

A Venetian adventure

With informative presentations on everything from revision techniques to useful smartphone apps, in a stunning Italian setting, Laura Bennett finds her first MET Meeting to be an extremely positive experience



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The Mediterranean Editors and Translators association is a forum for translators and editors who work mainly into or with English¹. With 190 members, it hosts a conference every year in a Mediterranean country with the aim of promoting opportunities for peer sharing of knowledge and expertise. I had hoped to attend METM11 in Barcelona, but was unable to do so. Imagine my delight when it was announced that METM12 would take place in Venice; as Italy is one of my source language countries, it was too good a chance to pass up. Luckily, I was also able to arrive in Venice 24 hours before the conference so could make the most of my time in the city.

The title of this year's conference was Craft & Critical Vision: Diving Beneath the Surface of Discourse, and it was to take place in the Don Orione Artigianelli Cultural Centre, close to the Accademia and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Initial workshops began on the Thursday afternoon but, as none of them fell within my specialisations, I opted to spend some time visiting one of the museums instead... followed by a sampling of the local gelato.

Workshop

My workshop took place on Friday morning and was entitled Translation Revision: how, why and how much. Led by Barcelona-based freelance translator Ailish Maher and in-house translator and editor Luci Vázquez, the workshop was fully booked and included translators and editors with

a range of languages, specialisations and experience. Ailish and Luci's intention was to provide a systematic overview of revision, including assessments to make and procedures to adopt when approaching a revision project in our working lives, rather than getting into the grammatical nitty-gritty of specific examples.

Stressing the importance of determining fitness for purpose of a text when revising, Luci began with this quality scale: 0 – unacceptable,

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1 – intelligible, 2 – accurate, 3 – well written, 4 – very well written, with only texts in the last two categories generally considered suitable for publication. With reference to Brian Mossop's *Revising and Editing for Translators*², we discussed the importance of revision elements falling into one of the four categories of Transfer, Language & Style, Presentation and Content. Ailish urged us to carry out a risk assessment when revising a text, in order to work out which of the four categories requires the greatest attention. Knowing when to exercise restraint was also stressed as being essential in a good reviser, over-revision being just as damaging as

under-revision. Taking care not to introduce any further errors when revising and, as far as possible, printing off or reading aloud the finished text was recommended for catching any lingering errors.

Ailish spoke of the differing approaches taken by the translator and reviser when dealing with a text. A translator's approach usually focuses on 'explicitating', making the text clear to the target reader. Conversely, the reviser often feels the need to 'implicitate'; the translator is often too close to the text to be able to assess the distance required, but the reviser can be a better judge of the line between over-clarification and potential ambiguity. After working on some further examples addressing these issues, the session was brought to an end in time for lunch.

Literary translation presentations

Friday afternoon began with a welcome from conference organisers Valerie Matarese and Marije de Jager, before turning to parallel presentations and panel discussions.

My afternoon was destined for a distinctly literary flavour with a first session entitled Editing and Translating Literature for the Sea of Words International Short Story Contest. A group of Barcelona-based translators and editors discussed their involvement in MET's project organised to provide publication-ready versions of four winning stories in this short story contest run by the Anna Lindh Foundation. Together with information about the running of the project and the issues encountered, it was interesting to learn how all the translators and editors involved felt their regular work had benefited from this voluntary project.

Next up was a groundbreaking MET event. Chaired by Sarah Griffin-Mason, the bulk of the presentation was given by Sarah Ardizzone via a live link with London. Despite learning afterwards that the technical set-up



had been fraught with anxiety earlier in the day, this was undetectable in what was a crystal-clear and fascinating presentation from Sarah. Introducing us to the Translation Nation project³, Sarah gave an overview of the initiative's aim of engaging second-language-English- and native-English-speaking primary school pupils in translation in a way that promotes literacy, confidence and understanding among children and benefits communities as a whole.

Friday's programme drew to a close with the first of the plenary sessions. Speaking about Travelling, Writing, Translating, Loredana Polezzi, Associate Professor of Italian Studies at the University of Warwick, discussed the intersection of the history of travel writing and translation, while providing concrete examples dating as far back as Marco Polo's *Il Milione*. The day's final event brought an opportunity for some informal networking over a delicious buffet and drinks.

Practical issues

Saturday morning began with another round of panel discussions and presentations, and for me these began with a session focusing on practical tips for translators. Chaired by MET committee member Anne Murray, the panel's first speaker was freelance translator Timothy Barton. He amazed us with a number of automated hotkey processes set up to streamline his own invoicing processes, searches and file maintenance.

MET Treasurer Helen Casas spoke

next and chose to recommend a number of smartphone apps, ones that sync with PCs and laptops in particular. An avid smartphone user myself, I found this particularly enlightening. I left with a notebook full of recommendations for new apps, including Last Pass password manager, Xmarks for managing bookmarks and browsing, and a resolution to finally get to grips with HootSuite for managing my social media accounts.

The final speaker of the session was José Carlos Gil, who began his presentation by recommending two pieces of software: ApSic Xbench⁴, an integrated QA reference tool, and the free LF Aligner⁵ for aligning previously translated or bilingual files, with which José Carlos reported great results. Co-working spaces, something I find a particularly interesting proposition for combating freelancer isolation, was the next topic before José Carlos finished with a discussion of Gmail Labs tools; the 'undo send' feature for emails found a particularly appreciative audience. The session drew to a close with audience participation providing queries and positive feedback.

The next presentation was given by Ailish Maher and was entitled Quotations: lost in translation? Focusing on a topic that regularly comes up in my own work, Ailish was inspired to investigate this field on realising that there seems to be a lack of consensus among translators as to how best to tackle this issue. Areas covered included best practices for

dealing with quotations in a source text, the lengths that translators should go to when tracking down original quotations, consistency, avoiding plagiarism, strategies for paraphrasing and bibliographic or copyright implications. Providing examples from a text encountered in her own work with quotations originating in a variety of languages, Ailish finished by emphasising the importance of keeping the author's reading visible at all times.

Saturday's sessions came to an end with a presentation by Michael Farrell of his seemingly very useful and free self-built terminology search tool IntelliWebSearch⁶, followed by the MET General Assembly.

The conference took place at the Don Orione Artigianelli Cultural Centre in Venice

A soggy end!

METM12 concluded with a delicious closing dinner at a traditional restaurant near San Marco, giving us all a great opportunity to see the city one last time and to consolidate connections made earlier in the weekend. For me it had been an extremely positive event. One of the organisers made mention of a conscious effort to ensure that a variety of specialisations and interests had been catered for during this year's event, and, as a non-medical or scientific translator, that was certainly my experience. I would encourage other arts translators to attend future events on that basis.

Venice still had one last surprise for us... waking up the following morning to *acqua alta* flooding of 150cm certainly made for a memorable end to the trip. Luckily, by the time I needed to leave for the airport, the water had receded to ankle-deep and I was able to wade through. Others were not so fortunate and resorted to buying distinctly inelegant plastic galoshes to make their way home. One attendee commented that there was no need to take Diving Beneath the Surface of Discourse quite so literally!

FOOTNOTES

¹ www.metmeetings.org

² Mossop, Brian *Revising and Editing for Translators (Translation Practices Explained)*, Saint Jerome Publishing, 2007.

³ <http://translation-nation.herokuapp.com>

⁴ www.apsic.com/en/products_xbench.html

⁵ <http://sourceforge.net/projects/aligner/>

⁶ www.intelliwebsearch.com/index.asp