TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION AGM
19 November 2019
Co-Chairs’ Report

Welcome & Introduction
TA membership currently totals 722, an increase from 701 last year. The total SoA membership is currently 10,897.

Committee
Natasha Lehrer and Christina MacSweeney accepted nominations to join the committee. They replace retiring members Daniel Hahn and Shaun Whiteside with effect from this AGM. Warm thanks to our retiring members for their valued contribution to the running of our association.

The Committee is always keen to hear from potential new members. If you are interested in serving on the committee from November 2020, please do contact one of the co-chairs or the TA secretary, Catherine Fuller, who will be happy to give you more information about what is involved.

The TA Committee for 2019-20 will be Charlotte Collins (co-chair), Ruth Martin (co-chair), Kareem Abdulrahman, Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp, Kari Dickson, Marta Dziurosz, Sasha Dugdale, William Gregory, Natasha Lehrer and Christina MacSweeney.

Roland Glasser represents CEATL ex-officio on the committee. The National Centre for Writing and BCLT share ex-officio representation at committee meetings, reporting on in Other Words and other relevant activities.

Activities
The TA Translation Symposium (popularly known as ‘LBF Minus One’) is our annual all-day event held on the Monday before the London Book Fair. 120 people attended this year’s sold-out event at Europe House, which featured LBF’s Literary Translator of the Fair Jeremy Tiang, a keynote address from the author Joanne Harris, and a public reading workshop with voice coach Jessica Higgs. The 2020 event will provide a holistic look at translation life, from improving your craft to improving your finances and mental wellbeing. It will take place on Monday 9 March at Goodenough College; please note this date for your diary now. Planning is also underway for the Literary Translation Centre at the London Book Fair (10-12 March).
Our annual summer social was held later than usual this year, on 5 September. It was one of the first external events held at the new SoA offices. As usual, it offered a welcome opportunity for members to meet each other.

The new SoA space will also provide an ideal home for our Tea and Talk: Translators and Cancer event on 3 December. This drop-in afternoon for translators living with cancer or who have had to deal with cancer in the past will offers an informal and supportive environment to chat informally over tea and cake. SoA staff will also be dropping in to chat and to answer any professional queries.

The TA committee’s Theatre Translation steering group is working with SoA staff to produce a new guide to contracts for theatre translation. The group is also engaging with producers, directors and literary managers in the sector to facilitate real change from ‘within’. In July, Catherine Fuller spoke at the Out of the Wings conference at Kings College London; the event highlighted the wide variety of work undertaken by theatre translators, and provided a good starting point for the guide.

Looking forward, our 2020 activities will include a focus on mental health. We have also applied to participate in the ITI & Friends event in Bristol in June. Look out for more details in The Author and the TA e-newsletter.

CEATL

In May of this year, CEATL held its first ever British AGM, in Norwich, with generous support from the Society of Authors, the National Centre for Writing (who hosted us at Dragon Hall), BCLT, the British Council, ALCS and Amazon Crossing. In addition to the sessions regarding internal CEATL business (including important lobbying and policymaking), the AGM featured a seminar on best practices, with contributions from Daniel Hahn, TA co-chairs Ruth Martin and Charlotte Collins, TA Secretary Catherine Fuller and NCW Director Chris Gribble, among others. There was also a public event on Translating Sebald hosted by BCLT Director Duncan Large and involving several translators of Sebald into different languages. Dinner on the final night included a private view of the exhibition “WG Sebald: Far Away – But From Where?” at the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts. This year’s AGM was held to have been one of the most successful in CEATL’s history – so many thanks to all our partners!

In other news, CEATL’s e-zine, Counterpoint, has proved extremely popular across the continent, and the second issue is due for publication early in December. You can download the latest issue and also subscribe to receive future issues here: https://www.ceatl.eu/ceatl-e-zine-counterpoint.

The 2019 Working Conditions Survey will go out shortly to members of all associations, and we urge you to respond – it shouldn’t take too long and it does give us a picture of how things have progressed since the last survey was carried out in 2011, and help to raise standards for literary translators.

And last of all, CEATL is currently drafting a Human Rights Charter specifically designed for literary translators. We will let you know more as soon as the final wording has been agreed.
National Centre for Writing/British Centre for Literary Translation

Highlights of this year for BCLT included Emily Wilson’s Sebald Lecture ‘Translating the Odyssey Again: Why and How’ in April (the event sold out for the second year running) and our two series of research-led events in May on Poetry Translation and on W.G. Sebald and Translation. The latter was part of a joint programme with National Centre for Writing for the Annual Meeting of CEATL, the European Council of Associations of Literary Translators. This year is BCLT’s 30th anniversary year, and our first major event will be a day on ‘Publishing in Translation’ held at UEA on 30 November.

