



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Marian S. Greenfield



Marian S.
Greenfield

Dear NYCT members,

As most of you know by now, the NYCT has been experiencing some real difficulties, especially in recruiting and retaining officers. At this time, the entire Board has been appointed to serve on an interim basis and will be replaced with the March election (see the candidates' statements elsewhere in this issue)...That includes me, President-Elect Lori Coleman, Program Director Margarite Heintz Montez, and our newest appointees, Treasurer Lyn Dominguez, and Secretary Nicole Lisa. (Treasurer Deborah Lockhart resigned in January and Interim Secretary Gloria Barragan resigned in February)... Thanks to all of them for stepping up to help the Circle and to the candidates who agreed to carry the torch in the new administration.

My main goals in the couple of months I will serve as interim President are to help NYCT get back on track with communications with members, the election process, dues collection and other finances and accounting. I had hoped to have finalized 2006 and 2007 financial statements published in this issue, but that was not possible. We're still tracking down some entries. Hopefully

they will be published in the March issue.

We have come up with a temporary fix for the communications issues, and you all should now be getting both hard copy and e-mail from the NYCT, provided your information is up-to-date in the database (more on that below). However, a permanent solution requires modifications to the NYCT website, and we have been seeking bids to get them done... This has been necessary for at least two years now, but we have made considerable progress in the past two months and hope that this will be resolved early in the incoming administration.

After some research with ATA headquarters, I found out that the NYCT forfeited its 2004 ATA chapter rebate because the check was never cashed, and the 2005 Chapter Report was never filed, so we did not get a 2005 rebate either (each representing a few thousand dollars in

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Please submit all contributions as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word format. Articles should be limited to 1500 words or less.

The Gotham Translator is published six times a year by the New York Circle of Translators, Inc., a chapter of the American Translators Association. The deadline for acceptance of contributions is the first day of the month preceding the month of publication. Articles and other materials should be e-mailed to the Editor at editor@nyctranslators.org. The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or the policies of the NYCT or the ATA. All material submitted is subject to editing and becomes the property of the New York Circle of Translators unless accompanied by a copyright statement.

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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. The "Members' Voice" section of each issue is devoted to translations, stories, and poetry written by members.

In general, articles and other submissions should be limited to around 1500 words. All text should be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word format. We prefer unpublished contributions. In the case of previously published submissions, please advise us of this fact at the time of submission. ■

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President's Message (cont'd)

revenue). We managed to file the 2005 ATA chapter report in January, within the two-year deadline, so we will get our 2005 rebate. The 2006 report was filed promptly, so those revenues were in place, and the 2007 report has already been filed, so we're in good shape there.

Many of these problems are due to a lack of continuity on the Board, which should be helped by the update of the Chapter Handbook, which is underway by a committee headed by Past President Guylaine Laperriere.

Now, back to updating your information in the database. Each member is responsible for entering and updating his/her information, including snail mail and e-mail addresses in the NYCT database. One thing to remember is not to create duplicate profiles, but rather to update your existing profile. This should be facilitated by our new policy of printing your membership number on your Gotham mailing label (an idea taken from ATA's practice).

Ballots will be mailed out on March 1 by Nominating Committee chair Rosene Zaros. She will tally the votes and results will be announced on April 1, when the new officers will take office.

It has been an honor and a pleasure stepping back into my NYCT Presidential shoes, and I wish the incoming Board the best.

Here's to a revitalized NYCT.

Marian S. Greenfield ■

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

ABOUT OUR CHALLENGING AND CHALLENGED PROFESSION

by Rosene Zaros



When I talk with people at meetings and other gatherings, the thing that stands out the most is that we genuinely enjoy what we are doing. I have never met a translator who dreaded the thought of going to work. The problems we face lie elsewhere. In fact, the very fact that we love our work may make it harder for us to question the structure of our professional organizations and what we legitimately have a right to expect from them.

Out of curiosity I went to the bylaws of the three professional organizations that I think have the most impact on us: ATA (American Translators Association), NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators), and, of course, our very own NYCT (New York Circle of Translators). Their purposes were similar, but their ranking order was somewhat different as was the extent to which these purposes were delineated.

ATA's purpose is remarkable for its ambiguity: "ATA is a professional association founded to advance the translation and interpreting professions and foster the professional development of individual translators and interpreters. Its 10,000 members in more than 80 countries include translators, interpreters, teachers, project managers, web and software developers, language company owners, hospitals, universities, and government agencies." All that is well and good, but what does it mean to you, as a translator or interpreter, on a day to day basis? And, do you have any voice in how this goal is achieved?

NAJIT puts "promoting professional standards of performance and integrity" in first place, while "achiev[ing] wider recognition for the profession of judiciary interpretation and translation" comes in second. Again, what exactly does that mean? In reality, it would seem that "recognition" is the very least of our problems. "Translator" and "Interpreter" are today household words.

I am happy to say that Article III of the NYCT bylaws states as its first purpose: "to advocate and promote the recognition of translating and interpreting as professions, and to *defend* and *support* the interests and concerns of professional translators and interpreters" (my emphasis).

