



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

WHAT I LEARNED FROM NYCT'S OUTREACH LAST FALL

by Diana Méndez

Late last fall the NYCT sent our president, Leonard Morin, and yours truly, Diana Méndez, your newly elected program director, on an outreach mission. We spoke at NYU and Hunter College to groups of students in various translation and interpreting programs about the profession. There were also stragglers who weren't enrolled in any T&I programs, but were nonetheless interested. And, sure, they learned about what it means to freelance, project manage, interpret, get started, and a lot of other essential stuff. But I want to focus this article on what I, what we, learned from them and what this means for our profession broadly and our very own Circle, more specifically. The Circle has a great opportunity, several opportunities, in fact. I will argue that it behooves us as

members and language service professionals to take advantage of them.

In the scant years since 2008, when I got my start in the industry as a PM, there has been an increase in translation programs all over the United States. The only programs I ever heard of back then

were just Monterey and Kent State. Now there are many undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs in translation all over the place. This points to interest in the professionalization of the trade and that translation is being

Inside this issue

- 5** The Beauty of the Word
- 7** Election Results
- 7** Spring Meetings
- 8** Ecuadorian Translators Association
- 11** Healing Voices Training

continued on page 3

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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.

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The Gotham has been selected by EBSCO to be included in university databases. All articles that are submitted to The Gotham will be included in the databases unless the author requests that their article not be included. All request are to be in writing via e-mail or regular mail.

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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
- approaches to translation
- legal issues
- the business of translation
- dictionary and hardware/software reviews
- 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.

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. In case of previously published submissions, please advise us of this fact at the time of submission.

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continued from page 1

taken more seriously. Honestly, I am not 100% sure that the best translators all “went to school for it”, but that is not at issue here since the programs exist, they are attracting students and we should play a role in all of this!

At NYU we had a group of 20-something students in the room with us and another twenty tuning in via a webcast. At Hunter, we scheduled the talk with the head of the burgeoning T&I program. She brought her translation class in to hear us speak. These students stayed after class time to ask questions and talk with us. This is significant.

I think that these students point to the opportunity the Circle has to play an important role in the formation of the next generation of language professionals. We have a chance to have a hand in shaping the professionaliza-

tion of translation and interpretation, not just here in New York, since where NYC leads others tend to follow, our impact could be truly great. Our members have years of combined experience among our members. Among us we have expertise in many, many subjects and just general know-how that beg to be shared. The Circle has the opportunity to grow by proactively encouraging student memberships, and in doing this, injecting new life into our own ranks.

Some of the ways that we may do this are the following. I only name a few, please let us know what others you can think of.

How many of us would be willing to take on a mentor role? Taking on this responsibility does not have to be anything overly time consuming. We’re all busy, but we really learn something when we teach it. A lot of us take our

linguistic skills, business acumen, and self-marketing techniques as givens and do not realize that, no, this stuff is not given; we learned it through trial and error over years. Experience like this is valuable and priceless to a new person. We could help the next generation of language professionals learn from our mistakes. [If anyone is hesitating because they think that newcomers would be competitors, please put that aside. I was a PM who more than once (twice or even five times) got turned down and was told “Sorry, I don’t do birth certificates (or transcripts, handwritten medical reports, you name it) anymore. I did that when I got started.”] So, no that is not a valid reason not share your expertise, Circle member.

We have a few agency members in the circle, and to these companies interns

continued on next page

continued from page 3

could prove valuable. Not as translators necessarily, but also as general admins helping the agency out while learning how to run an LSP and getting a peek at what goes on behind the scenes. It turns out there is more to the language services industry than translating and/or interpreting. Who knew, right?

At the very least we can share our experience so that a newbie won't think that starvation rates are the norm or acceptable. What do you wish you had known when you started? I am in the process of drafting a proposed course for Hunter's translation program on the business of translation. I come from years as a PM and, believe me, the transition from that side of the monitor to the freelance side has taught me a lot. I wish to impart some of that knowledge

gleaned from errors, mishaps, chance and more than one helping hand, to others.

We are the ultimate in people based professions- when we ask for a translation/ interpretation we are placing our trust directly on someone's ability. Machine Translation and CAT tools have yet to replace the human touch--they accentuate the translation process, make it more efficient, but they are still just tools to build upon and improve what we, human translators, put forth. The same goes for our ability to learn from each other. Your experience is invaluable.

I propose that we as the Circle take ownership of our organization, welcome an expansion, and take active roles however we can. Do you have contacts you've let get cold in areas

where volunteer translation could be useful? Have you a project where you could use a helping hand?

