

Words of thanks

on the occasion of the granting of an honorary doctorate to

Prof. Dr. Hans J. Vermeer

on 17 January 2010 in Heidelberg

delivered by Jun. Prof. Dr. Dilek Dizdar

Translated by Marina Dudenhöfer MA

It is now my turn and my pleasure to say a few words as one of that next generation of academics, on whose behalf I am also speaking and who have been touched by the life and work of Hans Vermeer as an author and a teacher. In particular, I would like to speak on behalf of Sebnem Bahadir; unfortunately, we cannot speak in chorus, as you once told us when we asked if we could do a presentation together for the PhD group, so I am speaking for both of us.

My dear Hans, in 1994, you wrote us a letter in which you addressed us as colleagues and invited us to come and talk to you in Heidelberg about our PhD thesis plans. You recommended Germersheim instead for our PhD studies as you felt it was more progressive, innovative and promising, and, new professors had just been appointed, in particular Heinz Göhring was also teaching there. From that point on, you supervised and encouraged us with such generosity; a generosity which should serve as the example for how we should behave towards students and anyone needing our support. Sebnem and I, as everyone present knows, have you to thank for the fact that we are both standing here as we are today, in a holistic sense, as Vermeer would say. It is impossible to clearly separate the academic from the non-academic, the rational from the emotional and our train of thoughts (caused by an outside stimulus) from our feelings. Likewise, we cannot separate our respect for the academic and teacher from our friendship and affection for him.

We should take people and their actions as a whole. Vermeer teaches us this by his example. He always treats others, their differences, the culture and their different ways of thinking with respect. This respect is coupled with Vermeer's humility, which can be felt in all of Vermeer's works and actions. He calls his work on tracing the history of translation, which fills seven thick volumes, *sketches*. He makes it clear in all his writings that his work is an invitation to start a dialogue and think further; a starting point for controversial discussion, even protest. If you read Vermeer attentively and follow his example, you will never fall into sectarian thinking. If others refuse to hold a dialogue with him, he creates his own by discussing the works of other academics from a whole range of disciplines. Although many academics have got stuck at *skopos* theory and its buzz words, Vermeer has continued to surpass himself. If you follow the development of Vermeer's theory and examine it carefully, you will see how he gradually revises "concepts" (including the concept of "concept"), brings in new trains of thought and drops others, in the process reshaping his theory. The foundations of Hans Vermeer's theory are stable thanks to his very thorough early groundwork on the *prerequisites for a theory of translation*. The depth and scope of his foundational research work could hardly be improved upon.

My dear Hans, I know you do not like words of thanks, or to be the centre of attention. You have accepted this honorary doctorate on behalf of your field of work and not for yourself. I know that you have been following the developments in Germersheim closely, that you delight in bright and

enthusiastic students and that you perhaps feel new optimism for our field. And I think you were right to recommend Germersheim. Things are changing here, even if it feels like a delayed reaction sometimes. I would like to particularly thank you for supporting these changes by accepting the honorary doctorate. Your acceptance sends a signal to the rest of the world of translation studies; it pays tribute to our field and, above all, it motivates and inspires us to carry on raising the profile of translation studies.

Thinking further, discussing, debating, crossing borders, *sounding out the borders* – that should be the aim of our new DocTRINe PhD group (“on the edges of translation studies”). You have allowed us to link your name to our plans and have promised us your support. We would like to open up the borders through guest professorships and improve the dialogue with our colleagues in translation studies throughout the world. This year, Rosemary Arrojo will be our guest professor. You have had a fruitful dialogue with her for many years now. “Interdisciplinarity” and “internationalisation” are the buzz words in universities today and we must give them a meaning. You quietly put these words into action with an openness of mind that made it possible to follow new paths and avoid the mainstream. I promise that I, that we, will do our utmost to follow these paths, even if we cannot hope to be as sure-footed as you.