We are working in a profession that is both challenging and challenged. There are numerous problems ranging from social issues such as homosexual translators in the military to political issues such as the voting structure of ATA, our largest professional organization, and how that affects the way problems are handled. Should ATA take a position on issues such as the fate of all the translators who helped the

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A Word From the Editor (cont'd)

US in Iraq? Should ATA be involved with any of the issues that make translation a challenged profession? Should ATA take a position when translators such as Mohamed Yousry are accused of exceeding the bounds of their mandate as translators or interpreters and engaging in criminal acts or abetting criminal acts? Or is it sufficient that they merely “advance the translation and interpreting professions”? And, if so, what, exactly, does that mean? And, most important of all, do you have any voice in those issues?

In this edition and subsequent editions we will be featuring articles that could be called controversial – another word that could be translated as “going against accepted ideology”. It has always been, and will continue to be, the Gotham’s policy to print all sides of the challenging issues that confront us, and all comments and criticisms will, in the spirit of the highest ideals of journalism, be given due consideration. Up to this point, the NYCT Board has been very supportive of this goal of free and open discussion. We hope that it will continue.

But, ultimately, if we are to see significant change, not just in our profession, but in the world, we must take the time to get involved, to demand a voice in the decisions that determine how we live and work. In the end, it’s all about you! ■

SOME ADDITIONAL WORDS

by **Rosene Zaros**

It seems that the answer to the question I brought up about what we, as translators, might legitimately expect from our professional organizations, has already been answered by ATA President, Jiri Stejskal. The answer is both insulting and demeaning and should spark outrage against an organization that professes to “*advance the translation and interpreting professions*”.

In his President’s message entitled “Who We Are, Who We Are Not”, appearing in the January edition of the ATA Chronicle, Mr. Stejskal makes it absolutely clear that not all “we’s” are equal, and it can be inferred that the “we” in the title of his article probably does not include “you”, unless you happen to be one of the 2500 active and corresponding members out of the more than 10,000 actual members of the ATA.

According to Mr. Stejskal, you should not think that your membership entitles you to “*certain services and benefits provided in exchange for membership dues...[rather it] means that you are part of a large community of translators and interpreters...and to develop your skills as a translator or an interpreter.*” Initially, one might think he is making a somewhat less than eloquent plea in the style of JFK: *Ask not what your association can do for you...That, fellow translators, is definitely not the case.*

He continues, and I quote the entire paragraph for the benefit of those who may not be ATA members and, thus, do not have access to The Chronicle:

“Speaking of skills, let’s also look at who we are not. We are not an association of professional translators and interpreters. Paying membership dues does not make anyone a professional. This is a conundrum that ATA’s Public Relations Committee is facing when addressing the media, because while we want to present ATA as the “go to” place, we cannot claim that all ATA members are professionals. Our Association welcomes students and new entrants to the profession who benefit from the experience of those who are professionals. If you consider yourself a professional, show it by getting and maintaining certification or pursue active membership status through the active membership review process if no certification is currently offered for your language combinations(s), and help others to become professionals.”

I cannot think right now of any word other than flabbergasted to describe my initial reaction to Mr. Stejskal’s words that the American Translators Association is “*not an association of professional translators and interpreters*”. But when I read more of his words, I understood better why the President of this 10,000-member association does not believe it is an organization of translation and interpreting professionals.

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THE POLITICALLY NON-POLITICAL POLITICS OF THE AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION

by **Bernie Bierman**

The following entry was made in the minutes of the meeting of the ATA Board of Directors held on July 21, 2007:

"13. Discussion of ATA's Position on the Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy as It Affects Translators and Interpreters/ How Do We Handle Requests for ATA to Take Policy Positions

An ATA member asked the Board whether ATA would be taking a position on the question of gay and lesbian translators and interpreters being dismissed from the military. This question was used as an example for a general discussion of when it is appropriate for ATA to take a position on an issue.

First, it was agreed that there are at least the following two ways that ATA could take a position:

- (1) The ATA Board can take a position on an issue through a majority vote on a motion.*
- (2) The ATA membership can take a posi-*

tion on an issue through a majority vote on a resolution submitted by a group of ATA members for consideration at one of the official annual meetings dictated by the bylaws and traditionally held during the Annual Conference on Thursday and Friday.

Secondly, it was agreed it was not appropriate for the Board to take a position on a political issue. This, of course, leads to the difficulty of distinguishing between political and other types of issues, such as humanitarian issues or professional issues.

By the end of the discussion, it was agreed (a) that the ATA Board would not take a position on the question of gay and lesbian translators and interpreters being expelled from the military and (b) that the question of how best to deal with future requests for ATA to take a position should be revisited at a later date".

The action (or better said, lack of action) taken by the ATA Board on the issue of

homosexual translators and interpreters serving in the United States military (and perhaps also in the Department of Defense, the Departments of the Army and Navy, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National

Security Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation), does speak volumes about ATA's long-standing policy of avoiding issues – both "political" and "non-political" – that are deemed "controversial" and therefore perceived as a threat to the image and to the good and welfare of the association.

From the above-transcribed minutes, we see that the ATA officers and directors openly acknowledged a problem with distinguishing between "political and other types of issues, such as humanitarian... or professional..."

However, it should be equally noted that the ATA officers and directors were quick to dismiss the matter outright, rather than to continue discussion of it, or even pose the issue to the membership for discussion and possibly guidance.

