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THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

UNDER THREAT: A PROFESSION CHALLENGED

By Rosene Zaros

We are all familiar with the expression "the pen is mightier than the sword" and we realize that it can refer not only to the written word, but to the spoken word as well. Words have the power to motivate, to influence, to persuade, to agitate, and to foment action in ways that weapons cannot. Those who rely on weapons as a means of achieving their goals depend on fear to suppress dissidents. This may be successful in the short term but, ultimately, those who can communicate ideas effectively will be the winners.

In our multilingual/multicultural world, translators and interpreters play a major role in facilitating meaningful communication and their importance is increasingly being recognized. Nevertheless, the general public knows very little about the complexity of these professions. Simply being bilingual is not an adequate qualification for becoming a translator or an interpreter. It is necessary to have an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and of the cultures involved. There is even widespread confusion about what one does when one translates and what one does when one interprets.

This lack of understanding means that many language professionals, in the current political climate, exercise their professions under threat of death or imprisonment. They frequently work for and/or with the news media. In a recent article in the NY Times, James Glanz, reporting on the situation in Iraq, described someone he worked with as a "freelance reporter, cultural guide, translator all in one," and asks the question: "Why do Iraqis risk their lives to be that?"

Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based advocacy organization that defends imprisoned journalists and freedom of the press throughout the world, and the Committee to Protect Journalists are working to bring the many problems facing journalists to the attention of the public. But, their primary emphasis is on journalists. The interpreters who aid them, who indeed form a part of their ranks, slip through the cracks.

Occasionally, as in the aforementioned NY Times article, these issues appear in the national news, but more often they appear only on websites focusing on interpreter issues. The reports are numerous and we know little about the circumstances surrounding the incidents. Some are particularly disturbing in that they seem to indicate that Americans have been involved in the death of translators. Others are ominously repetitive: Translator Killed, BBC Translator Killed, Translator and Family Members Killed, Turkish Translator Beheaded. And, some of them are Americans as this December 27, 2004 headline indicates: "Army Interpreter Killed in Iraq was Headed Home." The 28-year-old woman from western New York was getting ready to leave Iraq when she was killed in an attack. And so it goes.

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These are the more obvious situations that are part and parcel of war. They bear witness to the fact that history will be written in words not in bullets, and the mere fact that opposing ideologies go to such lengths to suppress freedom of speech and thought makes it even more apparent that we must do our utmost to preserve these freedoms in the United States. Yet, we are allowing ourselves to be manipulated. Out of fear, we are behaving in ways that belie the ideology that made America great. We may think about a line from a poem by John Donne: "Do not send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." Whenever any human being is deprived of a civil liberty, we are all diminished.

We, as language professionals, must work together to assure that our colleagues receive the respect and protection that they deserve. When we interpret or translate, we are facilitators of communication. Our own views do not form a part of the discourse and to construe the discourse as such would constitute an egregious error. Unlike some other professions, interpreters and translators have no professional organizations to come to their aid, to protect their interests, and to assure that they do not fall prey to those who would involve them in issues that are beyond the scope of their professions. Our professional organizations are more interested in assuring our prospective clients that we are competent to perform our jobs. And, certainly, that is important, but we must also work toward better educating the public about what we do — and don't do.

While working in a war zone may continue to be perilous, translators and interpreters working in the United States should not have to face prison time simply for doing their jobs. ■

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Slavica Zecevic

THE NEW YORK CIRCLE'S WEBSITE IS UNDERGOING A MAJOR MAKEOVER

The New York Circle's website was built by David Mintz, our webmaster, in 1999, and since then, it has undergone some changes. However, signs of aging are noticeable and interfere with our use of the site. After a few months of constructive negotiations with David on making the Circle's website more functional and more attractive, an agreement was reached, put into writing and signed.

Here are some of the clauses that are of interest to you as members:

1. (Re)design membership application/dues renewal system to incorporate real-time credit card processing. Application/renewal system will validate user data, process credit card payment, email confirmation message to member, email notification to designated NYCT administrator(s), and write member data to NYCT member database.

   The way we are doing this now:

   You send your checks to the Circle's address. They sit there until Treasurer gets them. Treasurer goes to the Post Office once a week, but that may vary. Finally, when Treasurer gets your checks, she/he enters the info in your record. After that, when she/he has time, the checks are deposited in the bank. The bank takes time to process them. Treasurer gets the bank statement indicating that the checks cleared, and then updates the records. This process is not only tedious but unreliable. Human error always creeps in. This year, the box holding the checks was misplaced so many of your checks weren't properly recorded. The good thing is, when man makes a mistake and learns about it, the mistake is usually corrected. But, as you can see, this process takes days and all of us want to enjoy the benefits of our membership immediately.

2. Design and build custom email list manager that enables authenticated and authorized user(s) to log in and send messages to user-selected subsets of NYCT membership, e.g., based on working language combination or membership status (renewable within x months, expired, etc). Provide a member opt-out option. Allow administrators to override user opt-out option.

