Translation Studies Partners with University of Paris to Present Biennial Conference

"Translation as Innovation: Bridging the Sciences and the Humanities" (http://www.univ-paris-diderot.fr/TranslNov/page.php?np=welcome&n=16) is the theme of the second biennial conference coordinated through a partnership between CTS and the Centre d’Études sur la Traduction at the University of Paris Denis–Diderot. A delegation of University of Illinois faculty will travel to Paris to participate in the event, which is taking place December 13-15, 2012.

The conference will convene scholars and practitioners to examine the role of translation in the transmission of knowledge, particularly in the sciences. Conference planners recognize translation as a non-neutral activity and instead as an act that may enhance topic awareness or even generate debate.

Scott L. Montgomery, translator and author of several books, including Science in Translation: Movements of Knowledge Through Cultures and Time and the forthcoming Does Science Need a Global Language? English and the Future of Global Research, will provide a keynote address at the conference. We recently posed a few questions for Montgomery about his research and writing:

The literary translation audience seems to have been captivated by your book, Science in Translation: Movements of Knowledge Through Culture and Time. What prompted you to write it? How did you reach your conclusions?

This book developed directly out of my own work as a technical translator and my longstanding interest in scientific language, its history, and cultural contents. I had written a previous book of essays (The Scientific Voice) in which, among many things, I looked at what happened to Freud’s work, how it had been rendered into a scientific English from a more literary German. This made me wonder if such adaptation wasn’t a common element in the translation of scientific texts, especially in the past. Certainly I recognized it in my own translations; many changes were needed to create a scientifically-sounding text in English from the Japanese. From here, I looked into the history and theory of translation, which I found dealt with literary works but could be applied, with some important results, to scientific works, too. So I chose some specific cases—ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary—to research and write about. It seemed only right to examine things in some detail and to always be on the watch for how science itself changed when it was delivered from one language, culture, and historical setting into another. The results I came up with were absolutely fascinating to me—they still are, and always will be—and I must say that I’m very pleased they have been of interest to many others as well.

Are there common reactions to the book—and your views—that you could share?

In truth, though reviews were positive just about everywhere, reactions to the book have been much stronger and more appreciative in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia, than in the U.S. (with a few exceptions). This isn’t surprising, I suppose. All of these regions are multilingual to a far greater extent than America and commonly deal with issues related to linguistic difference.

You will be the keynote speaker at the upcoming conference coordinated jointly by the Center for Translation Studies at the University of Illinois and the University of Paris–Diderot in December. What connections do you hope to make through your talk and ensuing discussion with participants?

I’ve recently become very interested in the impact of English as a global language, particularly in the sciences, and have just completed a new book for the University of Chicago Press on the subject (Does Science Need a Global Language? English and the Future of Global Research). A fair portion of the book looks at the current situation of English, and its possible future, through the lens of lingua francas in the past, about which I learned a great deal while writing Science in Translation. So I’m especially eager to discuss some of my conclusions with other participants. This conference will be a rare opportunity to gain comments from so many important thinkers in this general area.

What are some of the conditions that have given rise to English becoming as close to a global language for science as we’ve had thus far?

These conditions are historical, meaning they have to do with early colonialism, and with geopolitics, war, economics, and technology in the 20th century, as well as the nature of post-war scientific culture. As many authors have pointed out, Britain’s colonial empire seeded English in many parts of the globe, while America’s political, economic, military, and scientific dominance after World War II, were primary factors. What hasn’t been noted as much are more recent geopolitical realities—the collapse of the Soviet Union (the end of Russian as a possible "competitor"), enlargement of aims of the U.N. (including its Millennium

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Development Goals), climate change and the IPCC, worldwide energy concerns, rise of international peacekeeping and human rights, global anti-terrorism, the growth of international aid and rescue organizations, and multinational “big science” projects like the Human Genome Project, the Large Hadron Collider, and the International Space Station. All of these have led to the further use of English as a global communicational currency, not least in science. Globalization and the Internet are not required, in other words, for English to have become something approaching a global tongue. Since the early 1990s, the vast majority of international scientific publication, databases, conferences, programs have become English-dominant or English-only. As of 2005, universities around the world have either expanded or begun teaching science and engineering courses in English. The language, in other words, extends well beyond American power, which it no longer depends upon. Such comments are really just the tip of the pyramid, however.

Was there ever a language that approached this level of dominance in science?

Absolutely. Between the 9th and 13th centuries, Arabic was the lingua franca of most of the best scientists in the world, from Spain to western India.

What are some of the ramifications of forsaking other languages in favor of presenting research in English?

