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Interview with Anna Kinder, Deutsches Literaturarchiv (Marbach, Germany)

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MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS/PALABRAS CLAVES

archives, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, littérature allemande, traduction littéraire, période moderne

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1. Introduction

Anna Kinder is Head of Research at the German Literature Archive in Marbach, whose collections bring together and preserve an abundance of valuable sources of literary and intellectual history from 1750 to the present day. The following interview was conducted via email in April-May 2020.

2. Interview

PH – How did the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (DLA) come to be a centre for translation archives?

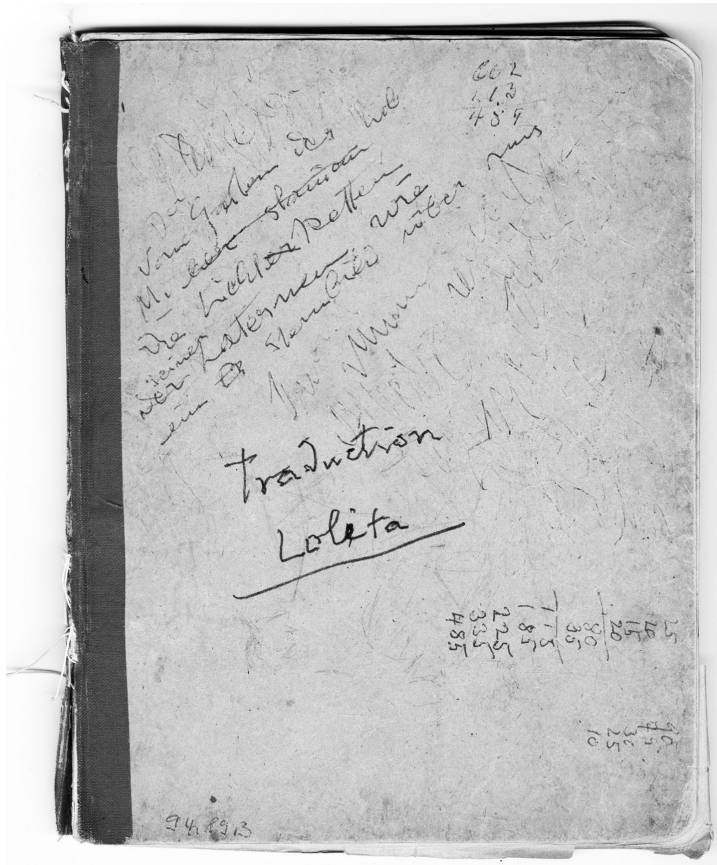
AK - That depends on how you use the term: ‘Translator’ can refer to multilateral operators who not only occupy a fixed role within the literary system, but figures who are sometimes authors themselves, like Hans Wollschläger, whose German translation¹ typescript of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*² is held at the DLA; or literary mediators, like Peter Urban (see Figure 3), or, conversely, figures we see primarily as authors who are, in fact, also translators – think of Friedrich Schiller, for example, who translated³ Racine’s *Phèdre*,⁴ or Ingeborg Bachmann’s Ungaretti translations.⁵ If we understand the term ‘translator’ in this sense, then, strictly speaking, the DLA has always been a centre for translators’ archives. And even if we look at how literature comes into being and functions, it is clear that the myth of monoglossia is difficult to maintain: literature comes into being and is always caught up in processes of translation, appropriation and retranslation. This is what ultimately makes the question of the supposed original so interesting.

PH – Can you describe the range of materials relating to translation that can be accessed at the DLA?

AK – Material relating to and created by translators can be found in the numerous literary estates of translating authors, publishers and editors, as well as in the archives of publishing houses and editors. The DLA also holds numerous materials relating

FIGURE 1

Helen Hessel's translation of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, 1959, Museum of Modern Literature, "Die Seele", Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach



to translators whose actual literary estates are not held in Marbach, such as Curt Meyer-Clason or Elmar Tophoven. The variety of material ranges from correspondence, manuscripts and typescripts, to galley proofs, notes, vocabulary lists, papers and the “original” copies of works used for translation in our collections of authors’ libraries.

PH – What factors influence which translators’ papers the DLA collects?