   The way we are doing this now:

   We go to the administrative pages on the web and choose the option that will take us to the members' emails. We have to convert that file into .xcl format. That is something we have to do each month in order to include new members. Unfortunately, we may get emails that are not in use any longer, truncated emails, non-existing emails, etc. There is no consistency and, as you already know, there is no guarantee that you will receive an email. Plus, we are using our personal provider to send a broadcast email. This means that lots of emails bounce especially those of people with the same provider. We spend lots of time working on this without achieving the desired result.

3. Redesign "look and feel" of site. Incorporate new logo/banner into main page. Redesign navigation bar. Add "Tooltip" style popup text on navigation link mouseover event. Add dynamically generated content to main page per NYCT specifications (e.g., "Featured member of the day" and/or "NYCT welcomes our newest member," and/or current New York City weather data). All HTML and CSS to conform to World Wide Web Consortium Standards. NYCT agrees to provide high quality digital image of its logo (i.e., logo that appears in *Gotham Translator*).

   You know how the site looks now. Everything is left centered (the computer resolution was different at the time the site was built) and there is lots of white. The idea is to make the site user friendly and as attractive as possible so that clients should be able to find what they are looking for in no time in a nice environment. I took a peek and, trust me, you will not be disappointed.

Changes are being made as we speak. Unfortunately, you will not be able to see them now. It is an extreme make over that will take 18 months of work. So, we have to be patient.

This project is a serious investment. It will not only advertise us better but save us lots of money and unnecessary work that does not always produce the desired results. ■

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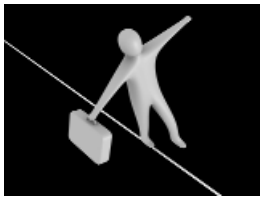

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

by Marguerite Shore

In the current political climate, translating and interpreting can prove perilous, and not just in the most obvious ways (i.e. working in a war zone). In March 2005, I was scheduled to give a talk to the NYCT about the translation of art-related materials. However, in order to address my deep concerns about the current political climate and the consequent dangers for members of our profession, I decided to use my time slot for a different purpose. As a result I organized a panel presentation with the participation of Ramsey Clark, Maya Hess, and Ellen Sowchek. I was aware ahead of time that many attendees would not agree with my views or, more particularly, with the views of Hess and Clark, but I was hoping to create a framework for dialogue and debate that would continue beyond the evening. It goes without saying that the opinions I am expressing here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or the policies of the NYCT or the ATA. It is my wish to open a dialogue that will transcend politics by examining all the ramifications of current judicial policy so that we may work together to ensure that all of our colleagues may practice their professions without fear of persecution or prosecution.

Maya Hess was the evening's first speaker. As a forensic language specialist and president of Hess Translations Inc., she has provided linguistic support in numerous high-profile court cases. Hess holds an M.A. in print journalism from New York University and a Graduate Certificate in Terrorism Studies from John Jay College of Criminal Justice; she is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in criminal justice at City University of New York. She gave an impassioned presentation on the significance of the Special Administrative Measures (SAMs), the restrictions imposed by the Attorney General's office on an inmate's contacts with the outside world. Hess focused specifically on the impact of such measures on interpreters in terrorism-related cases and examined how the SAMs evolved, what part they played in United States v. Sattar et al., and how the verdict in that case is reshaping the role of interpreters. Mohamed Yousry, a Justice Department-approved Arabic interpreter, was indicted on April 9, 2002, along with Lynne Stewart, an attorney, and Ahmed Abdel Sattar, a paralegal. Yousry was a court-appointed interpreter for Egyptian cleric Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, now serving a life sentence for plotting to blow up New York City landmarks. Yousry, who is charged with conspiring to defraud the United States and providing and concealing material support to terrorist activity, followed the instructions given to him by Ms. Stewart. Yousry had never been asked to sign the SAMs and was carrying out the instructions of the lawyer for whom he was working. Stewart, in violation of the SAMs, released a statement from the Sheik to a Reuters correspondent in Cairo. Some see her actions as heroic, others see them as foolish, and still others view them as patently illegal. But regardless of one's opinion of Stewart's actions, Yousry was carrying out his duties as an interpreter, following the instructions of Stewart, the lawyer.

Hess's presentation to the NYCT had two principal thrusts: the insidious implications of this case for all legal translators and interpreters, and the cowardly and evasive response of the ATA to Yousry's situation. ATA and NAJIT issued a joint statement that withholds judgment on Yousry's innocence or guilt but expresses the opinion that he, apparently, did not adhere to proper protocol: "Based on the trial transcripts and other materials, indications are that many aspects of the events leading up to the Lynne Steward/Mohammed Yousry trial were not handled according to the standard recognized protocols for professional interpreting and translating in legal settings." As Hess stated, "… the core issue of Yousry's case is NOT about linguistic protocol, which is what the ATA/NAJIT statement has concentrated on, but about the fact that the SAMs have placed interpreters in an untenable position." She ended with a plea for the ATA and NAJIT to work to safeguard their constituency.