There are a number of drawbacks and limitations to a global tongue in science, or any other domain, and they can’t be denied or ignored. I devote a full chapter to these in the new book. They include such things as fairness (advantages that native speakers have), bias (against those who speak or write imperfectly), marginalization (of those who choose other languages to publish in), problems of confidence (in non-native speakers), domain loss for other languages (new terminology coined in English first), among others. As I say, all of these factors are real. They were also real for Arabic, when it spread over the conquered lands of Islam; it was true for Chinese in East Asia; it was also true for Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Persian, and other regional lingua franca. What history shows is that these drawbacks are endemic to dominant languages and also are temporary; they weakened with time, as the lingua franca became something akin to a basic skill for intellectuals.

Meanwhile, a dominant language doesn’t, by itself, prevent research from gaining wider notice. Rather, it is the lack of translation—whether due to lack of translators, financial support for them, or the existence of copyright laws that prevent such translation into the dominant tongue. We should be clear: national science, in national languages, isn’t in any danger of going extinct—far from it. Governments support science for domestic reasons, not for the global advance of knowledge. What needs to happen is for publishers to allow significant domestic work to be translated into English, and to spear in print even simultaneously, via a system of copyright acknowledgments. It is the present system of priority claims on published work, preventing its re-appearance anywhere else, in any form, without large fees, that prevents the rightful delivery of excellent local work to a global audience.

One final point here: A global language increases multilingualism—thus, access to knowledge diversity—among all except native speakers. Today, as in the past, these speakers are too easily lured into thinking the world comes to their door, seeking the golden word. The truth is that as their language spreads, their monolingualism renders them progressively weaker and more isolated. The external world has access to everything they know; they have access to nothing else.
Judging a Translation: The National Translation Award

Remarks on Conferring the Award, October 2012

Note: The NTA Award is by tradition presented by the ALTA Vice-President. Elizabeth Lowe is serving in this capacity until 2013.

Each year since 1998, the American Literary Translators Association has presented the National Translation Award for the best book-length translation into English of a work of fiction, poetry, drama, or creative non-fiction published in the United States or Canada during the previous calendar year. The NTA, which comes with a prize of $5,000, may well be unique among awards for literary translation, as it is conferred by a sizable portion of the entire ALTA membership. This year, no fewer than 91 readers over two rounds of judging read 119 entries for the prize, from which nineteen, several of substantial quality, passed to the final round.

By the time the award committee met by phone to discuss the seven books that had all ranked highest, the committee was in unanimous agreement on the selection. To quote Jim Hoggard, “Infallible taste came to inevitable agreement!”

The purpose of the National Translation Award is, of course, to highlight outstanding work by a translator. However, the work that receives this honor must be able to withstand the close scrutiny that comes with such attention on a national and international level. Preference should be given to authors that are considered extremely important in their countries of origin or, beyond nationalism, writers who perpetuate and renovate the literary traditions of their languages. Under these circumstances, the translator needs to provide some kind of critical apparatus that orients English-speaking readers with regard to these matters. In addition, the translator may need to include explanations of unfamiliar geographical, sociopolitical, botanical, and culinary references in the original work—even if the typical monolingual editors and publishers are loath to do so. The main thing is to provide readers what they need to fully appreciate the work in translation, and this can be done in unobtrusive, non-academic ways.

Sinan Antoon’s translation of In the Presence of Absence, originally published in 2006 and offered to the English language readership in 2011 by Archipelago Press, deserves the National Translation Award, not only for the high quality of the translation from Arabic, but also for being a translation of the last words of someone who is arguably one of the world’s most important and beloved contemporary writers. The poems of Mahmoud Darwish, a Palestinian writer, have been translated into 35 languages for good reason. At the apex of his career, he composed this remarkable text knowing that his death was imminent and, in fact, he died in 2008. Self-elegy, the translator explains, is an “established genre in classical Arabic poetry…. In Darwish’s hands this kernel is introduced to new ground and branches out to new horizons…. creating a “poetography” that illuminates the author’s life, landscapes, and poetries.

According to one reviewer, “In cases where Darwish is in his most playful moments, Antoon recreates this playfulness in English while staying faithful to the original’s meaning and mood. At other moments, the English translation illuminates and in this way complements the Arabic…. Sinan Antoon has skillfully and thoroughly fulfilled his task as a translator by not only preserving to the maximum the inherent beauty of the text, but also by complementing it in his translation.”

The committee also felt that the award should be given because of the excellent paratext materials offered in the way of a translator’s preface and endnotes. The translator’s preface makes us want to know more about the fascinating “self-elegy” that Antoon defines as “an established genre in classical Arabic poetry, with roots going back to pre-Islamic times.” Readers need to understand how Darwish metabolizes the age-old experience of exile in order to fathom our own times. The end-notes are also valuable guides to understanding literary allusions, references to places and historical events.

