

Aurora borealis: Fireworks for Metella Paterlini of Italy

A prize for outstanding translation of non fiction literature? This is actually a strange category: defined by exclusion, or even by negation. The book trade likes to make this distinction between fiction and non fiction, but many who work in the field agree that the difficulties are very much the same in both genres—whether you do research for a real subject or for something our authors make up. From helicopter construction terminology or logging industry shop-talk to medical diagnostic jargon, we always have to do our research thoroughly and in detail, be it for a fictional description or “the real thing”.

The Aurora borealis prize jury had a number of highly qualified candidates to consider, but in the end we all agreed

on Metella Paterlini, an extremely worthy member of Associazione Italiana Traduttori Interpreti. Metella graduated in translation from English and German in Milan. She started her career as a scientific-technical freelance translator and



Metella Paterlini receiving the Aurora borealis Prize

worked for publishing houses. From 1996 to 2003 she translated legal medical documents for the European Commission in Brussels and also for the EU translation centre in Luxemburg.

Metella Paterlini has translated more than 30 books from German and English for Italian publishers, on a wild and wide variety of subjects: guidebooks, essays, medical and scientific monographs and treatises, as well as works in the human sciences (archeology and philosophy), and several biographies.

In the profession, she is appreciated for her accurate translations from two different languages which she evidently masters very well. She has repeatedly been praised for “her smooth and well-flowing use of the Italian language”,

and for the jury she embodies the emblematic translator in the non fiction field by her sheer versatility, getting (and accepting!!) assignments covering every walk of life well, no, she told me that the subject of economics might be one walk that she prefers not to take and she is obviously producing highly satisfactory output in all of them.

If you are familiar with the German, you may know the term *Fachidiot* (a rather derogatory term for someone who knows one subject very well but is not a bit interested in anything else). The English is halfway between a *nerd* and a *one-trick pony*. And a very dear colleague in my Austrian association once coined the term *Vielfachidiot* to design our own

translating profession, making us ‘many-trick ponies’, which is much nicer I think.

And so in this (horse-)sense Metella Paterlini is a most worthy laureate for the 2014 Aurora Borealis Prize for outstanding translation of non fiction literature. Congratulazioni!

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