The second speaker of the evening was Ramsey Clark. Clark is an eminent and controversial lawyer who specializes in civil rights issues. He was the 66th Attorney General of the United States, under President Lyndon Johnson, and was instrumental in passing and enforcing the Civil Rights Act. He has devoted much of his career to defending the rights of indigenous and disenfranchised peoples around the world. His presentation to the NYCT outlined the difficulties in finding and retaining translators and interpreters in today's charged political climate. He described at length his experiences representing defendants in war crimes tribunals at The Hague and in Rwanda, where interpreters endure death threats for doing their jobs. He drew a parallel to post- 9/11 America where Arabs and Arab-Americans are the target of the majority of government prosecutions in terrorism trials. Here, too, interpreters are put in an untenable position and, indeed, several paralegals involved in the Sheik Abdel Rahman case suffered harassment by the government. Clark spoke of Yousry's skill at communicating with the client and how important this was to the defense team. Yousry had been hired precisely because of his educational and cultural background. He is a doctoral candidate in the department of Middle Eastern Studies at NYU, working on a dissertation on political Islam in Egypt. His background enabled him to understand events taking place in Egypt and this made him more effective as an interpreter in the case. Moreover, Yousry, a naturalized American citizen, in no way supports Abdel Rahman's politics or cause and is

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR By Rosene Zaros

Because of the many problems that translators and interpreters are facing today, we decided to make them the theme of this issue. Language professionals are challenged in many ways. These challenges range from issues arising from ambiguous state laws governing interpreters to threats of death and imprisonment.

While both the ATA and NAJIT have codes of ethics that, if followed, may offer a degree of protection to language professionals, the reality of the situation is that there are times when a translator or interpreter is placed in what can only be described as an untenable position.

As I stated in the July/August issue, I would like to use this column as a platform for dialogue with readers. I welcome your comments on this or any other of the issues that we will be addressing. ■

not even a practicing Muslim. In contrast, many of the translators and interpreters working for the U.S. Attorney's office have a woefully inadequate grasp of Arabic language and culture. Thus, the US government has created a Catch-22 situation: it needs competent translators and interpreters, but is frightening off those who are best-equipped to do the work.

The final speaker of the evening was Ellen Sowchek. An ATA Certified French>English translator and interpreter based in New York, Sowchek has been researching and analyzing the psychological effects of interpreting on interpreters. Her interest was generated, in part, by recent experiences translating and interpreting for Holocaust victims. She began by explaining that a professional interpreter is required to speak in the same grammatical person as the individual for whom he/she is interpreting; i.e, to speak in the "I" voice. An interpreter is also expected to convey accurately not only the speaker's meaning, but also the style or register of speech, and to do so in a neutral fashion, without adding to or subtracting from the original message. But, Sowchek asks, "what happens when this *original message* is about the unspeakable?" Does interpreting in difficult situations take its psychological toll on the interpreter? In her presentation, she considered this question in connection with some of the most difficult of all interpreting assignments: the 1944-46 Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, the 1961 Eichmann Trial in Israel, the 1993 and ongoing International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and the 1994 and ongoing International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Sowchek presented dramatic, and sometime heart-wrenching, testimony by interpreters, who, in many cases, had to convey the words of criminals who had victimized the interpreters' families. It was clear from her descriptions that interpreters working under such emotional duress need special consideration. In the first place, they need to be adequately prepared and provided with psychological support. After the fact, they may need debriefing and follow-up support.

Although all three speakers had different points of reference, what came across compellingly was the impossibility of neutrality in charged situations. My feeling and, again, this is my opinion only, is that our parent organization, the ATA, has missed a crucial opportunity to acknowledge the perils inherent in certain types of translation and interpretation. There are other cases where the US government has sidelined translators and interpreters whose work exposes inconvenient truths. FBI translator Sybil Edmunds was fired after reporting that another translator, who has not been publicly identified, belonged to an organization that was a target of FBI surveillance. I believe that the ATA has been utterly silent on this case. Confronted with thorny, even explosive issues, it retreats into legalistic bombast about protocol and neutrality. I believe that the ATA's response to Yousry's plight is tainted by, even part and parcel of, the current political climate. I understand that the present-day ATA board and its representatives have worked hard to develop close relationships with the U.S. government and, indeed, this may benefit many ATA members as it results in jobs and contracts. But, what is the moral cost? Since September 11, 2001 we have heard innumerable wonderful tales about the ATA moving into the news, promoting the competency of its members and the need for high professional standards. I would like to see a more courageous, if less "neutral" stance — one that acknowledges the risks of doing one's job well and the moral implications of putting oneself in the service of questionable government policies. ■

About the Author

Marguerite Shore has been a freelance translator for more than 25 years. She specializes in translating art, architecture, and tourism texts from Italian into English and from French into English. From 1995-1997, she worked as Coordinator of the Translation Studies Program at NYU. She is a former President and Program Director of the NYCT and a former Public Relations Chair of the ATA. She is an ATA grader of certification exams from Italian into English. She has a B.A. in Art History from Vassar College. Personally, she is proud of her liberal political credentials and is extremely concerned about issues of censorship and free speech.