Sinan Antoon is an associate professor at New York University. His teaching and research interests lie in pre-modern Arabic literature and contemporary Arab culture and politics. His scholarly works include The Poetics of the Obscene: Ibn al-Hajjaj and Sukhf (2011), and numerous essays on the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, Sargon Boulus, and on contemporary Iraqi culture. He has published two collections of poetry in Arabic and one collection in English: The Baghdad Blues (2007). He has published three novels: Tjaam: An Iraqi Rhapsody (2007), which has appeared in German, Portuguese, Norwegian, and Italian editions; The Pomegranate Alone (2010), forthcoming from Yale University Press in 2013; and Ya Maryam (2012). His translation of Toni Morrison’s Home is forthcoming in Arabic in 2013.
**Faculty News and Publications**

David Cooper published a translation of part of a study by the great Czech scholar of translation, Jiří Levý, in the “Translation Studies in Translation” section of the journal Translation and Interpreting Studies. “Classicism and Romanticism in European Translation” by Jiří Levý, translated with an introduction by David L. Cooper, can be found in issue 7:1 (2012).

Leonardo Giannossa wrote an entry called “Text-based Approaches to Translation” for the forthcoming Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics to be published this month.


Rosina Neginsky is working on a translation from English into French of her book of poetry, Juggler, that was published in a bilingual (Russian and English) edition, in 2009 by University Press of the South.

Nancy Blake, Douglas Kibbee, Elizabeth Lowe, Patricia Phillips-Batoma, Joyce Tolliver and graduate student Donald McLawhorn (EALC and College of Medicine) will present sessions at our biennial conference for translation scholars and practitioners conducted in partnership with the University of Paris Denis–Diderot. (Paris, December 2012).

**Meet a CTS Lecturer**

Leonardo Giannossa, a visiting lecturer for the current academic year, took a break from work recently to talk about his background and his first few months at Illinois.

Giannossa studied translation at the University of Bari in Italy, where he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. In August, he graduated from Kent State University, having earned a doctorate in English and Spanish translation. “My dissertation is corpus-based and focuses on the statistical analysis of differences in the use of cohesive devices between English and Italian as well as between translated Italian and non-translated Italian,” he said.

“In Italy, study of a foreign language is required from a very young age—all through the elementary school years,” said Giannossa, who is from San Giorgio Ionico, in the province of Taranto, an ancient Greek colony in Southern Italy. He enjoyed studying English as well as Spanish.

Giannossa is teaching three courses this semester, including TRST 407: Terminology and LAS 490: Computer-Assisted Technology (CAT Tools). Both courses cover practical applications of terminology, translation, and localization work. TRST 490 introduces students to a variety of CAT tools, including the SDL Trados software suite. He is also supervising two capstone projects (TRST 440—the exit requirement for the program, a semester-long project in technical or literary translation) and developing online courses for the pending CTS master’s program.

**Events**

**May 2, 2013**

The Center for Translation Studies and the European Union Center at the University of Illinois will hold a translation competition from EU languages into English for Illinois high school students in the spring of 2013. The winners will be brought to the Champaign-Urbana campus for the one-day program, “Translation Day at Illinois.”

Please see www.euc.illinois.edu/translationcompetition for more information.

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**FAQ**

- How can I contact the Center for Translation Studies?
- What courses are offered by the Center for Translation Studies?
- What research opportunities are available for students?
- How can I get involved in translation and interpreting projects?
Gregory Henninger is a senior from Metamora, Ill., who is working toward a certificate in translation studies while earning dual bachelor’s degrees in Spanish and Literature. Fluent in three languages—English, Spanish, and German—and competent in a fourth—Arabic—Henninger is in rare company among his American peers. His extensive study of languages and their applications has been crafted with an eye to the future, providing Henninger with versatility in career choice.

When Henninger returned from his first study abroad experience in Vienna, Austria, in summer 2011, he learned that scheduling conflicts would prevent him from earning a minor in Arabic Studies and thus decided to pursue a Certificate in Translation Studies. Mastering translation software has been the focus of Henninger’s efforts since he enrolled in the CTS program.

“I consider myself very lucky to be able to study this material as an undergrad,” said Henninger. “I don’t think I’d have this opportunity anywhere else at this point.”

Henninger’s capstone project is a translation of technical descriptions of wind turbine technology from German into English. Professor Leonardo Giannossa is his advisor.

In order to gain further translation experience, Henninger has volunteered for three years at the Wesley Food Pantry on campus, where he assists Spanish-speaking patrons. He is also a volunteer advocate for Spanish-speaking clients of La Línea, a program of the University YMCA. He will study abroad in Bilbao, Spain, this spring.

“Toward the end, you learn something,” said Henninger. “I have come to a fork in the road,” said Henninger. “What I'm looking at now is trying to decide between a career path in Europe or following opportunities in the U.S. European programs [for advanced study] have a reputation of theoretical application, while American ones focus more on practical application.”

