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Introduction: Indiana University: The Institute for Advanced Study Translation Workshops

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Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, Volume 54, 2008, pp. 135-136 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press



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INTRODUCTION

INDIANA UNIVERSITY: THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY TRANSLATION WORKSHOPS

The vexed and vexing relationship of theory and practice in literary translations has often been hampered by a lack of concrete evidence for the complex process by which a translation comes into being. Much of the material needed to understand this process more fully is often discarded, and thus lost to future generations. The first step in rectifying this situation is to preserve the papers of leading literary translators in our own time.

For the past nine years, the Lilly Library at Indiana University has been assembling a rich archive of translation manuscripts and materials for study by both literary scholars and students of translation, including correspondence with authors, translators' correspondence with publishers, translators' manuscripts, and translators' annotated copies of their works. The archives of such translators as William Weaver, Barbara Wright, Margaret Jull Costa, Leila Vennewitz, Edith Grossman, David Bellos, Krishna Winston, Nicholas De Lange and John Woods now allow us to investigate the genesis of translations in great detail, from the initial decision to translate a literary text (who decides to translate a text and why?), to the translation itself (in its varying stages), and its critical reception. Such archives also allow an insight into the business of translation: translators' fees, costs of production, editorial intervention, print runs, even questions of design and marketing.

As an adjunct to this project, we have established a forum in which such matters can be discussed both formally and informally. The Literary Translation Workshop of the IU Institute for Advanced Study offers distinguished translators from around the world an opportunity to share their methods and insights with colleagues from a wide range of departments, with no limitation as to source and target language. Guests are invited to speak about their own experiences as literary translators, and to touch on any of the subjects indicated above—always from

the perspective of actual practice, and with concrete examples. In many cases the Lilly Library also displays correspondence, drafts and other material related to the speaker's own published works.

The essays which follow give some sense of the seminars themselves—largely informal, often detail oriented, but also evolving at times into the translator's sense of his or her profession. Included here are essays by Margaret Jull Costa (Portuguese), David Young (Dutch), Jonathan Cohen (Spanish), Peter Constantine (German), and Kevin Tsai (Chinese). They offer only a small sample of the range of languages and genres we have dealt with, and the issues we routinely confront.

Although each of these essays comes from a practitioner of the art of translation, the authors are by no means unaware of translation theory, which has often informed their work. But it seems self-evident that any solidly-based theory of translation must take into account records like these of the translator's mind at work.

Breon Mitchell