PERILS OF TRANSLATION IN POST 9/11 AMERICA
THE CASE OF MOHAMED YOUSRY

By Alison Dundy

Mohamed Yousry, a Justice Department-approved Arabic translator and interpreter, was convicted in Federal court on February 10, 2005 of conspiring to provide, and providing, material support to terrorism and conspiring to defraud the U.S. government. This conviction arose from his work as a translator, approved by the Department of Justice, for the blind Egyptian cleric, Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman, who is jailed for life in the United States on charges from the conspiracy trial over an alleged plot to bomb the New York/New Jersey Holland Tunnel and other landmarks. Mohamed Yousry's co-defendants—attorney Lynne Stewart, and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar—were also convicted on all counts. Although even the prosecution admitted that not a single act of violence or criminal activity, much less a terrorist attack, arose from this alleged "conspiracy," Mohamed Yousry could face more than twenty years of hard prison time.

It is the job of the translator to facilitate communication. A translator's own views and voice are essentially invisible and silent. In criminal court cases, the translator typically speaks as the voice of the accused, the voice of defense counsel, the voice of the prosecution and of the judiciary. In the course of attorney-client discussions on the political situation in Egypt, which were relevant to the defense counsel's efforts to achieve a transfer of the prisoner to Egypt, Mohamed Yousry translated the Shaykh's comment: "escalate the rhetoric in the media" regarding the ceasefire between the Mubarak regime and the Islamic Group. Attorney Lynne Stewart conveyed this to a Reuters news agency journalist in Cairo.

The prosecution argued that conveying the Shaykh's views to the public constituted a "jailbreak" by co-defendants of a prisoner the government thought it had "locked up and thrown away the key." Mohamed Yousry was charged and convicted of "material support to terrorism" for doing nothing other than his job: interpreting for a defendant and his counsel. He never spoke to any of the Shaykh's followers or even to the press. His conviction on conspiracy charges harks back to the dark ages and the origins of the term "conspiracy" (from the Latin *conspirare*-literally "to breathe together.") He did nothing more than breathe and speak in the same room as the Shaykh and the Shaykh's attorneys. *Mohamed Yousry was not tried or convicted for any political activity but simply for doing his job as a translator/interpreter.* The conviction of Mohamed Yousry sets a terrible precedent: that translation in a criminal case may itself be judged criminal activity, and even material support to terrorism.

UNCLE SAM IS WATCHING YOU

On October 31, 2001, the same day the Patriot Act was signed into law, then Attorney-General John Ashcroft, secretly amended Special Administrative Measures (SAMs), without the normal period of public comment. SAMs restrict a prisoner's access to visitors, media, mail, and even contact with the prison population. They were signed into law during the Clinton administration. As amended by John Ashcroft, SAMs now allow the Bureau of Prisons to conduct videotape and audiotape surveillance of communications between attorneys and their clients in federal custody.

Mohamed Yousry and co-defendants were indicted in April, 2001. The evidence against them consisted of many tens of thousands of wiretaps of phone calls and secretly videotaped attorney-client discussions. Attorney-client discussions are supposed to be privileged, indeed, constitutionally protected. This violation of the Sixth Amendment Right to Due Process and Counsel threatens the civil liberties of everyone living in this society and can be particularly damaging to legal translators and court interpreters who may, like Yousry, find themselves facing serious charges of "conspiracy" for doing their court-appointed and approved jobs.

HISTORY, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Mohamed Yousry is *not* a supporter of the Shaykh. Under oath at the trial, Mohamed Yousry testified that he opposes Islamic fundamentalism as a regressive force that would be particularly injurious to women and minorities, such as Coptic Christians in Egypt. He is a U.S. citizen. His wife is a born-again Christian, as is his daughter. He was an acclaimed adjunct professor at CUNY's York College. In the minefield of Middle East Studies, he was respected by students of all religions and ethnicities and nationalities. CUNY fired Mr. Yousry when he was indicted, a firing which the American Association of University Professors investigated and found to be wrong and politically motivated. Mohamed Yousry is a doctoral candidate in Middle Eastern Studies at New York University. The topic of his dissertation — the influence of the Islamic Group in Egypt — was suggested by the chairman of his department, Dr. Zachary Lockman.

It was precisely Mohamed Yousry's political and cultural background and his education that enabled him to understand developments taking place in the Shaykh's country of origin and here in the United States. This understanding is a crucial element of effective legal trans-

lation. He had the knowledge to understand both languages in their proper context. Ominously, the government sought conviction of Mohamed Yousry *because* of his knowledge of the Egyptian political context. Among government exhibits of "evidence" against him were slides of his extensive library, including books about Egypt and terrorism and the Islamic Group. (His library, which would be the envy of every scholar and bookworm, included titles on a broad range of subjects, but only those convenient to the prosecution's prejudicial arguments were presented to the jury.) In this (and many other ways) the tactics of the prosecution were uncannily reminiscent of the "witch hunts" of the McCarthy era, wherein countless lives were ruined and individuals prosecuted because of "thought crimes" — they read books that the government didn't like.

A joint statement issued by the American Translator's Association and National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators on the conviction of Mohamed Yousry argues that judiciary interpreters "are the court's instrument to help ensure that constitutional due process guarantees are upheld." But, it is precisely the constitutional guarantee of due process and attorney-client privilege, which is so basic to effective defense, which was vitiated by the prosecution of Yousry, Stewart and Sattar.