What is more interesting and perhaps more significant here is that the ATA Board members saw only two methods by which an issue of this nature (or of any other nature) could be handled: (a) by internal action of the Board itself, or (b) by means of a resolution offered by a group of ATA members for voting at the Annual Meeting. On the issue of homosexual translators and interpreters serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, the ATA Board decided to go to option (a). But even option (b) raises some interesting points, unless of

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The Politically Non-Political Politics (cont'd)

course the Board does not subscribe to the concept that its policies should reflect the overall thinking, philosophies and wishes of the *entire membership*, which in the case of ATA means some 10,500 people:

In the American Translators Association, there are only about 2500 members who have the right to vote, and of those (approximately) 2500, only about 20% *actually participate in elections*, i.e., take the time and trouble to cast ballots. Thus, out of some 10,500 members, a mere 5% actually speak for the remaining 95%. (In the 2007 elections, 522 or 21% of the voting membership cast ballots, and those 522 constitute 4.9% of the total ATA membership.)

Thus, when the ATA Board looks to a "group of ATA members" to offer a resolution and a "majority" to enact or reject the resolution, it is obviously talking about those who have the right to vote (a small minority in relation to the total number of members) and who actually do take the time to vote.

Given the fact that historically-speaking, the voting membership has almost consistently supported Board initiatives and policy, it becomes easy – and convenient – for the Board to sweep what is in its view a "controversial" issue under the rug, and the rug in the case of the American Translators Association is not only thick, it has big-time soundproofing capabilities: The ATA keeps a very tight control on what it wants its members to see and hear, and what it doesn't want its members to see and hear. Image always counts. And

the possibility of an "unruly" discussion can be most detrimental to that image.

* * * * *

At its meeting of July 21-22, 2007, the ATA Board stated that it was not appropriate for it to take a position on a "political" issue. Past Boards going all the way back to the earliest days of the association claimed that it was inappropriate for the association to become involved in *partisan* political issues, a concept that is a little more clearly defined than just plain "political" issues. After all, what is a "political" issue? As already seen, the ATA Board readily admits that it cannot define the term.

Suppose a Federal law was enacted that mandated that all court interpreters and translators working in or for the Federal courts had to be native-born Americans with at least one native-born American parent, in effect putting out of business thousands of translators and interpreters who fail to meet that qualification. Would the ATA Board view this as a "political" issue and quietly sweep it under its thick rug? Or would this be an issue that would escape the label of "political" through the application of some classic Byzantine thinking (at which ATA Boards appear extremely adept)? Or suppose an organization like "U.S. English" was able to realize just half of its stated goals to elimi-

nate all foreign languages from American life, would the ATA sit back and accept this condition because to fight such extremism would be viewed as engaging in "politics"?

Notwithstanding the current Board's agreement that it is inappropriate for it to

take a position on a "political" issue, the history of the ATA is rife with positions taken on "political" issues: Very early in its history, the association had to deal with the politics of a Soviet Union spy in its ranks, a situation that engendered undercover surveillance of the association by the FBI (the first of two known occasions when this police agency deemed ATA worthy of surveillance).

In the American Translators Association, there are only about 2500 members who have the right to vote, and of those (approximately) 2500, only about 20% actually participate in elections.

When in 1964 a dissident group of ATA members vociferously advocated the concept of state licensing of translators – a "political issue" if there ever was one – and even had one of New York's big-muscle law firms lined up to help them through the catacombs of the state legislature in Albany, the ATA Board of Directors did not hesitate a minute to get into the ring with this dissident group on what was clearly a "political" issue.

And the association's Board of Directors certainly did not cry "political issue" in 1970 when it moved to prevent the association's duly elected President-elect from assuming the presidency because of his

involvement with a group of anti-Vietnam war activists who were plotting (with FBI encouragement) to burn records of a local draft board in Camden, NJ. The notorious "Cunningham affair" was clearly about the highly-charged politics that emanated from another highly controversial war that the United States was involved in.

It can even be argued that the 4-year investigation by the Federal Trade Commission in the early 1990's into ATA's alleged price-fixing activities was a "political" issue.

The history of the American Translators Association, that is, the real history, not the one that the organization is currently planning to fabricate for promoting its precious image, clearly demonstrates that from the association's earliest days to modern times, ATA Boards have indulged in and/or responded to "political" issues when it was convenient or propitious, and avoided those issues when it was deemed inconvenient and less propitious. The real history of the organization clearly reveals all sorts of "political" activity. (What the fabricated history will show is another matter.)

The massive terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the United States, the nation's retaliation against Al Qa'eda forces in Afghanistan in October of that year and the invasion of Iraq (or for those offended by the word "invasion", the preemptive military strike) in March of 2003, did something that all of the efforts of the American Translators Association in all of the past years could never do: *It made the*

words "translator" and "interpreter" household terms. The words were heard almost daily and nightly on television news and seen with the same frequency in the print media.

