THE TRANSLATION THESIS

For the past several years, Literature has allowed students to undertake a translation as their senior thesis project. In general, a translation thesis is comprised of a translation of a text that may or may not have been translated previously, as well as a significant critical commentary on the work in the form of a translator’s preface and notes on the text. Students who wish to undertake a translation thesis should consult with the Director of Studies before launching the thesis work.

The following guidelines provide valuable information on the form and content of a translation thesis:

**FORMAT:** One clear copy of the original text must be provided along with the two copies of the thesis. For other formatting indications, refer to the general thesis guidelines.

**LENGTH OF TRANSLATED TEXT:** The translation itself should be between 15,000 and 22,500 words, or about 60-90 double-spaced pages. Texts that fit this format well include novellas, plays, collections of short stories or poems, and some critical essays. A student who wishes to translate from a longer work (such as a novel) should choose a representative excerpt or a collection of excerpts that functions well as a standalone text.

**TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE:** The translator’s preface is a crucial component of the translation thesis. It should be no less than 5,000 and no more than 7,500 words, or about 20-30 double-spaced pages. The preface should:

- Introduce the text to a general academic readership and explain its significance. Relevant information about the author and the composition or reception of the text may be provided. If English translations of the text already exist, the preface should situate the new translation in relation to existing ones, and explain what the new translation seeks to achieve.

- Detail the translation challenges posed by the text. Using well-chosen examples, the stylistic particularities and semantic richness of the original text should be highlighted, demonstrating an informed understanding of the text in the original language.

- Describe and justify the translation strategies chosen in order to best render the original text. It may be useful to refer to other translations used as models (or counter-models), or to relevant texts on translation theory.
FOOTNOTES/ENDNOTES: Footnotes or endnotes should highlight, within the translation, places where a difficulty presented itself (such as word play, semantic ambiguities, or terms with no English equivalent), and explain how that difficulty was handled. In the case of a recurring difficulty, a note at the first occurrence is sufficient. A translation should not be overloaded with notes: in some cases, it may be advisable to limit notes to representative or significant instances. Important or recurrent difficulties can be addressed at greater length in the translator’s preface.

Notes can also be used to provide information about cultural or historical background relevant to an understanding of specific elements the text.

THESIS EVALUATIONS: Translation theses will be evaluated by two readers, at least one of whom will have a knowledge of the original language. In addition to the accuracy and readability of the translation, evaluators will devote particular attention to the quality of the critical apparatus (preface and notes).