The ATA and NAJIT state that judiciary interpreters "are neutral parties and may not advocate for one side or the other" and that they "are officers of the court." There is no consensus in the field regarding whether or how translators serve as officers of the court. To assert that they are court officers is flatly contradictory to our *adversarial* system of justice. American jurisprudence is premised on the clash of argument between prosecution and defense, in the belief that a presentation of all sides of a picture might enable a jury to best weigh the evidence and arguments. To assert that a judiciary interpreter retained by defense counsel is foremost an "officer of the court" would be, in reality, to insist that they fink on the defense team that they have been hired to assist and that they reveal defense strategy and arguments.

Moreover, the expertise of the translator or interpreter is language, not the law. Maya Hess, founder of Hess Translations and a doctoral candidate in criminal justice, put it succinctly in a presentation to the NYCT in May:

"To illustrate the insanity of this situation, let's transpose it to the medical field. The expectation that Yousry should have second-guessed an attorney's legal decision is akin to demanding that an interpreter interpreting for a patient and his doctor question the diagnosis and treatment. And, if the patient is harmed, can the interpreter now be cited for malpractice because he didn't question the doctor's medical assessment? It is absurd!"

To conclude, legal translators must recognize that law, like language, is both a product of society and an instrument of society. Law and language reflect past changes and lead to new changes. Not all change is progressive in the sense of the advancement of human society and human freedom. These are reactionary times characterized by manipulation of fear arising from heinous crimes such as the attack on the World Trade Center. This manipulation has led to sweeping encroachments on civil liberties that affect everyone and to attacks on immigrants and political opponents of the government in particular. These are times when anti-Arab prejudice is an ugly reality — and this is a huge factor for legal translators in "terrorism" trials today.

I maintain that, after a review of the facts of the case, *there should be no neutrals here*. The ATA/NAJIT statement of "neutrality" is a capitulation to wrongful prosecution. Colleagues involved in Mohamed Yousry's line of work should wonder where they will turn if they are rounded up and sent to prison or deported or worse — for no crime at all. Who will defend them? Who will translate for them?

But let's move from the realm of hypothesis to face reality squarely. The pre-sentence report by the Probation Department, which provides sentencing guidelines for the judge, recommends 260 months — *more than twenty years* — jail time for Mohamed Yousry. Slamming the prison door shut on an innocent man is the real crime here. Sentencing is scheduled for December 22, 2005 in Manhattan's Federal Court. I urge colleagues to be there and to do everything they can to expose and protest this atrocity. ■

About the Author

Alison Dundy is a writer and translator. She attended the trial as a representative of the Partisan Defense Committee-a legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people.

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WE TRAITORS

By Marcos Santarrita
Translated by Tom Moore

The expression traduttore, traditore (translator, traitor) is well-known, and practically a proverb — more a witticism than a verity. The most famous translation, the Vulgate, the translation of the Bible into Latin by St. Jerome, is still current, with the force of law, after 1500 years. For a large part of the Modern Age, many of the Greek and Roman classics which shaped the Western mind were translations of translations — from the original into Arabic, and from the Arabic into Latin or other European languages.

It is clear that, as with any reproduction, the work, especially the literary work, loses something in being brought into a language different from that in which it was conceived; in pure poetry, almost everything is lost; and if not, the translator creates his own poetry on top of the original, which continues to be a loss. This is a limitation of the art, and not of the artisan. There is no denying, however, that, just as in any field of endeavor, there are good and bad professionals, and that in Brazil the latter predominate. But there are serious reasons for this.

Our publishing industry, especially in the literary field, is almost exclusively devoted to licensing foreign authors; it has no need for the Brazilian writer, and would happily dispense with him, if it could. Like all the rest of Brazilian commerce and industry, it exists for short-term gain, which never created great work, nor famous names. Within this framework, however, one would hope that the translator would be the absolute master of the situation, since the publishers make their living from the sweat of the translator's brow.

A sad misconception. Here, more than in any other part of the civilized world, the translator is the poor relation of literature. The translator receives wretched fees, and must definitively alienate the fruit of his labor — the translation is sold, irrevocably, with abusive contracts which dispossess children, grandchildren, and all other descendents. He can scarcely be a professional, and live from his vocation. Hence there is a proliferation of those who translate in their spare time: journalists, lawyers, diplomats, and whoever has spent some time in a foreign country; hence, also, the poor quality of the translations.

It is clear that, as with any reproduction, the work, especially the literary work, loses something in being brought into a language different from that in which it was conceived.

It is not only the publisher, however, who is treading the professional translator underfoot. In Brazil, absurdly enough, the press has set itself up in judgment in the matter of the language and literary taste, as if the writer or translator should adhere to the newspapers' style manuals. If the translation seems good to the gentlemen of the press, who rarely are qualified to judge, nothing is said about it; the justification for this is that the translator has done nothing more than his duty, as if translating a literary work were like working on an assembly line. If it doesn't seem good, the simple newspaper reporters, who are barely able to do copy editing, roll on the floor when they discover, or think they have discovered (generally the latter) a slip in an otherwise good piece of work.

