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Guest Editors' Preface

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Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, Volume 54, 2008, pp.
vii-viii (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press



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GUEST EDITORS' PREFACE

In 2001, with the encouragement of Mary Ellen Brown, then Director of Indiana University's Institute for Advanced Study, we launched a series of special seminars on literary translation. Under the Institute's auspices, we co-chaired monthly meetings at the Lilly Library through 2008. Since that time the seminars have continued with the assistance of Kevin Tsai as co-chair. We have always aimed at a broad representation of literatures and invited translators and scholars from around the world. Visitors have included many active members of the American Association of Literary Translators, of which Mitchell is a past president, and several contributors to a large-scale anthology of which Jones is editor-in-chief. Members of Indiana University's faculty have also participated as presenters as well as seminar members.

The first session in March 2001 was led by Yoshihiro Ohsawa of the University of Tokyo and Breon Mitchell, speaking on the topic of translation and censorship. During the nine years of the seminar's history, we have covered a variety of aspects and issues of translation: its possibility and impossibility, its role in society, the value of text-friendliness versus reader-friendliness, the role of translation in pedagogy and in business, the translator's position in relation to copyrights and censorship, and the influence of political ideology. Occasionally we have had intense exercises in translating in which we closely compared a variety of translations of the same work or joined the translator-presenter in closely examining her/his translation against the original. Through those lectures and exercises we learned much about the art of translation as well as the nature of literature. We limited ourselves to translations of foreign literatures into English, with source languages ranging from French and Chinese to Hebrew and Arabic. At times we invited the original author with her/ his translator, and on other occasions leaders of centers for foreign languages and translation both here and abroad.

Based on our IAS Seminar on Literary Translation, Ohsawa and Jones, with Mitchell as consultant, co-organized three workshops on literary translation for the meeting of the International Comparative Literature Association in Hong Kong in 2004. Subsequently, Ohsawa presented a symposium on “Familiarization and Defamiliarization” at the University of Tokyo. In this issue of the YCGL we have included works selected from among presentations at the IAS Seminar, many of which were based on papers given at the ICLA workshops and the Tokyo symposium. In Part I, edited by Jones, issues of translation, theoretical and practical, are pursued by scholars of translation. Part II, edited by Mitchell, places emphasis on practicing translators’ views and experiences.

We are grateful to the contributors for their thought-provoking papers and essays. We also thank the staff of the YCGL and of the University of Toronto Press for their devoted work.

Yoshihiro Ohsawa, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Tokyo and visiting researcher in the Department of Comparative Literature at Indiana University from 2001 to 2002, passed away in Tokyo on March 21, 2005. We regret his early and sudden death and recall with pleasure his inspiring participation at our Seminar at Indiana University and our joint efforts in planning the ICLA workshops.

Sumie Jones and Breon Mitchell, Co-editors