This is certainly in contrast to less turbulent days when the word "translator" was associated with Berlitz and/or the United Nations. But, as said, the events of the last six years have thrust the words "translation", "translator" and "interpreter" into a public position heretofore unknown. As recently as January 13, 2008, an editorial appearing in the New York Times stated: *"Many important issues have not been fully examined. What is to become of the thousands of Iraqis who helped America and its coalition partners as translators, drivers and fixers and will face retribution" ..*

While I am sure that there must be smiles of satisfaction among ATA officials over public awareness of translation and translators, there is a downside from which they have more than obviously run, and that is clearly the charitable description.

The reaction demonstrated by ATA officials to the linking of the words "translator" and "torture" does not merit very much charity in the opinion of this correspondent. On the contrary, both the reaction and action of the members of the ATA Board of Directors, and particularly that of the association's then-President, Marian S. Greenfield was *politically and blatantly partisan.*

The issue of translators and torture is political only by extension. The core elements are *humanitarianism* and *professionalism*, which the ATA Board says

are clearly distinct from "political" issues. (There are also questions of legality ascribed to the matter of torture.) But when it came to the question of torture and translators, the Board conveniently threw humanitarianism and professionalism (and legality) straight into the dumpster, decreeing that torture was a political issue. Having so decreed, it proceeded to indulge in and foist upon the membership its own brand of political thinking, to wit:

When an anti-torture resolution was offered by ATA member Aaron Ruby for consideration by the membership, the Board reacted first by truncating Mr. Ruby's resolution (unilaterally eliminating the numerous references that he had incorporated into the resolution), and then went on to urge the voting membership (deliberately excluding the non-voting membership - the majority constituency of the ATA - from even seeing the resolution merely for information purposes) to reject the resolution outright. Totally discarding the fact that numerous professional societies whose members might be involved or implicated in acts of torture or prisoner abuse had already enacted anti-torture resolutions, the ATA Board (initially) announced that it was against any such resolution. One must truly ask here, "And the initial reaction and action of the ATA was not an open act of political partisanship"?

[It was only in response to pressure from both certain more influential members of the ATA Board and members-at-large, did the ATA Board retract its directive to the

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The Politically Non-Political Politics (cont'd)

voting membership to reject the resolution, offering its own more watered-down version. The voting membership eventually gave its approval by a very narrow margin to the Board's version of the anti-torture resolution.]

However, even there, the ATA's openly political machinations and partisanship did not cease. The watered-down anti-torture resolution was placed in a mausoleum deep inside ATA's website. Happily for the curious, there is a search engine available for navigating through the tombs, and keying in the word "torture" will ultimately bring one to the resolution. Clearly and more than obviously, the anti-torture resolution does not stand on equal footing with some of the association's other *pronunciamentos*. And that too is the charitable description.

On June 8, 2007, the very same New York Times ran an Op-Ed piece by former Navy Petty Officer Stephen Benjamin that described in detail what it means to be not just a military translator, but a homosexual military translator. (Mr. Benjamin was subsequently dismissed from the Navy because of his homosexuality, about which he was neither asked nor did he tell anyone in authority.)

To be absolutely fair to the ATA and its policy-makers, the issue of homosexual translators and interpreters in the U.S. military is a knotty question, and those who would demand that the association take a position on it or make some kind of statement (*pro* or *con*) would also do well to

give the matter some deeper thought.

Clearly, the issue involved here is *not* about homosexual translators and/or interpreters in the armed services; it is rather about homosexual people in the military, whether such persons serve in the combat arms or in support units, whether they are infantrymen or sonar operators or artillery FO's or medics or helmsmen, whether they are at the low end of the enlisted ranks or the high end of the officer corps. Indeed, a statement made or position taken by the association on the issue of homosexual translators and/or interpreters in the U.S. military has to be in effect a statement about or a position on the military establishment's *global policy* regarding all homosexuals in its ranks, a policy that is popularly known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell".

My criticism of the American Translators Association in this area is not about its failure to take a position on the issue. Rather, my criticism of the organization is about its deliberate hiding of the issue and outright refusal to discuss it with its members (even merely for the sake of debate) or allow its members to discuss it among themselves (again merely for the sake of debate). What harm can come from the ATA officials informing the membership that the matter has been raised and that the policy of the association is currently so-and-so? Why pretend that it doesn't exist? Why the reluctance - or perhaps the fear - to have an open discussion about it? If it is a so-called "non-issue", then why not allow the consensus to determine that it is a non-issue? What is all this secrecy about?

Like it or not, translators (written and oral) and translation have become part of many issues in today's world. Translators and translation are connected to many controversial issues like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the worldwide efforts to combat political terrorism; translators (written and oral) and translation are connected to numerous socio-political issues, immigration and bilingualism or multilingualism being just mere examples. I do not see how the American Translators Association can continue to ignore those issues and remain a viable and authentic part of a very real world. Worse, I do not see how the association can continue to suppress all discussion about issues which it gratuitously labels "controversial", unless of course that is the way the members want it and like it. And if that is so, then all of my arguments and pleas for open discussion aren't worth a wooden nickel. I hope it's not true, but it could very well be that the members of the American Translators Association much prefer the sounds of silence. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bernie Bierman is the author of "A Translator-Warrior Speaks: A Personal History of the American Translators Association, 1959-70", which is the only published history of the ATA. He was Managing Editor of "Translation News" (1989-1995) and has written over 250 articles on various aspects of the U.S. translation industry. In addition, he was President of AdEx Translations International, Inc., and assisted in establishing the translation studies program at New York University. He is currently a semi-retired freelance translator, dividing his time between his homes in Pawling, NY and Marco Island, FL.