In Observance: Michael Henry Heim

The Center for Translation Studies family at Illinois bids a fond adieu to internationally acclaimed translator Michael Henry Heim, who died from complications of melanoma on September 29, 2012.

Heim was a gifted linguist who spoke or read over a dozen languages. He was a professor of Slavic languages and literature at the University of California–Los Angeles for 40 years.

Heim’s lauded body of work included translations of the writings of literary giants such as Anton Chekhov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Gunter Grass, and Thomas Mann. In 2003, Heim endowed the PEN Translation Fund (http://pen.org/page.php/prmid/396), which provides grants to selected literary translators in order to promote the publication of world literature in English.
MEET A CTS STAFF MEMBER

Elizabeth Mosley, an alumna of the University of Illinois (BS ’04, psychology), was welcomed to the Center for Translation Studies as office manager in May. Mosley previously held a temporary position within the office and was impressed by the program and its administration.

In her current role she juggles a range of tasks that bring the CTS executive committee’s goals to fruition. Ticking off tasks related to the Center’s quest to begin a master’s program in translation studies in fall 2013 is an intense focus at present. From arranging travel for faculty to scheduling and marketing courses to arranging logistics for guest forums, Mosley toggles nimbly between tasks and makes improvements where she can. Mosley has increased the center’s presence on social media, beginning a LinkedIn group and posting updates on Twitter. She plans to introduce quick response codes on spring semester course fliers provided to students.

“I really appreciate the culture and energy here,” said Mosley recently. “Dr. Lowe [CTS Director and Mosley’s supervisor] is very dynamic. She travels often and brings in guests from abroad. I love the exposure to languages and cultures.”

Mosley, the mother of four children attending Urbana schools, is simultaneously pursuing a master’s degree from Illinois in educational policy and leadership. She maintains a grant-writing consultation business on the side.

“Yes, I think Dr. Lowe will put those grant-writing skills to work soon, too!” said Mosley, with a warm smile. “This job is an opportunity to learn what goes on behind the scenes in education. I can utilize a lot of what I’ve learned here and continue to grow.”

University of Illinois Wins Grant to Host NEH Summer Institute

Dr. Elizabeth Lowe, director of the Center for Translation Studies, and Christopher Higgins, a CTS affiliate faculty member, will co-direct a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute for College and University Teachers next summer. The theme, “The Centrality of Translation to the Humanities: New Interdisciplinary Scholarship,” was developed in collaboration with University of Illinois colleagues Joyce Tolliver, Associate Professor of Spanish and gender and women’s studies, and Nicholas Burbules, professor and director, education policy, organization and leadership.

Scheduled to take place July 6-27, 2013, at the University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign campus, the course will teach through case studies, allowing participants to examine general issues in history, philosophy, and politics as they relate to translation.

The first case explored will be the boom in Latin American translated works, with discussion led by National Medal of Arts recipient Gregory Rabassa, who is widely known for his English translations of Spanish and Portuguese literary works, including One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez.

Next, the Bible—both Hebrew and King James versions—will be examined in the second case study as an example of a highly-charged text. David Rosenberg, a bestselling author, biblical scholar, and translator, and Valerie Hotchkiss, director of The Rare Book & Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois, will lead this portion.

The third case will take a look at Sigmund Freud’s body of writing and examine how his “everyday text was turned into scientific work through translation,” said Higgins. Adam Phillips, a psychoanalyst and author who is overseeing a re-translation of Freud’s prose for Penguin Books, will take the helm on this topic.

Rilke’s poetry will be the focus of the fourth case study. William Gass, accomplished author and critic, and Rainer Schulte, co-founder of the American Literary Translators Association and editor of Translation Review, will be the participants’ guides. “Their emphasis will be the concept that good translation is reading of the deepest kind,” said Higgins.

Throughout the institute, participants will be working on their own projects, which will be shared on the last day.

The institute concept presented by the Illinois team deals with the art or science of interpretation, which is a philosophical area of study, said Higgins. “There is a dynamic process in keeping a culture alive,” he said. “If you have living traditions, you are continually re-interpreting, from one writer to one reader, one teacher to one student. How does translation bring everything together?”

Participant applications are being accepted now. (Please see http://www.translation.illinois.edu/nehsummerinstitute2013.html for more information.) Twenty-five to thirty college instructors will be selected; the pool will include three graduate students.

“Our participants will be people from across the humanities who teach text and translation—discovery courses, if you will—who are interested in thinking through the stakes of teaching through translated works” said Higgins. “I hope they will feel like a kid in a candy store, as though they’re going back to grad school—reading and discussing.”

Christopher Higgins, associate professor of education policy, organization and leadership as well as an affiliate faculty member of CTS, is the author of The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). Higgins is the director of the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative. He is currently on sabbatical as he completes the first draft of a second book, Humane Letters, and compiles a book of previously-published essays about the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship.