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Charting the Future of Translation History

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Introduction

*L*et's make History so as "to let our children benefit from a more brilliant tradition" (Briceño Iragorry 1985, 145). Such a statement could serve as the motto for this book, and the attitude it expresses could be said to have motivated the contributors. This collection of studies is an attempt to point at blanks, at shortcomings which have prevented translation history from reaching its full disciplinary status among scientific fields and discovering the proper way to guarantee its own future.

Over the last thirty years there has been a substantial increase in activities relating to the history of translation. Both well-known and lesser-known specialists in translation studies have worked tirelessly to give the history of translation its rightful place. Numerous articles, theses, monographs, bibliographies, and anthologies have been published; symposiums, conferences, and congresses have been organized; journals and special collections have been launched. As a result, there exist today considerable resources of various types, based on differing approaches. Nevertheless, according to Lieven D'hulst (2001, 21), "the

history of translation has not received the attention it merits in terms of research and cannot be compared to any other type of research in translation studies."

While most of the work has focussed on the "first" world (Europe and North America) and on its languages, new approaches inspired by disciplines such as postcolonial studies and gender studies, as well as research on a wide range of traditions such as those of India, China, Spain, or Ireland, have all contributed to broadening the field and making it more inclusive.

While much of the earlier work was descriptive, recounting events and historical facts, there has been a shift in recent years to research based on the interpretation of these events and facts, with the development of a methodology grounded in historiography. Translation in history is now being linked to themes such as otherness, ideology, manipulation, and power. Clearly, progress has been made, and the history of translation has become a viable independent research area within translation studies.

This book aims at claiming such autonomy for the field with a renewed vigour. It seeks mainly to explore issues related to methodology and a variety of discourses on history, and looks forward to laying the groundwork for new avenues, new models, new methods. It aspires to challenge existing theoretical and ideological frameworks. It looks toward THE FUTURE OF TRANSLATION HISTORY.

Answers are suggested for some questions raised, such as "Should history of translation draw much more on history and historiography?" and "Should the field develop its own methodology and research techniques?" From microhistory, archaeology, and periodization to subjectivity and postmodernism, methodological "blank spaces" are being filled.

Increasingly, translators and scholars are taken into consideration, scrutinized, and elevated as historical subjects. This trend could not be otherwise since texts definitely cannot exist without authors and readers; these continue to be the main raw material for letting history come to life. Contributors to this volume share this view, but in most cases

they go far beyond the text to uncover the role translation has played in so many different times and settings.

The book is divided into two main blocks of readings which provide new insights into the two really significant trends that seem to be unfolding in translation history studies, namely discourses on methodology and discourses on history.

Methodology

In opening this section, Julio-César Santoyo makes a rough diagnosis of how translating activity, throughout its history of approximately four thousand, five hundred years, has been historicized. Though there are parts of that history that are well charted, there still remain "vast unknown territories" and large empty spaces yet to be filled in. There are also *mistakes* that Santoyo thinks it is imperative to amend, like the supposed existence of a Toledo "school" of translators. The "blanks" include, among others, the history of interpretation, the daily practice of translation, lost originals which only survive in translation, old theoretical and critical traditions of the East and Middle East, pseudo- and self-translations, and translations as agents of History. The author also pinpoints forgotten aspects of practical, everyday forms of translation that are not as well documented as those of a more "cultural" or "scientific" character. Arguing that translation "has made History," Santoyo shows us the immense task ahead and the commitment that will be necessary in the next generations.

Paul F. Bandia's article posits that for translation history to emerge as an autonomous discipline, translation historians should overcome the false perception of their status as mere archivists or translation scholars or practitioners "masquerading" as historians. To this end, the author highlights the relevance of the deconstructionist approach to history (against reconstructionism and constructionism) in accounting for the significance of postmodern discourse for translation history. This significance has been far-reaching, particularly in matters related to gender, minority, and postcolonialism, as well as questions of ethics in transla-

tion theory and practice. These developments must be accounted for in translation history from a proactive, interventionist perspective.

To deal with the role of the translator as a historical subject in multilingual environments, Reine Meylaerts makes use of the idea of agency, looking particularly at field theory's habitus concept. Using a sociological approach, she intends to grasp the dynamics of literary translations from Flemish into French in interwar Belgium. Answers to the questions "Who has the right to be (or become) a translator?" and "Who has the obligation / mission to remain a translator?" require an analysis of the relations between structure and agency. Meylaerts observes that texts and discourses can cross so-called linguistic and cultural boundaries, disrupting the analytical pertinence of a clear-cut distinction between "sources" and "targets." Consequently, she argues the need for very flexible definitions of "sources" and "targets," definitions which need to integrate the concept of agency with communication-oriented models.

Sergia Adamo starts by questioning the role of historical awareness in translation history, mainly discussing D'hulst's (1991, 1993, 2001) concerns and proposals before offering some insights into microhistory. She recalls that the first commitment of microhistory is to recover the voice of marginal subjects on the grounds of fragmented and apparently minor data. Like Cronin (1996), Adamo regrets that the role of translators as creative and inventive mediators has been largely ignored in traditional reconstructions. Studying eighteenth-century translations of novels in a cultural area defined as Italian, she found that translations were an important factor in defining the female reading public. Especially at the stages of corpus definition (including not only textual and paratextual elements in the translations but also the translators' own statements contained in prefaces and dedications, as well as in their letters and memoirs or publishing data), materials collection, and problem focusing, she comes across many elements that fail to fit into any of the possible existing models.

Former UN interpreter and one of the very few researchers in history of interpretation, Jesús Baigorri-Jalón, begins his article by stressing the main obstacle facing those who embark upon the task of rebuilding the

history of interpreting: the quest for sources and particularly secondary sources. He presents a table summarizing research proposals, divided according to possible topics for research, possible sources, methodological procedures, and difficulties the researcher might encounter. To take on the huge job still to be done, Baigorri recommends that researchers work in teams, constantly exchanging experiences and findings. He also advocates a rightful place for the history of translation and interpreting in training programs. We must be grateful to the author for his extensive bibliography, which shows that more has already been written in this field than we tend to think.

In his paper, Georges L. Bastin deals with subjectivity and rigour, referring in particular to the Latin American case. In his treatment of subjectivity, he examines the traditional Eurocentric vision that has dominated cultural studies in and on Latin America. He clearly denounces what he considers to be simplistic and even racist approaches. He then puts forward some local concepts (taken from cultural, literary, or philosophical studies) that better translate the complexity of the Latin American cultural reality. Some general orientations are given to help "localize" translation studies in the particular field of history in this part of the postcolonial world. Among other important factors, rigour is crucial in a field where firsthand sources are scarce. The author mentions several actual instances in which a seemingly minor lack of rigour made a big difference. He then encourages a necessary subjectivity expressed through a true local discourse and periodization.

Last but not least, Clara Foz examines the role of history in translation studies, focusing on two central issues within the field: the history of translation and periodization. First, she reviews the theoretical and methodological debates on the role of history, from claims of an objective historical truth to the so-called new history. Secondly, she stresses that periodization is fundamentally subjective and marked by its time and the institutions that produce it. She invites us to take advantage of the *Historia a Debate* website, which aims to stimulate discussion and reflection about history. She then turns to the "translation object" in

history and studies periodizations by Ljudskanov, Steiner, Santoyo, and Ballard. The author concludes that practice opens the way to the object, not the other way around. This explains why the object of translation is now moving and changing under the influence of linguistic, cultural, or deconstructionist paradigms. This new vision offers a perspective that makes it possible to look at the translation object not as a given but as a construction.

Current discourses

The second section of the book is made up of papers that deal with a range of topics pertaining to different geographical locations and covering a wide expanse of historical time ranging from the Middle Ages to contemporary times. These discourses on history give us insight into past translation practices as well as the ideological, sociocultural, and historical circumstances that have determined translation choices and strategies in a variety of traditions over the centuries.

The section opens with Claire-Hélène Lavigne's paper on the history of legal translation, a remarkable effort given that the subject of history is rarely broached by legal translation scholars. Lavigne attempts to debunk the myth of literalness in legal translation practice, which has often been considered the inevitable consequence of the authoritative status of legal texts. Based on a thorough comparison of a translation of the *Institutes* done in thirteenth-century France and a fairly recent rendition, her paper argues convincingly that, like other forms of translation, legal translation practice is highly determined by factors such as the translator's objectives, the historical period when the translation is performed, and the legal culture of the target audience.

The next article, by Marilyn Gaddis Rose, is based on a reading of André Malraux's China novels in translation, as history rather than fictionalized reportage. The English translations of Malraux's *Les conquérants* and *La condition humaine*, which are read as frequently as the originals, have expanded their author's readership and kept the historical record accessible. The translators of Malraux's novels, functioning as intermediaries,

have at times endeavoured to transmit the author's acute perceptiveness, revealing the imperialist and colonialist subtexts, and exposing a post-World War II pre-existentialist reading of heroism and altruism tainted by imperialist egotism and opportunism.

