

The history of Translation Studies as a discipline

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1.1 Preamble

This chapter will not re-narrate the recent history of the academic discipline of translation studies. The general outline of that history is, indeed, well known: translation studies is the result of a lasting development that began in the 1970s, has moved quickly forward since then, but is still far from having reached an advanced stage of maturity in the early twenty-first century. On that basis, a variety of more detailed overviews have been launched, up to the present day (cf. Malmkjær 2013/2017). Obviously, one could identify less considered issues that await further investigation. Think of the academic research conducted and published in less widely read languages or topics relegated to the margins of the main story (e.g., what happened to linguistically oriented translation studies?), or the role of the epigones in spreading and maintaining fashionable ideas. Not less obviously, other questions have remained largely unanswered: why has descriptive translation studies been so successful? To what extent did it merge with other approaches, such as sociology or book history? Why has the concept of translation become so flexible? What has been the balance between interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinaryity?

Such lacunae are predictable in any historical overview. Yet, it is noteworthy that, in comparison with other disciplines that consider their own history, the history of translation studies has paid little interest to matters of historiography, i.e., the practice of history-writing. More in particular, the question remains what are or have been the historical features, constraints, choices, and effects of the enterprise that consists precisely of writing a history of modern translation studies. This chapter puts the focus on such matters because it is this author's conviction that the writing of history in this specific domain urgently calls for more historical concern and more self-awareness. Why this is so will be discussed in the next section (and again in Section 1.6). Currently, historical concern and awareness are already fitting an upcoming trend of taking stock of theories, as noted by Federici with regard to Malmkjær and Windle's *Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies* (2011): "The History of Translation Theory" is taking possibly a more prominent role than discussions of new translation theories' (2013: 107). Still, the outcome of this historiographical exercise will not be a ready-made toolset for historical research, although it may help to provide a roadmap for

future histories of modern translation studies. Let there be little doubt: such a history will be a complex undertaking¹.

How is this chapter organised? I will first discuss the mainstream distinction between, on the one hand, the age-old history of ideas on translation commonly presented as the pre-discipline of scholarly thought and, on the other, the twentieth century self-proclaimed birth of the discipline called ‘translation studies’. Second, I will give a brief overview of a number of recent attempts to produce histories of modern translation studies. Third, I will list some of the challenges that face the design of histories to come. Fourth, I will reflect on some of the tools at the disposal of the translation historian. Finally, I will suggest an approach that extends beyond the short-term frame of contemporary translation studies and tries, instead, to embed it in a broader history of translation knowledge².

Two last notes. First, while I mostly refer to ‘translation studies’ as the academic discipline usually coined with capital letters (‘Translation Studies’), the term, in fact, covers endeavours with divergent scopes and methods and serves as an umbrella for an array of scholarly traditions written in languages other than English (see Section 1.4). Inevitably, the use of a single term runs the risk of ambiguity. Second, I am well aware that writing *about* the history of translation studies is inevitably a way of taking part *in* that history. Self-awareness, indeed, engages the historian no less than the historiographer (see again Section 1.5).

1.2 About pre-disciplines and disciplines

The first issue I wish to discuss is the deep-rooted conviction among translation scholars that their discipline has only recently gained a recognized position in academia in the humanities or social sciences. The following statement is representative of this conviction:

Given translation’s longstanding role in human history, the discipline of translation studies is surprisingly new. Though reflections on translation have accumulated over the centuries, only in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries did a disciplinary field develop to study it. [...] In a mere half-century, translation studies has become a stimulating field of academic as well as practical interest and has begun to challenge and transform research and curricula throughout the humanities and the social sciences.

(Bermann et al. 2014: 2)

Of course, there may be some disagreement about the extent of the discipline’s capacity to transform the research agendas and curricula of other disciplines or whether academic interests have coalesced with practical ones. But the general thrust is clear if not undisputed: translation studies has acquired the status of a discipline and has freed itself from its past as a pre-discipline. To question this achievement would involve abstruse discussions that would only interest epistemologists or theorists and concern aspects that are of little interest for the broader community of translation scholars.