AK – The decision as to what the archive collects depends on a set of criteria, which are carefully examined during each individual acquisition process. These factors include, among others, questions relating to the research value as well as the canonicity, innovativeness, relevance to discourses and the significance of the person in question for literary history. Of course, it is also important that the materials correspond to our collection profile and that they can be well integrated into our already existing archival holdings, as this makes them particularly attractive in terms of research.

PH – Does the DLA have a budget to acquire translators’ papers and, if so, how does it decide what to acquire? Are there formal guidelines?

AK – No, there is no separate, designated budget to be used exclusively for acquiring a translator’s papers.

PH – Does the DLA aim to be representative of all kinds of literary translation and translators? Does it collect materials from other kinds of translation?

AK – In addition to literary authors, the DLA also collects the literary estates of philosophers and philologists, which naturally also contain materials relating to translation. This is also the case for the archives of publishers. The main focus of documenting translation activity does, however, clearly lie within the area of literary translations.

PH – Does the DLA distinguish between translators and author-translators when building its collection? Can such a distinction be seen in its catalogue?

AK – Author data in the catalogue provides names in the catalogue with their corresponding functions. Whether a person was more of an author than a translator is not something you can tell from the catalogue.

PH – Which translators would you personally like to see better represented in the DLA?

FIGURE 2

Helen Hessel’s translation of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, 1959, Museum of Modern Literature, “Die Seele”, Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach

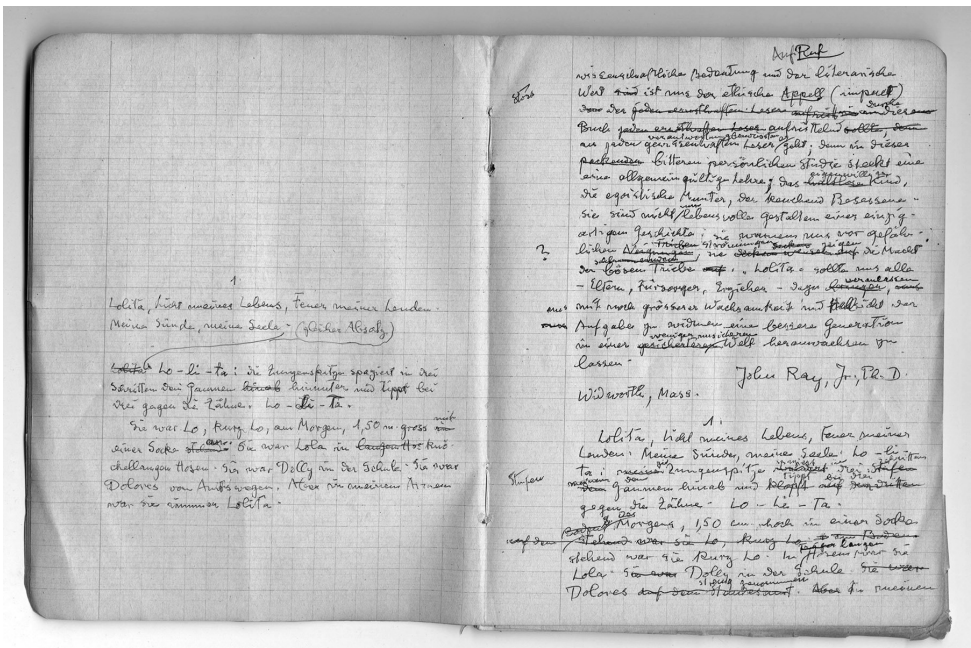
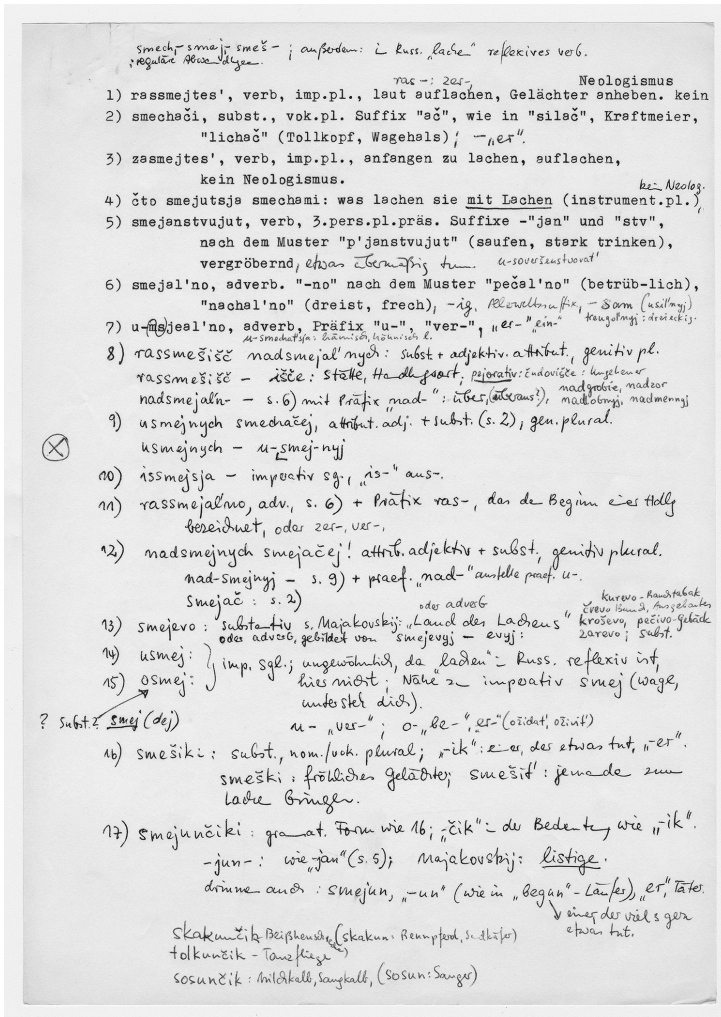


FIGURE 3

Peter Urban, working on translating Velemir Chlebnikov, Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach



AK – I am, in fact, particularly interested in the idea of networks, i.e. those collections which document how literature comes to be through processes of exchange and translation. A look at the archival material allows a number of “secondary” authors, such as translators or editors, to come into focus.

PH – How does the DLA judge the needs of researchers? Does this influence the choice of holdings, their organisation and description?

AK – This is always an important criterion. After all, we want researchers to use and study the material, which will, ideally, lead to the production of new things. An archive is only as alive as its users. In the meantime, over the course of numerous projects, we have tested a model in which the cataloguing and researching of material

are simultaneous processes. In this manner, research results can be directly incorporated into the cataloguing process.

PH – Are there other archival resources in the DLA that will be of benefit to translation researchers?

AK – What is particularly exciting here are the archives of publishers and editors, which show literature as translated literature before publication in all its creative, aesthetic, economic and programmatic dependencies. In this case I would also recommend a look at our international press archives, such as that of the archive of the publisher Suhrkamp, as well as at our production libraries, our collections of publishers' brochures and our collections of international licensed editions which the library houses.

PH – What efforts does the DLA make to promote translation research? Are there plans to digitise any of the holdings?

AK – Within the framework of our international fellowship programme, we support research projects based on the estates of translators and we enable research stays at the DLA Marbach. This is also a recurring theme at our academic conferences and event programmes. As far as digitisation is concerned, we have naturally undertaken to make as many materials as possible available in digital form – but, with the focus of our collections being the 20th and 21st centuries, we are faced with major challenges in this regard, particularly in terms of copyright and personal rights.

PH – How can one consult the DLA's translation archives?

AK – The collections are available for research within the framework of our regulations for use and can be viewed in our reading rooms after user registration. Our guesthouse can accommodate research guests and fellows for longer research stays. Scanning and copying requests can also be processed within a reasonable framework. In view of the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus, demand is currently increasing significantly.

NOTES

1. JOYCE, James (1939/1982): *Anna Livia Plurabelle*. (Translated from English by Hans WOLLSCHLÄGER) Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
2. JOYCE, James (1939): *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber and Faber.
3. RACINE, Jean (1677/1805): *Phèdre*. (Translated from French by Friedrich SCHILLER) Tübingen: J. G. Gotta.
4. RACINE, Jean (1677): *Phèdre*. Paris: Jean Ribou.
5. UNGARETTI, Giuseppe (1961): *Gedichte* [Poems]. (Translated from Italian by Ingeborg BACHMANN) Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.