

# THE Tasks OF Translation

## IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT



Why translate? Who translates?  
What do translators need to know?  
What do translation theory, history,  
and practice have to offer to  
students of literature and language?  
Responding to the Presidential  
Forum theme, colleagues have taken  
up these questions from dozens  
of different angles. I hope you'll  
be able to attend several of the  
sessions listed here and discover  
new perspectives on translation and  
its importance for our profession.

---

Catherine Porter  
2009 MLA President

---



The Tasks of Translation in the Global Context is the theme of the Presidential Forum at the 2009 MLA Annual Convention. Below are the programs for the Presidential Forum and its linked sessions.

## PRESIDENTIAL FORUM

### Monday, 28 December

**146. The Tasks of Translation in the Global Context**  
*10:15 a.m.–12:00 noon, Regency Ballroom A and B, Loews*  
 The Presidential Forum. *Presiding:* Catherine Porter, State Univ. of New York Coll. at Cortland

1. “*Quadrature: Translation and the Spatial Arts*,” Tom Clark Conley, Harvard Univ.
2. “*Living in Translation*,” Verena Andermatt Conley, Harvard Univ.
3. “*Translation and the Figure of Border: Toward the Apprehension of Translation as a Social Action*,” Naoki Sakai, Cornell Univ.
4. “*Translating in a World Full of Languages*,” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Columbia Univ.

*Respondent:* Brett de Bary, Cornell Univ.

### Tuesday, 29 December

**418. Translating Theory, Theorizing Translation**  
*10:15–11:30 a.m., Regency Ballroom A and B, Loews*  
 A linked session arranged in conjunction with the Presidential Forum The Tasks of Translation in the Global Context (146). *Presiding:* Philip E. Lewis, New York, NY

1. “*Philosophical Untranslatables*,” Emily S. Apter, New York Univ.
2. “*Passing Strange: The Laws of Translation*,” Peggy Kamuf, Univ. of Southern California
3. “*Translation, Empiricism, Ethics*,” Lawrence M. Venuti, Temple Univ., Philadelphia

**478. Teaching in Translation: Comparative Literature**  
*1:45–3:00 p.m., Regency Ballroom A and B, Loews*  
 A linked session arranged in conjunction with the Presidential Forum The Tasks of Translation in the Global Context (146). *Presiding:* Marilyn Gaddis Rose, Binghamton Univ., State Univ. of New York

1. “*Teaching in—and about—Translation*,” Sandra L. Bermann, Princeton Univ.
2. “*Teaching Baudelaire, Teaching Translation*,” Jonathan Culler, Cornell Univ.
3. “*Teaching Russian Poetry in Translation: The Bilingual Necessity*,” Marjorie Gabrielle Perloff, Stanford Univ.

## PRESIDENTIAL FORUM PARTICIPANTS



**Emily S. Apter** is professor of French, English, and comparative literature at New York University. Her published works include the books *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*; *Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects*;

*Fetishism as Cultural Discourse* (coedited with William Pietz); *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France*; and *André Gide and the Codes of Homotextuality*. She edits the book series Translation/Transnation for Princeton University Press. Books in preparation include “‘Politics Small p’: Essays on the Society of Calculation in Nineteenth-Century France”; “*Literary Worlds and Literary History*”; and a collaborative project, “*The Politics of Periodization*.”

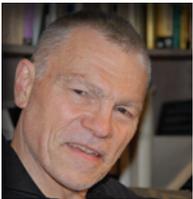


**Brett de Bary** holds a joint appointment with the Department of Asian Studies and the Department of Comparative Literature at Cornell. She has been director of Cornell’s Society for the Humanities and director of the Visual Studies Program. She has

translated works by Karatani Kojin, Oe Kenzaburo, Nakano Shigeharu, Miyamoto Yuriko, and Morisaki Kazue. She is associate editor of *Traces: A Multilingual Series of Cultural Theory and Translation*. She was a member of the Japan Foundation American Advisory Council. She coedited, with Iyotani Toshio and Naoki Sakai, *Deconstructing Nationality* and is the editor and translator of *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, by Karatani Kojin.



**Sandra L. Bermann**, Cotsen Professor of the Humanities at Princeton, is chair of the Department of Comparative Literature. She is author of *The Sonnet Over Time: Studies in the Sonnets of Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Baudelaire*; translator of Manzoni's *On the Historical Novel*; and coeditor, with Michael Wood, of *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*. Her current projects focus on lyric poetry, translation, intersections between twentieth-century historiography and literary theory, and new directions in comparative literature. At Princeton, she is a founding member of the Program in Translation and Intercultural Communication. She served as president of the American Comparative Literature Association in 2007–09.