Be that as it may, a reflection on the coming into being of modern translation studies can still be of benefit for students and beginning scholars who try to find their way in an increasingly opaque field. A field that seems marked by many turns, by conflicting methods, and East–West divides but also by an almost ungraspable range of meanings attached to basic concepts such as equivalence, norm, agent, or system (not to forget the very concept of translation). Therefore, and quite obviously, history is called upon to provide help by setting up beacons, by explaining similarities and oppositions, and by shedding light on the logic of change. However, the introduction of a historical perspective on the emergence and

evolution of translation studies has further implications, some of which question precisely this ingrained view of the opposition between a pre-discipline and a discipline.

First of all, why is this ‘self-chosen caesura by Western Translation studies from the 1970s’ (Schippel and Zwischenberger 2017: 10) so well accepted? Probably because it is the outcome of two equally widespread understandings of the principle of change in science, both borrowed from Thomas Kuhn’s famous inventory of models of evolution: the ‘growth’ model (science progresses by accumulation) and the model of ‘paradigm shifts’ (Kuhn 1962). It is worth pointing out that the history of translation studies features both models, as we will see further on in this chapter (see esp. Section 1.4). Let it suffice, at this point, to say that translation history probably does so in a more radical way when compared with other language disciplines and some social sciences. This holds, in particular, for the paradigm shift model³, one that, e.g., historians of modern linguistics are reluctant to use because there are too many different competing groups of scholars and schools and because there are too few generally accepted basic concepts and methods (cf. Kertész 2010).

Second, what exactly do translation scholars understand by a ‘discipline’? In fact, there is no real consent among historians of science on what a ‘discipline’ or a ‘field’ stands for and how one can establish enough shared evidence to distinguish between two phases of the life of a discipline: a pre-disciplinary and a disciplinary one (Shapin 1996). Not to mention that the understanding of what constitutes a discipline has itself undergone quite an evolution since the nineteenth century (Wallerstein 2001), giving way to a range of definitions of disciplines and especially of academic disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Admittedly, in a more practical vein, overviews and introductions to academic disciplines make use of basic toolsets of more or less measurable criteria, such as specific subject matters, theories, and methods, a strong presence in academic curricula, an acknowledged scholarly output, scholarly journals, meetings and conferences, accessible networks of scholars, and so on. There is little discussion that such criteria apply to translation studies of the twenty-first century. But defining specific subject matters or borrowing theories and methods are not historically specific to it, while other features, such as academic curricula, scholarly output, journals, meetings, and so on, have not yet been properly charted over a longer period of time⁴ and on a sufficiently large scale, with the prospect to draw a clear demarcation line between the ‘pre-discipline’ and ‘discipline’ translation studies.

A third implication of a historical perspective is that one is expected to achieve a more accurate view of the main turning point itself, which is very likely less a snapshot than a set of different steps or phases that have gradually sustained the self-understanding of translation studies as a discipline. Take the so-called founding text of translation studies written by James Holmes. It contains a search for models that Holmes thought would be useful to accommodate this discipline (1972/1988). More in particular, Holmes made reference to Mulkay’s theory on scientific growth (1972) and laid claim to the so-called empirical sciences represented then by philosopher of science Hempel (1952). At that time, the influence of the philosophy of science on ‘adjacent disciplines, most notably Linguistics’, as interpreted by Toury (1995/2012: 3), helped to sustain similar efforts in translation studies, including the ‘very organization of the discipline’:

Main split into *Pure* vs. *Applied* branches; *Pure Translation Studies* further broken down into *Theoretical (General and Partial)* vs. *Descriptive* sub-branches, with *Descriptive Translation Studies* branching again, in terms of three different foci of research: *Function-, Process-, and Product-oriented*.

(Toury 1995/2012: 3)

Obviously, Holmes's 'disciplinary utopia' (1972/1988: 67) was reacting against previous typologies of translation studies (or the lack thereof) and, perhaps less outspokenly, against the subservience of translation studies to linguistics or comparative literature. As one knows, Holmes's map has given rise to debate (see Pym 1998: 2–3), and alternate maps have followed. For instance, while they agreed that translation studies was an empirical science, Neubert and Shreve (1992: 68) seemingly had lesser interest in epistemological issues and preferred to foreground the specific subject matter, which was translation in their case. Later on, other ways to organise the discipline were discussed at length (e.g., Van Doorslaer 2007), in which the latter was seen less as a structuring device whose inner coherence and unity needed to be made manifest than as a conglomerate of more or less independent foci of attention (e.g., Venuti 2013).