THE TRANSLATOR-WRITER OR THE WRITER-TRANSLATOR OR THE WRITER WHO HAPPENS TO BE A TRANSLATOR

by Bernie Bierman

I would like to begin this essay with a little story.

I once had a friend and neighbor in the town in which I lived for over 30 years. His name was Jerry and by profession he was a book editor. Since the earliest days of our acquaintanceship, Jerry was aware of what I did for a living. Indeed, Jerry would often talk about some language issues to me that were related to his own line of work, but interestingly if not curiously, he addressed those issues in a manner or tone as if he were speaking to a non-linguist. Indeed, there were many occasions when I was tempted to say, "Hello, Jerry, remember what I do for a living?" But I allowed his unawareness (or ignorance, if you will) to go by the board.

I used to write an occasional political observer piece for the local newspaper. One day following the publication of one of my commentaries, he called me. "My gosh, you write quite well", he said. He was most obviously not referring to the content of my commentary, but to the vocabulary, grammar and syntax thereof. I

could no longer remain discreet in my response to his comment. I answered, "Thank you, Jerry, what in bloody hell do you think I do for a living?" He was totally mystified, if not outright shocked. He asked me why I was (a) annoyed, (b) asking the question in the first place and (c)

what my occupation had to do with my writing ability.

Here was a man – a highly educated man – in the publishing and writing business, and he had no idea whatsoever, not a clue, of what a translator is, what a translator does, let alone of what the essence of a transla-

tor is. But we can forgive Jerry and all the Jerrys for their unawareness about and ignorance of translators. But can we grant the same forgiveness to translators themselves, hordes of whom have no clue, like my old friend Jerry, as to what it means to be a translator, or for that matter, what a translator is really all about.

I have often said and written, much to the annoyance of many of my translator-colleagues, that there is a great deal of pathology operating in translators. And one characteristic of that pathology is that

most translators really don't understand the nature and essence of what they do. Indeed, if they understood that nature and essence, they would not, among many other things, be wasting their time with frivolous comparisons to other occupations, trades, professions, and they certainly would not be expending energy over trying to emulate certain characteristics that are very particular to those other occupations, trades and professions.

I would like to believe that there are some translators out there in this vast world who think of themselves as translators the way I think of myself as a translator. But, unless I am flooded with thousands of letters, telephone calls, faxes and e-mails, I must consider myself as one of the very few translators who knows precisely what he is. And as a translator, what am I? I am a writer. Period. No paragraph.

Yes, that's what I do for a living. I write. And in the event you weren't paying close attention, allow me to repeat: *Yes, that's what I do for a living. I write.*

OK, along comes a translator or someone else who is in the writing or publishing or communications business, and says, "You're not a writer; you're just saying in another language the words and thoughts

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The Translator-Writer... (cont'd)

of other people. You're a kind of parrot. A writer is someone who writes original thought. A writer creates".

To that, I respond. "*Equine detritus on rye toast and hold the*

mayo". My writing as a translator is as creative as that of the person who wrote the words in the original (source) language. And it makes no difference, absolutely no difference in what arena the translator is operating: fine literature, poetry,

industrial and commercial or historical or scientific texts, etc., etc., etc. *The translator writes and creates.* The creative process never ceases because *that is the very nature and essence of translation.* Translation is not a word-matching game (one of the very few points on which there was once universal agreement by translators; of course that was before the age of computer-assisted translation).

The translator is a creator and a creative person, and I don't give a hoot whether we're talking about someone who is translating a Swedish patent into English about a vibrator or someone translating James Joyce's "Ulysses" into French, or someone translating marketing documentation from Spanish about Cuban cigars (documentation that may also include an

historical narrative on cigar-making in Cuba and the Caribbean).

But that very same pathology and/or psychology of the translator, and particularly that of the translator engaged in so-called

industrial translation, impedes the translator from recognizing, seeing and understanding the creative elements involved in his or her work. It is so painfully evident from all of the literature and all the so-called translator testing and "credentialing" programs that have been generated in the industry in the past two or three, if

not four and five decades that translators don't, can't and refuse to see themselves as writers.

Clearly, if translators viewed and thought of themselves as writers, and hence artists of language, they would not demand or wallow in so-called formal "credentialing" systems. They would outright reject demands to cloak themselves in garments that have impressive but meaningless labels like "certified" or "accredited". People who are engaged in art forms don't need "credentialing", because most of them readily understand - and accept - that evaluation of an art form is overwhelmingly subjective. Oh, yes, there are things in writing, in art, in music, in acting, and in translation that are "correct" or "incorrect". But those "corrects" and "incor-

rects" constitute objective minorities in an ocean of subjective majorities.