More than being useful just to new translators, I want all of us to think through how the Circle could be useful to existing members too. That expertise I've been harping on is not just useful to students but to the membership at large. I learned from students that we have a role to play, that there is interest in what we do and that there are a bunch of passionate people who want to help give others a voice. JUST LIKE YOU DO.

I invite you as the NYCT to open that circle a little wider and see the difference we can all make. Let's all think through ways that we could benefit from an influx of new members and be of benefit and service to others. ■

THE BEAUTY OF THE WORD

by Leonard Morin

"Two dollars a word...? But..."

"That's right: two dollars. If you want a Pascal Smithie translation, you're going to have to pay accordingly!"

"...but we're a small agency," the voice fretted through the earpiece, *"we just don't have that kind of money."*

"Well, maybe you'd better look for another translator within your budget then," Pascal scowled.

"Can we just...?" Pascal dropped the call and picked up another coming in. It was his colleague Bartholomew.

"Hey, Barth, what's doin'?"

"I've got writer's block. You want to go to the Lonesome Word to get a cup of java?"

"Sounds good, I'm stuck on a phrase myself."

On the way out of his Upper-Westside brownstone, Pascal reminded the

maid to do his laundry. She timidly acceded. She was new to the job and still felt somewhat intimidated working for the internationally acclaimed translator. It was a dream come true. He was friendly to her within the limits of his lofty stature and paid generously for her services.

Pascal had passed his deadline, but he wasn't letting it get to him. His clients knew not to rush him, since a good translation takes time. He had run up against an idiomatic conundrum and needed to take a break to reflect upon it, to discuss it with his esteemed colleagues. It was time to go to the Lonesome Word and chew the fat. Bartholomew had hit the magic number.

As Pascal absent-mindedly wandered down W. 78th Street, he pondered the Spanish source text: *"Para cualquier litigio que surja entre las partes de la interpretación o cumplimiento del presente*

contrato..." He'd translated the like of it umpteen times, but he was bent on transforming it into something special. After all, that's what his clients expected of him. "Translation is an art," he always said, and he had to render the full beauty of the original. But the afternoon rush-hour traffic was crowding out his thoughts.

Bartholomew was seated behind an espresso when Pascal opened the door, but Barth didn't notice his buddy enter the café. He was peering off towards the sky, contemplating his current project. For you see, translation is always about the beauty of the word. It was these long ruminations, which are part and parcel of this profession, that motivated these two dreamers to enter the trade. And they were handsomely compensated for their efforts. They were the best in the field and

continued on next page

continued from page 3

could charge their clients—who valued nothing more in life than a good translation—virtually as much as they wanted.

“What’ll it be?” asked the waitress.

“Be careful what you ask, you might just get it,” Pascal snidely replied to the pretty young lady. Her name was Daisy and Pascal knew she was partial to him. But she had been burned by more than one translator in the past. She had since resigned herself to solitude until she found a nice doctor or lawyer to grow old with. “Just a regular coffee, sweetheart,” Pascal finally ordered. “Do your magic with it!”

“Pascal, I need to talk to you,” Barth implored. “I can’t do this anymore. I’ve translated one employee survey too many.”

“What’s the matter, Barth? I thought that was your calling. After all, there’s nothing more essential to corporate good conduct. How many times have

I heard you say that yourself?” Pascal asked with worry.

“Yes, and I still believe that. But aesthetically I mean. I entered this profession for the love of language. I want to inspire with my translations! To change the way people see the world! Remember when we were in college and we had those endless philosophical discussions about how translations could bring about a different world? How we would reconcile battling nations? But it wasn’t just about the content. It was about...”—the two finished the sentence in unison—“THE BEAUTY OF THE WORD.”

“Yes, Pascal, that was our vow. I don’t care about the money anymore, the girls, the club... it’s just the words that matter.”

“Listen, Barth,” Pascal queried, seeming unimpressed by his buddy’s pleadings, “speaking of the beauty of the word, I’m stuck on a phrase that I need your help with.” As Pascal spoke, he

reached into his back pocket and pulled out a sheet of paper. He zeroed in on the phrase in question and ran it by his comrade in arms:

“*‘Para cualquier litigio que surja entre las partes de la interpretación o cumplimiento del presente contrato...’* I need to make it into something transcendent. I don’t want it to be just another sales contract.”

Bartholomew stared at Pascal for a long moment, as though fathoming the depths of meaning of the phrase. Pascal gave a long sigh and then spoke: “You know what, Barth, what we really need is just to get away from it all. To just take some time to think this all through.

You can’t rush these things. Here, let me call the agency.” Pascal pulled out his smartphone and dialed.