Nitsa Ben-Ari's paper is an insightful account of the role of moral censorship in the shaping of language and culture within the complex process of nation building. The author shows how puritan Zionist ideology led to the suppression of erotic material and the adoption of a puritanical approach to literature that dominated Israeli culture well into the 1970s and 1980s. Ben-Ari draws parallels between this Zionist ideology and Victorian Puritanism. The paper reveals the self-contradictory aspects of this form of censorship, which eventually undermined Zionism. It provides an alternative viewpoint regarding the development of literature and literary translation in Israel.

The role of ideology in translation is also explored in Chantal Gagnon's case study of political speeches and institutional discourse within the context of the classic conflict between the two founding nations of the Canadian federation. Gagnon shows how this conflict is played out in the ideologically-driven choices made in the translation of political speeches, resulting in translation shifts which often create conflicting images of the same event. She concludes that ideological translation shifts as practiced by the Canadian government are the result of deliberate institutional policies, which are determined by the value systems of Canadian society at various moments in contemporary history.

Jo-Anne Elder's article calls attention to the First Nations of Canada, so often overshadowed by conflicts between the French and the English. The article is fundamentally concerned with the preservation of the narratives of endangered cultures through translation, citing as an example Robert Bringhurst's work within the context of the history of aboriginal languages and literature in Canada. According to Elder, Bringhurst's work shows how translators can contribute to history by recording and translating texts written in an endangered language. Elder makes the argument that the works of literary translators (as

practising artists) should be examined as literature and not simply as texts documenting cultural history.

Building on the concept of passing developed in African-American Studies and Queer Theory, James St. André discusses the practice whereby creative writing by some Westerners was passed off as genuinely Chinese at the dawn of the twentieth century. St. André focuses on the case of Ernest Bramah Smith, who could not read Chinese but sought to transcreate "Chineseness" in his English-language works. Smith modeled his transcreations after a style of writing developed through the translation of Chinese works into English. Through an analysis of the linguistic markers of "Chineseness" in English, St. André locates the origin of this practice in nineteenth-century sinological translation practice. He concludes by recommending further research into the history of sinological translation viewed in terms of passing.

The next paper takes us into the realm of the Americas as Lourdes Arencibia leads us to Mexico to visit the first major school of interpreters and translators in the New World, founded around 1533: the Imperial College of Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco. This college aimed at training native linguists with the capacity to perform a sort of spiritual crossbreeding, reconciling Renaissance humanism and Mesoamerican wisdom. Arencibia describes its location and origin, as well as the students and teachers (like Fray Bernardino de Sahagun), their work, the problems encountered, the teaching orientation, and so on. She emphasizes the permanent exchange of knowledge between natives and missionaries. Lost for centuries, the massive corpus of the translators and interpreters of the Imperial College of Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco has been recovered only recently.

In the same vein, Lydia Fossa presents the *Glosas croniquenses* project, which seeks to establish a synchronic bilingual glossary of terms from American indigenous languages and Spanish. Based on a distinct post-colonial approach as well as concepts such as heterogeneity and migration, this project offers a fresh view of research on early language conflict in the Americas. The project throws light on the dialectalization of Spanish in the Americas and enhances the linguistic resources of indigenous languages. It promises to be a major research resource for scholars and researchers from a variety of disciplines.

Christine York's contribution also deals with the Americas as she explores the broader issue of translating historical texts and the importance of such translation for the afterlife of an original work. York discusses Janet Whatley's 1990 English translation of Jean de Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*, a classic account first published in 1578. In her study of Whatley's translation, York focuses on the naming of plants and animals of the New World, finding traces of indigenous voices within both the original and the translation, and highlighting the linguistic cross-fertilization that occurred in the contact between Europe and native America.

Finally, Juan Miguel Zarandona takes us through the history of travel writing and translation by British romantics fascinated by the Iberian Peninsula. In particular, Zarandona discusses Robert Southey's translations of *Amadis of Gaul* (1803) and *The Chronicle of the Cid* (1803). Both of these translations had to do with the medieval history of Spain, and they were undertaken mainly to satisfy the exotic interests of British romantics following their newly found enthusiasm for Spain and Portugal during the last decades of the eighteenth century.

These contributions, which deal variously with discourses on methodology and history, recast the discipline of translation history in a new light and pave the way to the future of research and teaching in the field.

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