However, translators refuse to acknowledge that vast ocean of subjectivities, particularly those engaged in industrial translation. Why? The only answer I can think of is that if you don't understand the nature of your work, you cannot see the forest for the trees. I have met perhaps a handful of industrial translators who view themselves as writers; all the rest view themselves as something else. And what is that something else? Usually, it is an extension of some other occupation, trade or profession. And that will always be manifested by, for example, the medical translator using his or her type of (translation) work as the model for all other forms of translation; ditto the legal translator; ditto the engineering translator; ditto the computer science translator; ditto the accounting & finance translator. This viewing of a veritable galaxy through the eye of a sparrow has given rise to the rigidities that we see today in translator thinking, and worse in translator action.

It is through the combination of ignorance of the nature and essence of their work and the general non-recognition of that work (and its attendant skills and TALENT) by other occupations, trades and professions, including the profession of writing, that translators have devised this peculiar defensive mechanism of evaluating, grading and classifying their own. And worse, this reaction has brought with it the notion - absent from every other art

I have met perhaps a handful of industrial translators who view themselves as writers; all the rest view themselves as something else.

form, including the art of writing - that *only translators have the wherewithal (and the right, if you will) to judge the work of another translator*. A non-translator may not and must not be allowed to act as judge, for after all, in the minds of such translator-judges, translation is really not about writing, i.e., an art form; it is a science with clear rights and wrongs, with clear "do's" and "don'ts, with clear and defined boundaries.

I do not owe any fellow translator a good performance. I do not have to prove my abilities, my skills, my TALENT to any other translator. The only performance I owe is to my reader, my client. And if some translator tells me that my reader or client is absent the qualifications to make a judgment, then my response is "*Then solely on the basis of qualifications, you are disqualified from going to a museum or a concert or from reading a book and rendering an opinion about what you saw or heard or read*".

And conversely, no translator owes me a performance. If his or her reader or client likes the performance and I don't, then it is the reader's or client's opinion that counts.

One of the most wonderful aspects of

In translation, I revel and bathe in the freedom to view an expression in a source language and choose from a menu of 100 different ways to convey it into the target language, depending on the surrounding scenery.

translation, i.e., of writing, is freedom. The freedom to choose words that one feels are most appropriate, are most suitable, are most tasteful or even tasty. In translation, I revel and bathe in the freedom to view an expression in a source language and choose from a menu of 100 different ways to convey it into the target language, depending on the surrounding scenery. And if my fellow translator does not like my choice of expression, of words, of structure, I equally revel and bathe in the freedom of being able to say "Buzz off, Charley, my reader loved it".

But the translator we are seeing in today's world doesn't want that. He or she wants 1 or 2 choices for that source language expression. After all, if translation is a science and we are going to be recognized for our scientific approach and endeavors, then we cannot have all of this extraneous noise.

According to modern translation doctrine or dogma, particularly that advanced in industrial translation circles, the simple Japanese word "Arigato" (followed by those words that sound like "don't touch my moustache") must always be "Thank you very much" or "Thank you". We cannot allow "Much appreciated", or "Much obliged", or "I am indebted to you", or

"Please accept my deepest thanks", or "Thanks mucho" (the Japanese do have some of the most outstanding interpreters of the musical genre known as "Latin Salsa"), or "I truly want to thank you", and so on *ad infinitum*. "Vive la différence" must always be "Long live the difference". We cannot have and must not have "Thank heavens for little and big girls" or "Thank heavens for little and big boys" or "Thank you, God, for making penises and vaginas" or "May the sexual twain never meet" or (if one wants to mock political correctness) "May gender differentiation continue unobstructed". I would truly like to know which of these (and at least 25 more I can think of) is "right", which is "wrong", which is "accurate", which is "not accurate", which is "acceptable, which is "unacceptable".

I would have to admit that I have not been very successful in my long battle to raise the consciousness of translators as to the linguistic freedoms that are their birthright by dint of being writers. Indeed, I have lost that battle, as I continue to see translators year after year scurrying to wrap themselves into worthless garments with their superficially impressive labels, and then strut around like peacocks. And strut they do, make no mistake about that. But with the battle lost, I am perfectly content to sit on the sidelines with my wonderful freedom and my awareness of what I am as a translator and writer, and smile and say, "Hey, all of them there emperors ain't got no clothes". ■

ELECTION OF OFFICERS STATEMENTS OF CANDIDATES

CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT EDNA DITARANTO



Edna
Ditaranto

Nineteen years ago, I proudly served as President of The New York Circle of Translators. Since then, I have had a very light involvement with the Circle (a few monthly meetings, Holiday Dinners, Summer BBQ-Picnics – many of which my husband and I cooked) because I was devoting my time to building up my translation company, which I sold to my partner in 2006. Back to being a full-time translator again, I decided to be a more active member of the Circle. Last year, I worked on the ATA Certification Sitting, which took place in June, in cooperation with New York University, which donated the room free of charge.

I was saddened to hearing about the Circle's situation at the beginning of the year, and thought that I should do anything I could to help it.

The Interim Board decided that the Circle would be better served by a former President, who would be experienced in the Circle's business in order to guide and support the New Board for the remaining of 2008.

Once again, I proudly accepted the challenge. I know a lot has changed since 1990 B.I. (Before Internet), but I believe that I have also grown since then, both personally and professionally.

As President, I will strive to unite, guide and support the new Board and to focus on bringing stability and continuity to the Circle. I also plan to get members involved by listening to what they want and need, and by trying to deliver it to the extent that it is possible.