Further, more is to be learnt about the epistemological and socio-institutional features that distinguish the discipline from earlier endeavours. Lines of demarcation are less sharply cut than expected for both types of features. For instance, attempts to leverage 'committed approaches' (Brownlie 2010) during the 1990s disowned the empirical status of translation studies. Committed approaches

distanced themselves from the popular Descriptive Translation Studies paradigm in order to highlight power differentials reflected in texts and in translation. Particular translation practices were advocated in order to contribute to redressing geo-political and social injustices.

(Brownlie 2010: 45)

Curiously, such approaches or paradigms are still sheltered by the same discipline, although non-empirical approaches had been discarded a generation or so before as being 'normative', if not as tokens of the pre-disciplinary status of translation studies. This illustrates that the discipline changes together with the understanding of what a discipline is or should be, in this case by branching out its content, methods, and even subject matter. So far, it seems, translation scholars have reluctantly dealt with such issues or topics, methods, viewpoints, or practices that did not undergo strong evolutions during recent history.

A fifth implication is methodological: will new techniques, as designed by bibliometricians, sociologists, and IT specialists, open up other issues or invite for more distinctive features of disciplinarity? Think of the measurable impact of scholarly output or the conditions and constraints that determine the way individual scholars enter into groups (Rovira-Esteva et al. 2015): viewed from such angles, disciplines become networks of researchers interacting through mutual citation but also through the impact they are able to yield beyond their own field of investigation. Comparison of career paths and scholarly achievements across specific languages and intellectual traditions may result in proposals to ascertain 'common ground' (Chesterman and Arrojo 2000) within the discipline and a greater sense of communality (cf. Echeverri 2017). All this points at a growing scientification of translation studies, a process also attested in other disciplines (Burke 2016: 31) and sustained by more facts – English becomes the lingua franca in international research, few intellectual traditions dominate on a large scale, while the success of specific output channels seems to rule out other ones:

At present [...], there are over 110 living specialised journals in Translation Studies (TS) throughout the world, be they online or in paper format. There are quite a few dictionaries and encyclopedias dealing only with our interdiscipline. The number of scientific publications (books, chapters in edited books, journal articles, PhDs...) in

our field exceeds 60,000 items, with over 40,000 in the last 20 years. Paradoxically, although journal articles and book chapters amount to almost the same number within TS (about 40% each, with a supplementary 15% of books), and although it is increasingly clear that TS scholars cite books more than anything else, any research outcome which is not a journal article runs the risk of becoming invisible.

(Rovira-Esteva et al. 2015: 159)

Even if visions of future developments generally depart from the growth model, we simply do not know how long upward trends will continue nor how research policies with regard to channel preference, citation indexes, language use, ‘visibility’, etc. will evolve in the coming years and decades. In spite of upcoming ‘post-translation studies’ (Gentzler 2017), we cannot answer the question of whether translation studies will remain a more or less independent discipline – or interdiscipline – or become an entity or branch of some other disciplinary construct to come. In any case, tearing up its past does not turn modern translation studies itself into a homogenous field.

1.3 A succinct overview of histories of twentieth-century translation studies

When it comes to narrating in a more concrete or detailed way the changes that feature in the history of the modern or recent discipline, historians tend to combine the Kuhn models with more nuanced understandings of evolution and change. Some also refer to larger models such as the centre/periphery opposition, reconsidering the relations between Western or European and non-Western or non-European theories (e.g., Tymoczko 2006). Others tend to forward specific methods such as *histoire croisée* (e.g., Wolf 2016), still others focus on specific domains or the envisaged target public (e.g., Koskinen 2010). In the following, I will give precedence to overviews that aim at a large distribution among students and beginning scholars.

1.3.1 Historical studies

To start with, it may come as a surprise that there are few encompassing histories of modern translation studies, i.e., histories that cover a period spanning several decades and aiming at a detailed reconstruction of content, method, agency, and other elements approached from a transnational or transcontinental scope. Most frequently, historians cluster historical information around pivotal categories, such as changes, mappings, genres, themes, areas, or languages.

An example of a category that has become topical is that of *change*. Snell-Hornby’s research on ‘turns’ (carried out between 2006 and 2018) has focussed both on the content of a turn as well as on its applicability in the history of upcoming translation studies from the 1980s on. A turn is ‘ideally a paradigmatic change, a marked “bend in the road” involving a distinct change in direction with a new pattern of reflection and discourse’ (Snell-Hornby 2018: 143). Turns may have large coverage, succeed, or complement each other. It needs time to assess them, and turns can only be seen in retrospect, although on short note. On that basis, Snell-Hornby, and others after her, have come to distinguish a ‘cultural turn’, a ‘globalisation turn’, an ‘iconic turn’, a ‘sociological turn’, an ‘empirical turn’, etc.

