we do a few successful projects together, I probably won't remember you and you'll get lost in the database. It's not on purpose! I'm probably the one missing out on your great services.

5) Be a flexible team player. We aren't always given the best budgets or deadlines to work with, and sometimes the jobs come trickling in instead of steady volume on a regular basis. We need people who can understand our clients' needs. On the other hand, when better budgets are given to us, we'll be glad to pass that onto you since you're a real team player and we can count on you, and choose to reward you with a higher rate whenever possible.

6) When things go wrong, as they will at times, admit when you were wrong and the work wasn't up to standard. This shows a PM maturity and responsibility on your part and demonstrates that you care about the quality of the work you're delivering, and it can oftentimes recover a lost client. Ask them for the reviewed file, so you can check it yourself. You don't prove anything to a PM by arguing that you were right and the work was in good shape, when it wasn't… Help me resolve what's not going right. If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

7) Be nice and don't forget your manners. This is something I shouldn't have to tell you, but as the world is getting more and more competitive and resources of all kind (food, money, oil, etc.) are getting scarcer, I cannot emphasize this enough. Be grateful for the work you get, and thank the people who give you work. After all, those people are our treasures and a means to make our dreams come true. They deserve to be treated well and yes, loved and pampered.

8) Show gratitude for the work received. I know what you're thinking. She just said that, so why is she saying that again? This means thanking the person who gives you work, offering your services from time to time by saying you're available and offering new services that can be in demand, and saying thank you for the payment. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Yes folks, this gesture can go a long way, believe me.

9) Be ethical and don't contact or steal my clients. As a linguist, you are often entrusted with confidential or sensitive information. Do not betray this trust. Sooner or later, this will come back to haunt you. The Golden Rule: Do unto others what you'd have them do until you. and the reverse, Don't do unto others what you don't want them to do unto you. Enough said…

10) Find humor while doing work. Just this last weekend, while working on a very large rush job, a colleague of mine and I came up with the term "Vatman", which means "Very Accurate Translator" and "Vatmobile", which means my translator's laptop. These are ways that I encourage my people to keep doing a good job and that also make them want to keep working with me while making a normally stressful job a bit more enjoyable…

I hope you've found this article helpful and a bit amusing. I welcome your comments and hope to get to know all of you over time through this group. ■

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

US expat Kimberlee Thorne-Waintraub owns Small World Language Services, a translation agency specializing in English, Spanish and Portuguese. As well as running the business, Kimberlee is a project manager, English reviewer, quality assurance expert and content writer, and has published various articles on the translation and localization industry. Currently living in Buenos Aires, she is an accomplished musician, an avid reader and the wearer of many other hats. For more information, see www.smallworldlanguages.net or email info@smallworldlanguages.net. Small World Language Services is a corporate member of the ATA (American Translators Association).

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