Over the first year of the National Centre for Writing we have introduced residencies for translators from Korea, Singapore and Bulgaria, and a mini residency for a Dutch-English translator working with her author. Translators in residence have contributed to NCW’s Writing Life podcast and the Walking Norwich series. NCW and BCLT took part in a RECIT meeting in Hungary in May and will travel to Paris in December for the follow up meeting.

The 2019-2020 Emerging Translators Mentoring Scheme began on International Translation Day, with 7 translators working from French (Harvill Secker Young Translators Prize), Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Swiss Italian and Chinese (Tilted Axis Mentorship). The residential weekend will take place at Dragon Hall from 17th to 19th January 2020.

We are working with a number of partners as part of our Visible Communities programme exploring literary translation in diaspora and heritage language communities. They include BCLT, the Queen’s College Translation Exchange, Oxford, the Stephen Spender Trust, New Writing North, the Poetry Translation Centre and writer and translator Kavita Bhanot. We will also be offering mentoring opportunities, bursaries and residencies.

Our researcher Charlotte Hallahan would like to interview UK-based BAME literary translators, particularly those working with heritage languages. Any TA members willing to be interviewed, please contact Kate Griffin on kate@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk.

In Other Words

Following Issue 53 (July 2019) In Other Words has taken a short break as the publishers (the National Centre for Writing) explore moving towards a digital platform. As part of the consultation process NCW and SoA developed a reading habits survey which garnered over 90 responses from members of the TA and the Emerging Translators Network. The SoA and NCW are continuing to work together during this consultation process, and a final decision about the digital future of In Other Words is due in April 2020.

Campaigns

We are currently developing a project to encourage more literary prizes to accept works in translation, and to acknowledge and reward translators. Having laid the groundwork by gathering extensive data on the current prize landscape and speaking to some independent publishers about the issue, we intend to start
canvassing support from publishers more generally and contacting prize-awarding bodies in the new year.

The panel discussion held this evening on widening access to the profession is intended as the starting point for a broad focus on how we can help to increase the presence of under-represented groups in literary translation. The committee is open to ideas from members on concrete steps that we might take in this area over the next year, and beyond.

Translation Prizes

The annual Translation Prizes, administered by the SoA, were presented On 13 February at a ceremony at the British Library.

Save the date now for the 2020 event, which will be held at the British Library on Wednesday 12 February. The SoA Prizes team and the TA are jointly organising an event on Tuesday 28 January at the SoA offices to celebrate the shortlist. Further details and booking in early December.

Contracts and Rates

The SoA has three specialist translation guides available free of charge to members.

- Translator-Publisher Contracts
- Author-Commissioned translations
- Relay translations

Members are encouraged to send in their contracts for vetting by the SoA. The observed minimum rates for prose translation is £95 per 1,000 words. The suggested rate for poetry is £1.10 per line, with a minimum of £35 per poem, though members are advised to take a case-by-case approach as rates for poetry vary.

The negotiation of fees is a matter for the individual translator and publisher to resolve. You should always feel comfortable about asking to be fairly paid. In the SoA’s experience, UK trade publishers will pay in the region of £95 per thousand words for a prose translation. The word count can apply to either the source or target language.

The agreed sum may come as a flat fee, an advance against royalties, or a fee plus royalties from the first copy sold.

When negotiating a contract, you and the publisher will want to consider a number of factors. How long will it take you to complete the translation? As well as the word count, consider your experience, the complexity of the translation and if any additional research is required. Does the publisher need the translation by a very tight deadline? Is there grant funding available to support the costs of your translation? Will you get a royalty on sales?

Don’t forget that TA members are always entitled to unlimited advice and vetting of individual contracts from the SoA advisory team.
A reminder that translators can apply to the SoA for grants for work in progress from the Authors’ Foundation and the K Blundell Trust. Awards are made twice yearly to writers whose book project is for a commercial UK publisher.

Communications

The TA Forum is a free discussion group run by TA members for TA members only, and provides a safe and friendly environment to exchange news, view and ideas. To sign up, please send an email with your name and confirmation that you are a TA member to: ta-members+subscribe@groups.io

The SoA also maintains a TA Twitter list to which you can subscribe for a tailored translation-focused Twitter feed. You can find the latest tweets from list members either on Twitter itself or on the TA home page on the SoA website. Contact Catherine Fuller with your twitter handle if you want to subscribe. Don’t forget to follow @soc_of_authors.

Regular e-newsletters are sent to TA members; if you have any news or events that you would like to share with TA members, please let Catherine Fuller know. A paper copy of the TA newsletter can be sent on request if you do not have email access.

A new SoA groups e-newsletter template is currently being developed which will make it quicker and easier to prepare group newsletters.

The Society of Authors AGM will be held on Thursday 21 November at Conway Hall, WC1. Tickets can be booked via the SoA website.