Another category is equally topical, i.e., the already mentioned *discipline*. In an overview article on the history of translation studies, Gentzler divides the period going from the early 1970s to the present in four time layers or sections labelled as ‘pre-discipline’, ‘discipline’, ‘interdiscipline’, and ‘post-discipline’. The first covers the period between the end of World War II and the 1970s, the second corresponds to the ‘founding period of translation studies’ until the early 1980s, the third focuses on ‘the expanding field’ of translation studies in the 1990s and 2000s, while the last marks a ‘new phase that further expands the definitions of the field’ (2014: 13).

Other historical endeavours take a discursive practice or *genre* as their key focus, yet without allocating these to specific time layers, as occurs with Gentzler’s *Contemporary Translation Theories* (1993), in which a set of theories or ‘approaches’ is seemingly put on a par:

The following chapters focus on just five different approaches to translation that began in the mid-sixties and continue to be influential today: (1) the American translation workshop; (2) the ‘science’ of translation; (3) early Translation Studies; (4) Polysystem theory and Translation Studies; and (5) deconstruction.

(Gentzler 1993: 2)

Several surveys highlight *themes* rather than branches or genres, present states of affairs rather than changes. For instance, Baker (2014) concentrates on themes of the present such as representation, minority-majority relations, globalisation, and global resistance. Such studies still feature a historical bias because a good deal of the argument is devoted to the prospect of translation studies.

A growing number of historical studies focus on specific *areas* and *languages*. To quote but a few: Siever (2010) on Germany, Wakabayashi (2012) on Japan, Tak-hung Chan (2004) and Fung Chang (2015) on China, Garbovskiy (2016) on Russia, Albrecht (2016) on the ‘Romance area’, Schippel et al. (2017) on ‘Eastern Europe’, etc.

To sum up, historical studies witness considerable diversity and, thus, the complexity of an undertaking that consists of establishing relations of synchrony and diachrony, hierarchy or inclusion between subdisciplines, branches, genres, or themes. Naturally, historical perspectives also find a place in the broad cluster of works that want to provide a comprehensive assessment of research on translation. Such works mostly take the 1970s as their starting point. Several, and especially those issued by major Anglophone publishing houses, are quite successful, as attested by reprints and re-editions. This success is probably due to the need felt by translation students and scholars to dispose of updated states of affairs in a fast-growing domain that shelters numerous approaches and topics.

1.3.2 Introductions

Introductions to translation studies are often shaped as textbooks, as with Munday’s *Introducing Translation Studies* (2001/2012), or Guidère’s *Introduction à la traductologie* (2008). They have an explicit didactic purpose and address primarily undergraduates or scholars coming from other disciplines; their intent being to bring together and summarise ‘the major strands of translation studies, in order to help readers acquire an understanding of the discipline and the necessary background and tools to begin to carry out their own research on translation’ (Munday 2001/2012: 1). Past occupies a marginal place, while ‘strands’ are rarely approached from a historical angle.

Introductions mostly differ by their scope, ordering, and viewpoint. For example, Stolze’s *Einführung* (1994/2011) extends the scope beyond late twentieth-century theories by giving

a consistent place to Humboldt, Schleiermacher, and Benjamin amongst their younger counterparts. All are presented and discussed with regard to five pivotal concepts: language system, text, discipline, action, and translator. Stolze also identifies correlations and differences between the scholar's viewpoints, yet without foregrounding shifts or turns. Pym's *Exploring Translation Theories* (2010) puts a focus on 'paradigms' (a category defined on the basis of the concepts equivalence, purposes, descriptions, uncertainty, localisation, and cultural translation) rather than individual theories. At the same time, he suggests a chronological order of paradigms 'starting around the 1960s and reaching the present day, except for the "uncertainty" paradigm, which was present in one form or another at the beginning' (2010: 3). However, chronology 'does not mean that the newer theories have automatically replaced the older ones' (2010: 3). Finally, Pym does not 'defend one paradigm against all others' (2010: 4), being interested 'in promoting awareness that there are many valuable ways of approaching translation, any of which may prove useful or stimulating in a given situation' (2010: 4). This idea of equivalent plurality seems to react against linear progression or radical turns; it regularly pops up in contemporary presentations of translation studies. But it does not put into question the major shift between the pre-discipline and discipline.