“Yes, Whitney?...Yes, it’s Pascal...Oh, I’m fine. How about you?...Glad to hear. Listen, Whitney, I’m sitting here with my colleague Bartholomew and both of us...yes, sure, I’ll tell him. I was just saying that the two of us are think-

ing we need to get away from it all for a while. Can you call the travel department and have them book a trip for the two of us to Mallorca for a month? It's just that we've reached an impasse... I know quality is all that matters to you. That's why I'm asking you... I know he's not working on anything for you now, but I'd really appreciate it... okay, great. I can guarantee you that I'll have a masterpiece for you when I get back."

As Pascal hung up his phone, Harvey Lechuga was just swaggering up with a gorgeous young woman in each arm.

"Hey, Saint Jerome, where are your dictionaries?"

Pascal and Bartholomew were elated to see him. "Hey, Harvey!" exclaimed Pascal.

"Hey, if it isn't ACS's star case manager!" emoted Bartholomew. "What's in the plans?"

"We were just about to head for the club. Let's go, guys!"

New York Circle of Translators ELECTION RESULTS

The new **Program Director** is **Diana Méndez**

The New **President-Elect** is **Chunwen Wang**

All three ballot proposals were passed. These included a change to the by-laws regarding the President-Elect. A change from a paper NYCT Gotham newsletter to a digital only version and remuneration for a permanent administrator.

E-mail notification was sent to all members regarding the results of the election. Thank you for voting and supporting the NYCT.

The table was sizable and round. In addition to Harvey, Barth, and Pascal, Joey Paraguas had joined them; six women of supermodel caliber were also seated at the table. A jazz band, led by an elegant *chanteuse*, was playing, and the abundant wait staff was tending to the every whim of the club's lavish clientele.

"Tell another story about your job, Harvey!" insisted one of the belles at Harvey's side. "I've never met a social worker before."

"Oh, I don't want to bore you," answered Harvey. Then the young lady at Joey's side chimed in: "Oh, please do,

SAVE THE DATES! Spring NYCT Meetings

February Meeting
Wednesday, Feb. 19th

March Meeting
Tuesday, March 11th

April Meeting
Wednesday, April 29th

Harvey! I bet Joey could use it as material for one of his articles."

Joey sneered, "I only write two articles a year. With what the newspapers pay me for my work, it really isn't necessary for me to work any more. I'm on vacation till New Year's." ■

Ecuadorian Translators Association

OUR COMRADES IN WORDS

Our chapter's President had the opportunity to meet with Paulina Miranda, the President of the Ecuadorian Translators Association during his recent visit to the country. She has graciously agreed to this e-mail interview to discuss the state of translators and interpreters in Ecuador.

What is the current state of the translation business in Ecuador?

Has the world economy impacted the industry?

Today, there are still too many non-professional translators and interpreters trying to make inroads in the translation business in Ecuador. Many clients believe that any bilingual person can translate virtually any kind of document or provide interpretation during

a meeting. Here is where ATIEC does the hard work of making clients aware that a professional translator or an interpreter cannot be an improviser.

The world economy has certainly impacted the translation industry in Ecuador. Since the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent slow global recovery, mid-sized companies and even some big corporations that used to look for translation services in South America have been struggling to reduce their expenses. In order to do so, they have been increasingly seeking the services of translators from countries economically less developed, such as India, Philippines, and Thailand where translators who charge less than 0.02 per word and are willing to work with unreasonable deadlines can

easily be found.

How has new technology impacted translators' day-to-day work? How has it affected training?

In day-to-day work, technology has had a very big impact on productivity. For instance, CAT tools such as Wordfast are extremely helpful in maintaining term consistency within documents. Also, they make retyping repeated segments unnecessary. Likewise, it is amazing how easily, usually just with the click of a single button, you can make your translation look as beautiful as the original document. It is like magic. All these features reduce the time the translator spends reviewing the final version.

One of my amazing and latest discov-

eries (I wish I had discovered it before) is the dictation tool of Apple computers such as iMac and Macbook Pro. It is particularly useful for texts whose topic you are familiar with, when you are tired of typing or when Carpal tunnel syndrome is taking revenge for the time you spend typing. You just have to find a comfortable chair, read the source text and dictate your translated version of it to your Mac while pressing a button. I must admit I have tried a lot of other voice recognition software before without success, but the degree of accuracy of the Apple dictation tool is way beyond my expectations.