In reality, it would be ideal if the translator were a writer as well, at least in the case of literary works, but how many would be ready to live as a professional with such meager returns? This does not mean that non-writers — that is, authors of their own works, fiction, poetry, essays — are not good translators. One of the best translators working today, Donaldson Garschagen, has never published, to my knowledge, a volume or piece of any sort. Others, equally good, are, at the most, original writers on rare occasions, or simply have whims in that direction. Be this as it may, at least in this case the ideal is fulfilled, since the good translators are writers.

The first requirement for being a translator is not, as it may seem at first glance, the mastery of the language from which one is translating, but of one's own. One who does not know how to express his own thoughts in writing will have difficulty in confronting the much more difficult task of expressing those of others. One could push this statement even further with an example. Until today, one of the best, perhaps the best, of Goethe's Faust into Portuguese is that of Antônio Feliciano de Castilho. Well then, it is said that the good Visconde de Castilho simply did not know German. How did he do it? He asked a German living in Portugal to translate the words, preferably adapting the syntax, and only then set to work on the sprawl that the man had created.

In most of our poor translations, this is precisely the problem: not infidelity to the original, but the badly edited Portuguese. For this reason excrescences such as "ele levou sua mão à sua cabeça e alisou seus cabelos" (a typically English construction — Portuguese would not require the possessive) abound; the unnecessary repetition of the

name of the character or of "he" or "she" innumerable times in the same paragraph (the Portuguese verb not requiring the use of the pronoun); or "a mulher Americana, o homem velho, o homem branco", holdovers from an original where the adjective cannot stand alone as it does in Portuguese. After a hundred years of the cinema, many translators — including or especially those working in films — have still not figured out that Attention! in the military does not mean "Atenção!" (pay attention!) but "Sentido!" (stand at attention!)

It is errors of this sort, and not those which are really serious, which attract attention, since the supposed critic in the newspaper is unlikely to have the possibility (either from an intellectual or material point of view) to be able to compare the translation with the original. And here we have the really important question: what is a bad translation? Is it one which is poorly written, with irritating little errors, or one which is actually poorly done? Because the translator really can be a traitor, and many are, presenting impeccable texts, which nonetheless are serious betrayals of the original texts.

What one wants is for the translator to be working with the writer, concealing his errors and vices — in short, to be co-author, which would be, indeed, the supreme act of treason. Great literature today is ever more restricted to the university ghetto, with its own rather specific language, full of neologisms. Current "thinkers", especially the French, have become veritable factories of new words, in the absence of anything new to say. The poor translator, in rendering the linguistic juggling of these texts, is slammed for the reason that the words he uses "are not in the dictionary". There are even cases in which the reviewer sets himself to correcting non-existent mistakes for this reason. Someone who knows the language will soon see who is at fault; but for the majority of readers, however — and the publishers — the translator is the illiterate.

Another serious problem is the author with a difficult, elevated style: Henry James, for example. It is said that this American snob (naturalized English) could not even express himself directly while speaking, and one of his critics asserts, in his favor, that while in the works of other authors the reader seeks to learn "whodunit"?, in James the objective is to discover what he intended to say. It is not surprising that he, idolized by the pretentious around the world, the majority of which, self-styled authorities on the master, never manage to discover what he is saying, and draw on all sorts of exotic interpretations for lack of anything better to do. The worst of it is that they cannot even make it out in translation, and put the blame on the translator, who ought to have transformed James into Maugham, in order for them to finally be able to read and understand.

And so it is a tremendous battle, but what can be done? Translation, even if not on the grand scale in which it takes place in Brazil, is indispensable, and many people who only know how to write need to earn a living, even if only a precarious one. And so, as with everything here in Brazil, we must grin and bear it, and pray for better days to come, even those who are not believers. For now, that is what there is for the plundered of the earth, who are always the ones to blame: the traitors. ■

About the Authors

Although **Tom Moore** is not a member (there were no contributions from members for this issue), he has contributed translations of articles on translation to the Gotham Translator, PLData, and the ATA Chronicle. He translates from Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian and German into English. He is presently a visiting professor of music at the University of Rio de Janeiro

Marcos Santarrita was born on April 16, 1941 in Aracaju, Sergipe, in the northeast of Brazil. He grew up in the cocoa-growing region of the state of Bahia and began to write at the age of sixteen while still a student in Salvador, the capital of Bahia, where he published countless stories and articles in the local press. After moving to Rio de Janeiro, he published his first collection of stories, *Men's Solitude* in 1968, followed by a succession of novels.

CALL FOR PAPERS

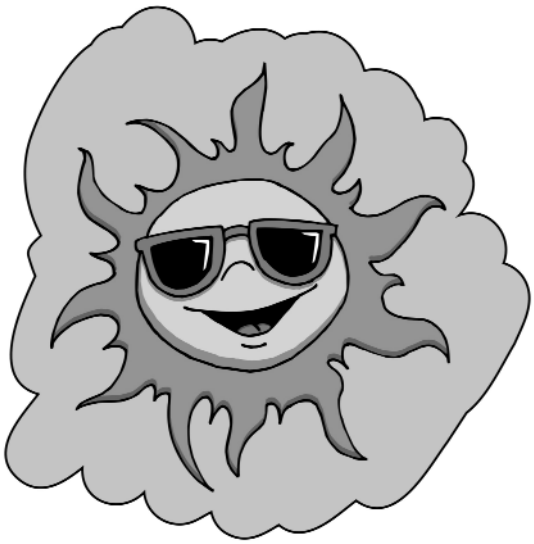
The Gotham Translator accepts and welcomes contributions of articles about all aspects of translation and translator-related issues. These may include, but are not limited to, specific translation problems or approaches to translation, legal issues, and the business of translation. We also welcome dictionary and hardware/software reviews as well as reviews of books, conferences and workshops. 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. ■

MEMORIES OF SUMMER

With the autumn season in full swing and as we look forward to winter holidays, it is nice to look back on the pleasant days of summer.