1.3.3 Companions

Next to introductions, which nurture didactic purposes such as progression and uniformity in viewpoint, companions handle a higher number of topics and are at the same time more complacent with variations between approaches (even if they likely want to serve as introductions as well). Munday's *Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* (2009) is a clear attempt to account for major 'issues' of contemporary translation studies but avoids the highlighting of opposition and evolution between the issues and the viewpoints of the authors that represent them:

This volume sets out to bring together contributions on key issues in translation studies, providing an overview, a definition of key concepts, a description of major theoretical work and an indication of possible avenues of development.

(Munday 2009: 1)

The volume covers nine such 'key issues', within nine chapters written by nine different experts. In spite of the focus on present and future, it is notable that a small selection of past writings enters the general presentation by the editor and is put side by side with present ones, as with Stolze (1994/2011). The reason is that eighteenth-century (Schleiermacher, Humboldt) and early twentieth-century (Benjamin) contributions have survived oblivion, as 'revisitations of such writings have transfused translation studies in recent decades' (2009: 4). Further, the editor does not attempt to pit against one another viewpoints that one assumes to be considerably divergent; his purpose being rather to allow all the authors to present their case independently:

I have also endeavoured to allow each author to speak with his/her voice, in many ways reflective of the theories they describe. Each chapter thus becomes an overview of the particular specialisation but, within that remit, each author has been able to develop those areas that are of most interest to him/her.

(2009: 12)

Newmark's concerns are with the usefulness of 'translation theory' (as opposed to 'translation studies', which he sees as 'more diluted') and the recurring question of the translator's search for the 'truth', moral and aesthetic.

(2009: 13)

The *Companion*, edited by Bermann and Porter (2014), covers up to 45 topics presented as chapters written by 47 authors and co-authors. These chapters are arranged in three parts that do not solicit a specific reading order ('Approaches to Translation', 'Translation in a Global Context', and 'Genres of Translation'). The book differs from previous companions, such as the one by Munday, not only by including more and more recent topics, methods, and viewpoints but also by taking into account the growing geolinguistic diversity of translation studies. Historical approaches to translation studies are not specifically distinguished but become conspicuous within a small number of topics, such as those dealt with by Baker (cf. *supra*), Bassnett, or Munday. Most authors take the 1950s as a starting point, while some, such as Cheung, go farther back in time.

1.3.4 Anthologies

Anthologies provide lengthy excerpts from what are considered seminal texts to which either direct or indirect access, i.e., through translation, is provided. In their presentation, anthologists generally dwell upon issues of text selection, contextualisation, and interpretation. In her anthology of theoretical texts, Nergaard (1995) orders the latter along a chronological line by distinguishing three 'generations'. A 'Prima generazione, per una scienza della traduzione' (First generation, for a science of translation) focuses on models of automatic translation and linguistic approaches during the 1950s and 1960s. It is followed by a 'Seconda generazione, per una teoria della traduzione' (Second generation, for a theory of translation), starting at the end of 1970s, with a focus on literary approaches. A 'Terza generazione, per una disciplina chiamata Translation Studies' (Third generation, for a discipline named Translation Studies) starts in the 1980s and covers issues such as post-modernism and deconstruction (1995: 1–48).

In his *Translation Studies Reader* (2002), Venuti intends to cast a map of contemporary translation studies, with 'its centers and peripheries, admissions and exclusions' (2002: 2). This map also accounts for 'the current fragmentation of the field into subspecialties, some empirically oriented, some hermeneutic and literary, and some influenced by various forms of linguistics and cultural studies which have resulted in productive syntheses' (2002: 2). On this basis, Venuti divides his reader into five chronological sections, corresponding to decades, each being introduced by historical narratives that 'refer to theoretical and methodological advances and occasionally offer critical evaluations. Yet the stories they tell avoid any evolutionary model of progress, as well as any systematic critique' (2002: 2). One may note a parallel here with previously mentioned surveys (Gentzler 1993; Pym 2010; Stolze 1994/2011).

Pinilla and Ordoñez López (2012) have written a history of anthologies of reflections on translation published in several languages in the Iberian Peninsula over two past decades. Their linking of genre, language, and space creates room for an analysis of a set of institutional and geocultural adaptations that Spanish and Portuguese anthologists have provided of so-called general translation studies.