**Tom Clark Conley** is Abbott Lawrence Lowell Professor in the Departments of Romance Languages and Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University. He translated *Casablanca: Movies and Memory*, by Marc Augé; *The Sovereign Map*, by Christian Jacob; Augé's *In the Metro*; Gilles Deleuze's *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*; and Michel de Certeau's *The Writing of History, The Capture of Speech and Culture in the Plural*. He is the author of *Cartographic Cinema* and *An Errant Eye: Poetry and Topography in Renaissance France*, scheduled to accompany a new edition of *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France*.



**Verena Andermatt Conley** is visiting professor of literature and comparative literature and Romance languages and literatures at Harvard University. She has worked on feminism and writing, the impact of technologies on contemporary culture, theories of the environment, and the negotiations of space in cultural theory. Her publications include *Hélène Cixous, Writing the Feminine; Rethinking Technologies; Ecopolitics*; and *The War against the Beavers*. She is working on space and habitability in French post-1968 cultural theorists.



**Jonathan Culler** is Class of 1916 Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cornell University. He is the author of numerous books on critical theory, including *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*; *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*; *The Literary in Theory*; and *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. He has at various times chaired the departments of English, Romance studies, and comparative literature at Cornell, and he served as president of the American Comparative Literature Association. He is working on books on *Les fleurs du mal* and on the theory of the lyric.



**Peggy Kamuf** is Marion Frances Chevalier Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. Her books include *Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise*; *Signature Pieces: On the Institutions of Authorship*; *The Division of Literature*; or, *The University in Deconstruction*; and *Book of Addresses*. She has translated into English texts by Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous and edited works by Derrida, most recently *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (with Elizabeth Rottenberg). She is one of the scholars editing Derrida's unpublished seminars and, with Geoffrey Bennington, is general editor for the English translation of this series.



**Philip E. Lewis**, professor emeritus at Cornell University, is vice president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. His work on seventeenth-century French literature includes books on La Rochefoucauld (*The Art of Abstraction*) and Charles Perrault (*Reading through the Mother Goose Tales*). He has served as editor of *Diacritics* and as a member of the MLA's Special Committee on the Future of the Print Record. He served as dean of Arts and Sciences at Cornell and as director of the university's Program in French Studies.



**Marjorie Gabrielle Perloff**

is Professor Emerita of English at Stanford University and scholar-in-residence in English and comparative literature at the University of Southern California. A past president of the MLA, she is the

author of many books on twentieth and twenty-first century poetry and poetics, including *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage*; *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*; *Wittgenstein's Ladder: The Strangeness of the Ordinary*; *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media*; and *The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound*, coedited with Craig Dworkin. Her cultural memoir *The Vienna Paradox* was published in 2004.



MLA President **Catherine Porter** is visiting professor at the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University and professor of French emerita, State University of New York College at Cortland, where she served as chair of the

Department of International Communications and Culture. She is a member of the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Translators Association, and the American Literary Translators Association. She has served as a regional delegate to the MLA's Delegate Assembly and as a member of the MLA's Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee, and Executive Council. She has translated nearly three dozen books.



**Marilyn Gaddis Rose** is a distinguished service professor and founder and current codirector of the Translation Research and Instruction Program at Binghamton University, State University of New York. A recipient of the Alexander

Gode medal of the American Translators Association for her contribution to translation pedagogy and scholarship, she is the founding editor of *Series*, the scholarly annual of the American Translation Association. She is the editor of the SUNY Press series *Women Writers in Translation* and a former member of the MLA Executive Council.



**Naoki Sakai** is professor of comparative literature and Asian studies at Cornell University. He has published in the fields of comparative literature, intellectual history, translation studies, the studies of racism and nationalism, and the histories

of speech, writing, calligraphy, and phonography. He has led the project *Traces*, a multilingual series in Korean, Chinese, English, German, and Japanese, and served as its founding senior editor. His publications include *Translation and Subjectivity*; *Voices of the Past*; *Stillbirth of the Japanese as an Ethnos and as a Language*; *Pride and Prejudice*; *Japan, Image, the United States*; and *Hope and the Constitution*.



**Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**,

University Professor, Columbia University, holds honorary degrees from the universities of Toronto and London and Oberlin College. She is the author of *Of Grammatology*

(translation with critical introduction of Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*); *Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Post-coloniality*; *In Other Worlds*; *Outside in the Teaching Machine*; *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*; *Death of a Discipline*; and *Other Asias*. *An Aesthetic Education in an Age of Globalization* is forthcoming. Her translations from Bengali include Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Maps*; *Breast Stories*, *Old Women*; and *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* and the eighteenth-century Bengali mystic Ramproshad Sen's *Song for Kali*.



Professor of English at Temple University, **Lawrence M.**

**Venuti** is a translation theorist and historian and a translator from Italian, French, and Catalan. He is the author of *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*

and *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* and the editor of *The Translation Studies Reader*. His translations include Antonia Pozzi's *Breath: Poems and Letters*; *Italy: A Traveler's Literary Companion*; and Massimo Carlotto's crime novel *The Goodbye Kiss*. He has received awards from the Fulbright Commission, the NEA, the NEH, and the Guggenheim Foundation. His version of Ernest Farrés's book of poems *Edward Hopper* won the Robert Fagles Translation Prize.

## 2009 PRESIDENTIAL THEME SESSIONS

The following is a list of sessions on The Tasks of Translation in the Global Context arranged by divisions, discussion groups, allied and affiliate organizations, and individual members.

### Sunday, 27 December

#### **17. Found in Translation: Translators on Translating**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall A1, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Twentieth-Century French Literature.

#### **32. The Disciplinary Challenges of Translation Studies**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall A2, Loews*

A special session.

#### **45. Translation: Figures, Theories, and Languages**

5:15–6:30 p.m., *307, Philadelphia Marriott*

Program arranged by the Division on Seventeenth-Century English Literature.

#### **49. Situating Translation**

5:15–6:30 p.m., *Congress B, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on French Medieval Language and Literature.

#### **81. Crossing Languages: Hybrids and Translations**

7:00–8:15 p.m., *Jefferson, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Language Theory.

#### **85. Creative Misreadings**

7:00–8:15 p.m., *Anthony, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Comparative Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature.

#### **89. Latin America in Translation Today**

7:00–8:15 p.m., *Congress B, Loews*

A special session.

#### **101. Translation and the Anglophone Text**

8:45–10:00 p.m., *Grand Ballroom Salon I, Philadelphia Marriott*

Program arranged by the Division on English Literature Other Than British and American.

### Monday, 28 December

#### **128. Cultural Politics and the Translation of Latin American Literature**

8:30–9:45 a.m., *Congress B, Loews*

A special session.

#### **132. The Translator's Visibility: Bridging the Gap between Translation and Translation Studies**

8:30–9:45 a.m., *Commonwealth Hall C, Loews*

A special session.

#### **145. Global Chaucer: The Circulation of Translation**

8:30–9:45 a.m., *410, Philadelphia Marriott*

Program arranged by the Division on Chaucer.

#### **195. World Literature in the Classroom: Pedagogies in Literature and Translation**

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., *Adams, Loews*

A special session.

#### **203. The Poet-Translator after Modernism**

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., *Independence Salon I, Philadelphia Marriott*

A special session.

#### **217. Arthurian Translatio**

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., *Congress B, Loews*

Program arranged by the Discussion Group on Arthurian Literature.

#### **229. Developing a New Generation of Translators**

1:45–3:00 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall C, Loews*

Program arranged by the Office of the Executive Director.

#### **230. Translated Scriptures**

1:45–3:00 p.m., *410, Philadelphia Marriott*

Program arranged by the Community College Humanities Association.

#### **248. German Transliterations: Poets and Philologists**

1:45–3:00 p.m., *Washington A, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century German Literature.

#### **252. Theory and Practice of Translation in Seventeenth-, Eighteenth-, and Nineteenth-Century Italy**

1:45–3:00 p.m., *Anthony, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Seventeenth-, Eighteenth-, and Nineteenth-Century Italian Literature.

#### **283. Translating the “Minor” or Noncanonical Languages and Literatures**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Regency Ballroom C2, Loews*

Program arranged by the American Comparative Literature Association.

#### **286. Sharing Culture and Preserving Poetry: Creative Conversations with Dick Davis on His Translations of Medieval Persian Verse**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall D, Loews*

Program arranged by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention.

#### **289. Translating Sephardic Texts, Sephardic Texts in Translation**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Anthony, Loews*

Program arranged by the Discussion Group on Sephardic Studies.