Of course technology has also had a major impact on training because today courses can reach a worldwide audience. Many universities like NYU offer online translation certificates, which allow you to easily access courses that otherwise would have been very diffi-

cult to take due to distance and work schedule. Therefore, ATIEC is currently developing an online training system that will be tested locally this year and globally next year.

What does the association do in order to promote the profession in Ecuador?

In Ecuador, currently only the Department of Linguistics of the Universidad Católica del Ecuador offers translation and interpretation courses toward the degree of Linguistics with specialization in translation. Some time ago, the Universidad Espiritu Santo offered a Translation program but had to close it due to the low student demand and the lack of qualified professors. Consequently, translators currently working in Ecuador have studied translation abroad or learnt the craft on the go. Therefore, in this context, the Association plays a very important role

nationwide in the promotion of the profession. In order to do so, each year the Association prepares a detailed program of the courses that will be taught during the year. Courses include workshops on good practices in translation and interpreting, common mistakes in translation, grammar for translators, etc. They do not aim at making a bilingual person a translator but they offer additional knowledge, resources and material to translators who are already active in this profession.

Additionally, we try to bring together all the professional translators and interpreters working in Ecuador in order to empower them, to make them realize the real value of their work and help them demand fair working conditions. ATIEC's goal is for translators to be in a position to demand reasonable deadlines and fees according to urgency,

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continued from page 3

type of text, pair of languages, format of source text, etc. Also, ATIEC aims for interpreters to be able to demand an upper limit on working hours per day, fair fees, quality equipment and a partner for interpretations of more than half an hour so that the two interpreters can relieve each other every thirty minutes.

Furthermore, the board of directors of ATIEC organizes meetings and gatherings of participants from both the public and private sectors in order to educate clients about the fact that professional translations can only be done by professional translators. Of course, the same criterion applies to professional interpreters. The Board of Directors works very hard day by day to make clients and authorities respect our profession. Fortunately, these efforts have already

begun to be rewarded. Some public agencies and private companies do not accept translations unless they bear the seal of an ATIEC member and some notaries decline to notarize translations unless the translator shows the ATIEC membership card. Consequently, the number of members of the Association is increasing from year to year. ATIEC started in 2007 with 7 members. Today, ATIEC comprises more than 50 professional translators and interpreters.

Does the association have smaller regional chapters? How do the smaller chapters or groups assist translators and interpreters?

Ecuador is a small country, so the Association does not need smaller regional chapters. Most of the members reside in Quito where the main office is located. Presently, the needs of members from other cities are easily and quickly ad-

dressed via email or telephone.

Personally how do you see the translation industry evolving in the next decade?

The translation industry will evolve positively in the next decade despite the efforts of some IT companies to replace translators with software.

Even if some clients are still tempted to substitute automated translation software such as the Google translation tool for translators, others recognize the need for a human professional translator in order to guarantee a high quality final product.

Also, due to the continual growth of globalization, more and more companies have decided to go online and have acknowledged the necessity of having their websites available in two, three or more languages. ■

HEALING VOICES RETURNS TO MARYLAND

Good news: the next five-day session of *Healing Voices: Interpreting for Survivors of Torture, War Trauma and Sexual Violence* comes to Maryland June 9-13, 2014.

Healing Voices is the only weeklong training in the world devoted to this specialized topic. The program begins with an overview of interpreting for torture and trauma followed by modules on mental health interpreting, secondary trauma for interpreters, ethics, interpreter interventions, cultural mediation, legal interpreting, family violence and sexual trauma, and interpreter safety and wellness.

Several trainers will attend. Their bios will soon be available. The two lead trainers are:

- **Karen Hanscom, PhD**, an internationally recognized psychologist and therapist specialized in torture treatment programs and Vice Chair of IRCT, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims.
- **Marjory Bancroft, MA**, creator of the leading international program for community interpreting; the ISO world Project Leader for a new standard on general interpreting; and Executive Director of The Voice of Love.

Details and registration

Cost: \$700

Dates: June 9-13, 2014, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Location: Charles Ecker Business Training Center
6751 Columbia Gateway Drive
(First floor)
Columbia, Maryland 21046

Airport: BWI (Baltimore Washington International)

The deadline for registration and payment is May 26, 2014.

Training Program Scholarships

A small number of partial and full needs-based scholarships will be available only for interpreters who work in:

- Torture treatment programs; or
- Refugee mental health programs that serve torture survivors.

For more information or to register:

Phone: 410.707.9088 Fax: 410.750.0332

vol@volinterpreting.org www.volinterpreting.org



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 meetings, summer picnic and holiday party
- Professional development workshops and seminars
- Subscription to our newsletter, The Gotham Translator
- Listings in the NYCT Online 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!