Our Circle has suffered a little setback, but I believe that we can easily overcome it by uniting our forces and resources and by forging ahead to the future. I am looking forward to seeing many of you at future Circle events (both veteran and new members).

CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT LORI COLMAN



Lori
Colman

I am honored to receive the nomination for President-Elect of the New York Circle of Translators. My love of and interest in translation and the translation industry blossomed in graduate school while I was pursuing a Master's in Spanish and Hispanic Literature. While getting my Master's I simultaneously earned my first translation certificate from Binghamton University's Translation Research and Instruction Program (TRIP).

Being even more enamored of translation after graduating, I knew that I was meant to work in the field. Shortly after I graduated, I got a job at Rennert Translation Group as Project Coordinator and have moved up to Assistant Director of Translation Services. I have been with the company for more than seven years. I feel that working for a translation company gives me a unique perspective because I can act as both translator and manager and I believe that these two roles are essential to the organization. While working at Rennert, I also earned a certificate in Spanish>English translation from NYU's School of Continuing and Professional Studies.

I joined the New York Circle of Translators in 2002 and have always felt a sense of belonging and purpose. I have made several friends and contacts that will last a lifetime. About 3 years ago, I decided to serve the Circle by volunteering to be on its Nominating

Committee. I took great pleasure in being able to give something back to the organization and have decided to take that dedication one step further by running for President-Elect. I have spoken at meetings and enjoy giving people the benefit of my experience. I am a member of the ATA and have attended several conferences and professional workshops. While on the Board of the Circle, I will strive to provide members with occasions to network and learn as much as they can about their profession. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be on the Board of this wonderful organization and will help to make this year the best ever for the Circle.

CANDIDATE FOR SECRETARY **NICOLE LISA**



Nicole
Lisa

I am honored to be nominated for Secretary of the NYCT. The Circle has been an invaluable resource for me since I joined in 2002, the same year I started working as a translator. It's been a place to meet colleagues and friends, TO compare notes and work stories, and to learn and grow as a translator. As Secretary it would be an honor for me to contribute to the organization so that it can continue to be there for newcomers and long-term-translators alike.

To tell you a little about myself: I completed the NYU certificate in Spanish to English translation last year. My background is with non-profit organizations in human rights and women's rights. I continue to translate in those areas, and this year I am taking on more legal translation work as well. I live in Brooklyn with my Chilean rock-star husband.

CANDIDATE FOR TREASURER **LYN DOMINGUEZ**

It is certainly an honor to be nominated for Treasurer of the New York Circle of Translators, and as Interim Treasurer I am grateful for the opportunity to be more closely connected to the group and for the challenge of the work.

I was drawn to translation through my love of Spanish, and was introduced to the NYCT through the New York University program in translation. I am in the beginning stages of translation as a "third career" after some years as an analyst of international financial markets and twelve and a half years as a bilingual social studies teacher in New York City public high schools. I have a B.A. in political science from the University of Michigan, a MBA in finance from the Stern School of Business at NYU, and a Certificate in General Translation from the NYU School of Continuing and Professional Studies.

If elected, I will do my best to be diligent in the work of this important organization and responsive to the needs of all the members.

CANDIDATE FOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR **MARGARITE HEINTZ MONTEZ**

I am honored to be nominated for the position of Program Director. When tapped to be interim Program Director for the New York Circle in April 2007 I did not hesitate. It is wonderful to be able to serve an organization that has helped me and many others in their professional goals. It is my hope that these past few months in which I have served have been beneficial to the NYCT members.

I came to the translation and interpretation industry after several years in advertising and news and what I learned in the first Circle meetings I attended really started me on my way. Should I be elected for the new term I shall be planning speakers and workshops that will be of benefit to all NYCT members. As always please remember that I am always open to suggestions from the membership.

CIRCLE NEWS

■ NYCT BOARD MEETING — JANUARY 21, 2008

In attendance at the meeting, which was held at the Stout Restaurant across from Penn Station on 7th Avenue, were: Marian S. Greenfield, Interim President; Margaret Altieri, Past-President; Lori Colman, Interim President-Elect; Eileen Brockbank, Past-Secretary, Member; Deborah Lockhart, Outgoing Treasurer; Margarite Heintz Montez, Interim Program Director; Gloria Barragan, Interim Secretary.

Those present discussed and attempted to resolve many of the problems that have been plaguing the Circle throughout 2007. The minutes in their entirety can be accessed at http://nyctranslators.org/Minutes_Board_Meeting_012108.pdf or simply go to our website at www.nyctranslators.org and click on the link there.



■ SPANISH LANGUAGE DIVISION 5TH MID-YEAR CONFERENCE Doubletree Hotel Philadelphia, Pennsylvania March 28-29, 2008

Come join your SPD colleagues for two days of educational sessions, and networking in the heart of Philadelphia's cultural district.

Sessions will cover topics such as:

- Legal terminology
- Interpretation in the immigration setting
- Translation strategies
- Dictionaries

- Basic and advanced TRADOS workshops
- Preparation for the ATA Certification Exam

Attendees can also take advantage of the Job Marketplace, and enjoy an evening of socializing at the Welcome Reception.