**324. Literary Translation and Literary Studies**

7:15–8:30 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall A2, Loews*

A special session.

**335. Gender and Translation: Voice, Politics, Praxis**

7:15–8:30 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall C, Loews*

Program arranged by the MLA Executive Council.

**348. Self-Translation**

7:15–8:30 p.m., *Washington A, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Comparative Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature.

**Tuesday, 29 December**

**369. Translation East and West**

8:30–9:45 a.m., *Regency Ballroom C1, Loews*

Program arranged by the Discussion Group on Translation.

**382. Translations and Early American Literature**

8:30–9:45 a.m., *307, Philadelphia Marriott*

Program arranged by the Division on American Literature to 1800.

**390. Training Translators in Theory and Practice**

8:30–9:45 a.m., *Washington A, Loews*

A special session.

**406. The Translated Modernities of East Asia: National Identities Found in Translation**

10:15–11:30 a.m., *Washington A, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on East Asian Languages and Literatures after 1900.

**419. Postcolonial Comparisons: Indigeneity and Translation**

10:15–11:30 a.m., *Regency Ballroom C2, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Postcolonial Studies in Literature and Culture.

**422. (Re)Interpreting Translation**

10:15–11:30 a.m., *308, Philadelphia Marriott*

A special session.

**433. Translation in Latin America**

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., *Washington A, Loews*

A special session.

**439. Teaching Literary Translation in a Polyglot Context**

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., *Congress B, Loews*

A special session.

**450. German Transliterations: New World Exchanges**

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., *Adams, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century German Literature.

**466. Found in Translation: The Many Lives of Colonial Texts**

1:45–3:00 p.m., *Regency Ballroom C1, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Colonial Latin American Literatures.

**488. Retranslation: When and Why?**

1:45–3:00 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall A2, Loews*

A special session.

**496. The Sociological Turn in Translation and Interpretation Studies**

1:45–3:00 p.m., *Jefferson, Loews*

A special session.

**499. Kafka Anew: Life, Work, Translations**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall C, Loews*

Program arranged by the Kafka Society of America.

**501. Literary Translators on Source Texts and Translation Practice: A Reading and Discussion**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall A2, Loews*

Program arranged by the MLA Office of Book Publications.

**515. Translating Africa in Global Contexts**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Washington A, Loews*

A special session.

**531. Language Theory and Translation Theory**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *Adams, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Language Theory.

**534. The Legitimacy of Translation as a Scholarly Activity**

3:30–4:45 p.m., *202-A, Pennsylvania Convention Center*

A special session.

**561. Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, and the United States Academy: What's the Relation?**

7:15–8:30 p.m., *Commonwealth Hall A2, Loews*

A special session.

**564. Bringing Borges into English: A Creative Conversation**

7:15–8:30 p.m., *Congress B, Loews*

Program arranged by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention.

**582. Inter-Asian Translation: Cultural Appropriation and Exchange in Premodern Asia**

7:15–8:30 p.m., *Jefferson, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on East Asian Languages and Literatures to 1900.

**586. Translation and Medicine**

9:00–10:15 p.m., *308, Philadelphia Marriott*

A special session.

**603. The Translated Modernities of East Asia: The Politics of Translation in National, Intra-Asian, and International Perspectives**

*9:00–10:15 p.m., Congress B, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on East Asian Languages and Literatures after 1900.

**608. Translating Identity: Early Modern Cultural Studies of the Ottoman Empire**

*9:00–10:15 p.m., Adams, Loews*

A special session.

**Wednesday, 30 December**

**614. Language Students as Future Translators**

*8:30–9:45 a.m., Adams, Loews*

A special session.

**622. Translating to and from Yiddish**

*8:30–9:45 a.m., Congress C, Loews*

Program arranged by the Discussion Group on Yiddish Literature.

**637. Englishing the French Renaissance**

*8:30–9:45 a.m., Jefferson, Loews*

A special session.

**672. The Role of Early Language Learning in Preparing Translators**

*10:15–11:30 a.m., Commonwealth Hall A1, Loews*

A special session.

**674. The Economies of Translatio**

*10:15–11:30 a.m., Anthony, Loews*

Program arranged by the Division on Comparative Studies in Medieval Literature.

**685. Translating C. P. Cavafy**

*12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Congress B, Loews*

Program arranged by the Modern Greek Studies Association.

Modern  
Language  
Association

**MLA**