1.3.5 Handbooks

As may be expected, the primary aim of a manual is first and foremost bound to language pairs and specific practices (literary, technical translation). Like most overviews

mentioned so far, handbooks generally split between pre-scientific and scientific phases of translation studies. But here also, quite some variation is discernible. Take the *Manuel de Traductologie* by Albrecht and Métrich (2016), which belongs to a series of Manuals of Romance Linguistics issued by German publisher de Gruyter. In spite of its name, the editors do not consider this *Manuel* as a ‘textbook’ nor as a ‘treaty’, but as ‘un ensemble – organisé – d’aperçus sur la traductologie des langues romanes’ (an organized set of surveys of translation studies in the Romance languages) (2016: 2). These surveys correspond to 37 chapters, grouped in five parts: ‘Aspects généraux’ (General aspects), ‘Linguistique et procédés de traduction’ (Linguistics and translation procedures), ‘Sciences du langage et traduction’ (Language sciences and translation), ‘Aspects historiques’ (Historical aspects), and ‘Aspects pratiques’ (Practical aspects). Many chapters in all parts manifest a great concern for itemising approaches, pointing at specific lacunae in contemporary histories, such as a history of translation terminology:

[...] neither the books written on translation history, nor the manuals addressing (future) translators, or the numerous introductions to the discipline give a place to the history of the main terms that have made up, during past centuries, the semantic field of the activity of translating and its agents.

(Pöckl 2016: 12, my translation⁶)

Benjamins’s *Handbook of Translation Studies* in four volumes (Gambier and Van Doorslaer 2010–2013) aims at spreading actual knowledge about a much larger range of topics among a broad audience of translation students and scholars as well as experts from other disciplines. These topics are ordered alphabetically and are also available in electronic format as an online resource facilitating updates and offering reference interlinking. Many of the chapters are also available in other languages. Historical viewpoints may occasionally pop up but are, obviously, not an explicit requirement or goal (although one chapter is explicitly devoted to translation history).

Other handbooks remain closer to the *Companions* mentioned earlier. So, the *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (2013/2017), by Millán and Bartrina, provides a number of ‘safe access routes into key areas of the discipline’ (p. 1). It is divided into five parts (‘Translation studies as an academic discipline’, ‘Defining the object of research in translation studies’, ‘Theoretical frameworks and research methodologies’, ‘Specialised practices and Future challenges’). These parts group 41 chapters, of which one is specifically devoted to history, while the basic tenet of the volume is to focus on the present and future challenges of the discipline. A similar attempt to offer access to key areas of translation history itself is featured by Rundle’s *Routledge Handbook of Translation History*, of which this chapter is a part: the first section offers an overview of ‘Methods and theories’ (eight chapters), the second focuses on ‘Interdisciplinary approaches’ (five chapters), while the third contains 16 case studies dealing with a variety of periods, areas, topics, and genres.

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1.3.6 Encyclopaedias

An alphabetical ordering of short chapters invites for an easy, yet, discontinuous reading. This principle naturally applies to encyclopaedias but is not always adopted by encyclopaedias of translation studies, which seem to attach different meanings to the term. As a matter of fact, the three-volume de Gruyter ‘Encyclopaedia’, issued by Kittel et al. (2004–2011),

uses German *Handbuch* and French *Encyclopédie* as equivalent subtitles, while it is structured along geographic and historic axes. It gives a prominent place to the history of translation studies, in particular in volumes 2 and 3, without, however, distinguishing neatly between translation practice and knowledge or theories about translation. We find extensive contributions on translation from antiquity till the nineteenth century and histories of regional and national translation cultures in and outside Europe, furthered by histories of translation of major works and authors, such as the Bible, Homer, or Shakespeare.

To some extent, the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker and Saldanha 2009) remains more within the logic of a handbook with short chapters alphabetically ordered. Historical issues are occasionally handled in the first part (General), when the entry invites, by tradition or convention, for a historical approach (as with the entry on the Bible). Yet, the second part (History and traditions) is explicitly devoted to history, shaped by either national or language traditions, with an unequal weight given to the history of translation vs. translation studies, but with a strong concern for non-Western traditions.⁷ Obviously, in all cases, the latter cover mainly pre-twentieth-century forms or aspects of knowledge.