This year we had two opportunities to get together in a spirit of fun and camaraderie. We began with a party in June and finished with a picnic in August.



Many thanks to Elisabeth, Maurice, Fouad, and Matt for the photographs and also to all those who made these events possible.

CIRCLE NEWS

■ FORMER PROGRAM DIRECTOR SURVIVES TRAGEDY BUT NEEDS HELP

Debbie Foloran, a long time Circle member and former program director as well as a real friend to many of us, needs our help and support. Debbie and her husband lost everything they owned when their apartment building in Montreal burned down in the middle of the night. Just before the roof collapsed, they were able to escape to safety. We are truly happy that they survived this tragedy. While Debbie was able to take her laptop on the way out, she lost books, research materials, translations, her husband's artwork, and many things that she considered dear.

Now our friend is in the process of starting anew by finding a new apartment and furnishings and doing all that is necessary to get their life back together. A group of their friends and colleagues have started a fund-raising effort to help them through this difficult period. It would be wonderful if we could show our support and help our dear friend and colleague by sending a donation. A donation can be sent to Deborah Folaron at her father's address which appears below. Debbie's parents will deposit all donations in an account that they manage for her and her husband Mimmo. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Daniel Folaron
Ms Debbie Folaron
7471 Lewis Road
Holland, NY 14080

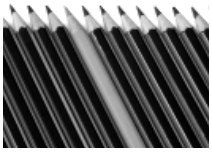
Thank you for your compassion and help.

■ CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Milena Savova, Chairperson of the Continuing Education Committee, after several years of successfully performing her duties, has resigned. The NYCT Board feels sorry that she will not be on the Committee any longer but is happy to know that Milena will be available to assist the Board in any way she can. Thank you, Milena. We want you to know how much we continue to appreciate you as a person and as our member.

Our colleague Jordan Fox has graciously agreed to serve as Chairperson of the Continuing Education Committee. We would like to extend a warm welcome to Jordan and tell him that we will be there to assist him in any way we can. If you are interested in learning more about Jordan and seeing him in person, please come to our October 26th meeting: he will be our presenter.

■ EDITORIAL ASSISTANT



The Gotham Translator is changing. In an effort to make the newsletter more useful and more meaningful to members, we plan to broaden the scope of materials that we publish. To facilitate this goal, we have opened a new position. In addition to the Editorial Board, we now have an Editorial Assistant who will be assisting Rosene Zaros, the Editor. Our colleague, Karl Gluck, has accepted the position and we want to wish him the best and to thank him for his service.

■ SEPTEMBER MEETING

The Circle held its September Meeting on the 21st. Members turned out in large numbers to hear speaker Jon Ritzdorf, Localization Engineering Architect, who teaches at NYU and Rutgers University. The title of his presentation was: The Web We Should Weave: Translators, Technology and the "Web." Jon's presentation was both informative and entertaining. We finished the evening at the Zen Palate, eating vegan food that tasted just like regular food. We thank everyone who participated in these two events and a special thanks goes to Jon for his contributions to the Circle.

FINANCIAL STRATEGIES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

By Joel A. Schreiber, CFP ®, MBA

BUSINESS CASH FLOW

It isn't news to you that control of your day-to-day cash flow is one of the most critical aspects of your job.

First of all, you can consider that you have four different types of funds:

- *Operating Money* that you use for current expenses
- *Invested Money* that's working to earn more money
- *Restricted Money* that is committed for some purpose
- *Potential Money*, income that is on your books, but hasn't yet been realized.

There are many strategies to maximize cash holdings, from laddered CD's, to short term ultra-conservative bond funds, to stock market CD's. These are all safe and liquid, yet can be higher yielding than your everyday bank account.

The other major cash control concern is to effectively manage your debt. Fortunately, today there are a number of ways you can tap resources to help underwrite the growth of your business or even your short-term needs. Among the tools you can use are business charge cards, business credit cards, capital lines of credit, business term loans and home equity lines of credit. The right mix of debt financing for your business depends on such factors as interest rates, loan limits, and required payback timeframe.

The bottom line is to develop an effective strategy that makes the most of both your cash on hand and the potential credit that is available to you. Proper cash control often spells the difference between success and failure for your business.