REGISTER TODAY:

<http://www.ata-divisions.org/SPD/2008/register.htm>

■ MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR UPCOMING CIRCLE MEETINGS

WHERE:

ANSI, 25 West 43rd Street, 4th Floor

WHEN:

Thursday, March 6, 2008
Tuesday, April 8, 2008
Wednesday, May 7, 2008
6:30 – 8:00 P.M.

Check your email for more details

Some Additional Words (cont'd from page 4)

In essence, Mr. Stejskal has established three membership classes: 1) a "professional" class, consisting of about 2500 members, in other words, those who have submitted either to ATA's "certification" test or to "peer review"; 2) an "apprentice" class of "students and new entrants to the profession", who may account for 10% of the total membership; and 3) all the remaining members who, without considering corporate and institutional members, total approximately 7000. And it is these 7000 who are, as Mr. Stejskal not so subtly implies, the non-professionals. And since these approximately 7000 non-professional members constitute the association's majority, Mr. Stejskal arrives at the conclusion that the American Translators Association is "not an association of professional translators and interpreters".

This class stratification of translators is an outrage. In the arts (and I like to think of translation as an art), there are two categories: *professional* and *amateur*, and neither is predicated on peer evaluation. Mr. Stejskal's message is loud and clear: if a translator chooses not to submit to ATA's vetting, that translator can never be anything more than an *amateur*. It ignores the myriad of reasons, valid or not, that a skilled and talented translator might choose not to go that route. Moreover, Mr. Stejskal's categorization applies not only to the approximately 7000 ATA "non-professional" translators, but also to the untold thousands of translators who, for one reason or another, do not belong to ATA. And, incidentally, the latter group includes some NYCT members who feel that the \$145 dues is excessive for what, in reality, ATA is giving to its members.

Although you may not be a voting member of ATA, or even a member, you can voice your opinion by sending an email to president@atanet.org. ■

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING SEMINARS

THE LANGUAGE SHOP PROJECT MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

Name of Seminar: Project Management
Date of Seminar: Saturday May 17, 2007
Registration Fee after February 15: \$135
Location: American National Standards Institute
 24 West 43rd Street, 4th Floor
 New York, NY 10036



Lana
Rachkovskaya

Ms. Lana Rachkovskaya, founder and owner of Capital Translations, Inc., has over 13 years of experience in the translations industry, providing translation and language services to the largest companies in various industries including medical, healthcare, legal, marketing and financial fields. She had a successful career both in Russia and in the United States, and actively participates and lectures at translation seminars and workshops in both countries.

Ms. Rachkovskaya's extensive experience in the translations industry includes broad knowledge and expertise in the project management aspect of the translations, including knowledge of the leading translations technology and effective methods for translations coordination and management. Over the years, Ms. Rachkovskaya trained personnel in translations companies, provided consulting and training on management, analysis and understanding of the translations workflow, as well as on the usage of translation memory tools and glossarization.

Ms. Rachkovskaya also designed translation databases for project management and took part in working on the compilation and design of computer dictionaries and machine translation tools.

- 12:30 to 1:00 p.m. Registration**
- 1-00 to 2:15 p.m. Session 1**
 Working Effectively with PDF files
 Office Equipment: Computer, E-Fax, Scanner, Blackberry
 Time Management - Multitasking. Standard Turnaround Times, Word counts
 Folder Structures, File Management
 Project Management Systems - TO3000, Projotex
- 2:20 to 3:35 p.m. Session 2**
 Other Helpful Software - ExactSpent, Trados, AnyCount, DeltaView
 Trados: TM and File Management
 Managing a project from start to finish
 Communication with Clients
 Out of the office responses
- 3:40- 4:50 p.m. Session 3**
 Invoicing
 E-mail management
 Back-up
 Professional Relationship with other translators/vendors. What you need to know:
 Freelance Agreements, POs, within 30 days payment policy
 Accounting: QuickBooks or other software to print checks.
 Maintaining your expenses: categorize all your expenses in advance.
- 4:50 to 5:00 p.m. Evaluation and Presentation of Certificates**

Contact seminars@thelanguageshop.org for registration instructions or call 646-245-4129.

THIS SEMINAR IS APPROVED BY THE AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION FOR FOUR CONTINUING EDUCATION POINTS FOR ATA-CERTIFIED PARTICIPANTS.



**THE GOTHAM
TRANSLATOR**



The New York Circle of Translators (NYCT) is a New York State not-for-profit corporation grouping independent translators and interpreters as well as companies and organizations. It is a chapter of the American Translators Association (ATA) which is, in turn, an affiliate of the International Federation of Translators (FIT).

NYCT members work in a variety of languages and specialties. Our members are committed to the exchange of ideas and mutual support. One of our goals is to educate the general public about the professional nature of interpreting and translating.

NYCT members enjoy the following benefits:

- Free monthly meetings featuring speakers on all aspects of the translation profession
- Networking opportunities at monthly dinners and annual holiday party
- Professional development workshops and seminars
- Subscription to our newsletter, The Gotham Translator
- Listings in the NYCT Online Membership Directory and the annual NYCT printed Membership Directory
- Referrals (if you indicate that you accept them, existing members may direct work requests to you or clients may contact you directly)

Visit us at www.nyctranslators.org and join online!



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