As the preceding paragraphs have shown, recent overviews open up room for geocultural diversity in translation studies and its history. This opening has brought attention to ‘forgotten’ trends and figures, frequently viewed from a ‘national’ scope, as with the volume published by Schippel and Zwischenberger (2017). This volume contains a part on ‘Nationally-Framed Histories of Translation’ and another on figures who ‘served as role models and who, in most cases, are either relatively unknown in Western translation theory or are simply underrated’ (2017: 15). Discovery, rediscovery, and legitimation or re-legitimation seem to go hand in hand, as with other examples of national or language-specific histories, such as Ukrainian thinking on translation between the 1920s and the 1950s (Oleksandr 2017), or French thinking of the first half of the twentieth century (D’hulst, 2021).



1.4 A ‘history of translation studies’ or a ‘history of translation studies’?

Both the debates about the status of the discipline and recent surveys that create space for a historical perspective witness an upcoming trend, which is particularly featured by the present *Handbook* (Rundle 2021). One could describe this trend as a moving away from a ‘history of Translation Studies’ toward a ‘History of translation studies’. On the one hand, translation historians tend to consider writing history as a scholarly activity that needs exposure and debate of the concepts and methods used. On the other, they do not confine translation studies to a discipline that has been unequivocally established, labelled, acknowledged, and bordered but as a more or less open field of knowledge, one that may extend from Benjamin to Toury, cover French ‘traductologie’, next to Portuguese ‘Estudos de tradução’, Polish ‘Traduktologia’, or Afrikaans ‘Vertaalstudies’, as well as other types and domains of knowledge that have burgeoned both at earlier times and in other continents.

This perspective seemingly challenges the position of translation history within translation studies. Some of the historical work on translation is indeed carried out within intellectual or institutional frames that do not place themselves inside the discipline of translation studies. This is the case, for example, with a study on the evolution of German theories on translating ancient literature since 1800, in which the focus is put on reception and transformation of antiquity (Kitzbichler et al. 2009) or a study of translation concepts in the history of missionary linguistics (Zwartjes et al. 2014). Nonetheless, such works are committed to aspects such as content, methods, agency, and many more that translation historians

precisely deem essential for their work. The future will tell us whether interdisciplinary cooperation will improve between translation historians and historians of other disciplines (for an in-depth analysis of this matter, see Rundle and Rafael 2016).

Writing a self-reflexive history of modern translation studies faces more and perhaps trickier hurdles. One is the already mentioned mapping of a broadening field, a feature it shares with most domains of study in and outside the humanities that have considerably expanded during the past 50 years.

Second, scholars work within a wide variety of continental, national, or local intellectual environments that cannot be cut to fit to the Procrustean bed of ‘Translation Studies’ or publications in English. Some of these environments and intellectual traditions extend to longer periods or correspond to different and even shorter ones. Think of German *Übersetzungswissenschaft*, in use since the early nineteenth century, Russian *perevodovedenie* and Ukrainian *perekladознавство* from the 1920s onward (Tyulenev 2015; Kalnychenko 2017), French or Francophone *traductologie* since the end of the 1960s, German *Translatologie* since the 1970s, English ‘science of translation’ during the 1960s and 1970s, etc.

Third, thinking and theorizing about translation do not fit clear-cut institutional borders. They have rather evolved under an array of more or less independent shelters (e.g., departments of theoretical, classical, modern, and applied languages, institutes for translator training, literature and comparative literature departments). In other terms, the expansion of the field does not seem to have reduced the latter’s compartmentalisation and even less so since the more recent but massive participation of researchers coming from other fields and backgrounds worldwide. Enlarged scopes require re-considered bordering, if any.

Further, like all histories, a history of translation studies makes a selection of categories or elements, such as scholars, theories, methods, institutions, schools, areas, periods, etc. (D’huilst 2010). Yet, all these elements are, to some extent, interconnected. This implies that, in addition to common binaries (prescriptive vs. descriptive viewpoints, non-academic vs. academic institutions, Western vs. non-Western worldviews, practice-driven vs. theory-driven research, etc.), history should also look for binding elements between these elements and notably their filiations and influences. Interesting binding elements are language communities (e.g., Cheung’s exploratory work on Chinese discourse, Cheung 2006), cultural areas (e.g., Paker’s work on translation concepts during Ottoman translation history, Paker 2002), and multilingual and transnational scopes (e.g., Gambier and Stecconi 2019).