TAX PLANNING

Income taxes play a critical role in the management of your business — from payroll taxes to unemployment insurance

(continued on next page)

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Translation Account Manager

tipping sprung ts

Tired of the usual project-management grind at a typical translation or localization company?
Consider joining the TippingSprung team to broaden your horizons — apply your translation knowledge at a top marketing company, and participate in translation/localization as well as marketing and branding-related projects.
For more info: **www.tippingsprung.com**

Job responsibilities:

- Manage all aspects of project delivery, ensure quality, manage budgets and resources
- Ensure customer satisfaction
- Assist on non-translation projects
- Contribute to ongoing process improvement

Required experience/skills/traits:

- Proven expertise in translation business with references substantiating at least two years of meaningful experience
- BA or MA in relevant field
- Project management skills
- Excellent verbal and writing skills
- Highly organized; entrepreneurial; results-oriented
- High degree of computer literacy

To apply, please email your resume and cover letter to
excellence@tippingsprung.com

to corporate taxes — if the business is incorporated — or the impact of your company's earnings on your personal income tax return, you have plenty to worry about.

Let me begin by emphasizing just how important it is to maintain accurate and orderly records, and to keep them filed in a way that makes it easy for you to locate them in the future. Typically, you should maintain tax records for five to seven years on your business, as the IRS or state taxing authorities may come back to you with questions in this timeframe.

One benefit you have in running a business is that a wide variety of expenses are legally deductible. You need to be careful not to go overboard, but at the same time you don't want to be overly cautious and miss out on fully allowable deductions. Here we have a list of some of the more common expenses that are easily overlooked:

- Professional fees and dues
- Financial Planning fees
- Employee education expenses
- Parking
- Safe deposit box rental
- Insurance appraisal fee

The deductibility of these expenses depends on whether they are business or personal. Business expenses are generally deductible whether the business is a sole proprietorship or a corporation. If the expenses are personal, a sole proprietor might be able to deduct them as an itemized deduction.

Beyond deductions, one of the most important aspects of tax planning strategies to consider is *how your business is structured*. Here I am simply talking about the different forms your business can take. How you structure your business can go a long way toward determining whether you are taking full advantage of the tax laws. For instance, the most common form of business is the *sole proprietorship*. This is the simplest way to set up a business. Most of the costs of your business are deducted directly from your personal income taxes, and all income for the business flows directly to you and is reported on your tax return as well.

One benefit you have in running a business is that a wide variety of expenses are legally deductible.

If you own the business with others, you may decide to set up a partnership. This offers a way to manage the business and divide up its profits while providing a bit more protection for the co-owners.

A sole owner or family-owned business can also be structured as an *"S" Corporation*. The *"S" Corporation* is generally not a separately taxed entity, but it is required to file a separate tax return. However, the income or deductions sustained by the business is passed through to the owner or owners, and claimed on their own tax return. Being incorporated can give the business owner some benefits of limiting liability.

RETIREMENT PLANNING

From IRA's (Individual Retirement Accounts), to 401(k)'s, to Traditional Defined Benefit pensions, there are a wide variety of retirement plans for business owners with various pros and cons associated. Which plan you adopt depends on such factors as number of employees, tax situation, and investment flexibility you desire. One of the easiest and least costly plans to set up and maintain is a *SEP-IRA*. SEP stands for Simplified Employee Pension, and it is one way you can make significant contributions to a retirement plan. This plan is very popular with small businesses that want to minimize paperwork and have significant flexibility in how they structure company contributions to the plan.

Establishing a SEP is easy and does not require governmental reporting. Once established, SEP contributions are made to your IRA account. If you are self-employed, you actually make contributions to your own IRA. Beyond that, employees manage their IRA's themselves according to regular IRA rules.

Please feel free to call me for help on setting up your SEP IRA, or for a free consultation on any business owner financial planning issues you may have. ■

About the Author

Joel A. Schreiber is a Financial Advisor. He spoke at the BUILDING YOUR FREELANCE TRANSLATION BUSINESS Seminar in New York on Saturday, June 11, 2005. He can be reached at:

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To succeed in today's business world, you need specialized knowledge and an inside track. Being a member of the New York Circle of Translators gives you that and much more!

1. **Make contacts that count.** Access a network of accomplished translators and interpreters who share your interests, issues, and specializations through meetings, conferences, workshops, and social events.
2. **Expand your visibility.** Build your reputation in the industry by contributing to newsletters and meetings or serving on one of the committees.
3. **Market your services.** Target the right audience for your specialty or language combination with your listing in the online directory of members and services.
4. **Gain client confidence.** Show clients your commitment to continuing education and professional ethics with your membership.
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6. **Find the answers you need.** Learn tried-and-true solutions to daily challenges from leaders, mentors, and fellow members.
7. **Become an advocate.** Increase the visibility and public awareness of the translating and interpreting professions in general, and of your language or specialty specifically.
8. **Know the news.** Stay current with language- and specialty-specific resources.
9. **Connect with colleagues.** Exchange information with your colleagues.
10. **Be part of a community.** Make the New York Circle of Translators your professional home.

2005 NYCT MEMBERSHIP FORM

please print clearly using upper- and lower-case lettering

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- ❑ Individual ($40)
  Open to individuals interested in the goals and objectives of NYCT.
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Make your check payable to "NYCT" or "New York Circle of Translators," to the attention of the NYCT Treasurer.

Mail to: The New York Circle of Translators
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New York, NY 10163-4051

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)

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