As to methodology, it should not come as a surprise that there are no ready-made procedures to deal with the history of translation studies. Of course, one may recall the well-known distinctions between internal and external approaches, the former putting a focus on content (concepts, methods, viewpoints, etc.), the latter on context (social, economic, institutional, etc.). Yet, both are entangled, so historians find themselves in the position of the anthropologist described by Lévi-Strauss in *La pensée sauvage* as a ‘bricoleur intellectuel’ (intellectual tinkerer), whose toolbox is limited and nevertheless in charge of describing complex and changing situations:

[...] the rules of his [the bricoleur’s] game are always to make do with ‘whatever is at hand’, that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock [...].

(Lévi-Strauss 1962/1966: 17)⁸

Decisions as to method depend also on more practical issues, such as the availability of data. For instance, micro-history and archive research are particularly challenging with regard to the domain of translation studies: for a long period of time, thinkers and thinking about translation have been discarded as secondary, like translation itself. The consequence is that much of the material, if it has not been simply destroyed, remains hard to find when it has not been itemised and classified as ‘translational’⁹.

1.5 A metahistoriographical digression

Given this rather long list of hurdles, it is appropriate to add a layer to the self-reflexivity of historical translation studies, by giving some thought to the epistemological and ideological underpinnings of the historical work itself. While turns are of pivotal importance to many historians, how should one understand the neglect or oblivion of continuity in thought? While quantitative methods are rapidly spreading within translation history, which place do historians consider desirable for qualitative research? Historians rarely address such questions in an explicit way at the outset of their work, and yet these questions have an impact on decision-making and may inspire, in particular, those historians who take charge of overviewing modern translation studies. Let me summarise four issues that are raised by a metahistoriographical viewpoint on translation studies (see also D’hulst 2010).

1.5.1 *Presuppositions*

The purposes of historical research are naturally quite diverse, depending on the institutional position, workplace, and intellectual background of translation historians. For some historians (including this one), to re-construct the history of thinking about translation is, among other reasons, a means to bridge the actual gap between the pre-discipline and discipline of translation studies (see the next section). In contrast to this (see Section 1.2), many see it as a means to distance past knowledge with the aim of sustaining claims for a better academic and scientific recognition of the discipline of translation studies (which naturally implies presuppositions about the nature of a science, a discipline, or knowledge in general). For others, history writing nurtures the belief that translation history should partake in a hub that links the historical branches of several social sciences or even become part of history as a mother discipline (e.g., Rundle 2012). Further, many so-called ‘engaged’ historians (e.g., Pym 2000; Tymoczko 2010) embrace specific approaches (social, comparative, cultural, micro-history, etc.), being motivated by present concerns in society (power, justice, interculturality, etc.). In addition, a number of historians are interested in revealing more historical diversity by highlighting concepts, worldviews, and intellectual traditions that have a long standing outside Europe (e.g., Cronin 2003; Hung and Wakabayashi 2005). Still others handle a viewpoint that aims at re-actualising forgotten thinkers or unacknowledged national traditions, languages, institutions, and the like (e.g., Santoyo 2006; Costantino 2015).

1.5.2 *Time*

The question of time calls for more consideration and, eventually, several adaptive decisions to be made (see esp. Rundle 2018). A first issue concerns the use of time levels. For instance, to what extent is it appropriate to project the historical periods featured by social,

AU: Is next section here Section 1.6 or Subsection 1.5.2?



political, or cultural movements onto the history of translation studies (think of categories such as structuralism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, women studies, hermeneutics, etc.)? In addition, as one knows, changes occurring in translation theories do not always coincide with changes in translation methods, practices, or popular viewpoints on translation. Another issue is the coverage of different types of evolution: less or more radical, faster or slower. As mentioned, there has been quite some debate about the concept of turn (*virage*, *Wende*, etc.). This debate has notably pitched into type and strength of turns, while the latter could also be viewed as tokens of field expansion, conceptual evolution, or methodological refinement (Bachmann-Medick 2007: 26–27). Further, turns are defined as such in contrast with continuities, which deserve equal attention, as was demonstrated decades ago by Fernand Braudel with regard to economic history (Braudel 1949; D’huilst 2007). Think of the persistence of age-old images or memes on translation: rather than dismissing them as pre-scientific or naïve statements, we are better advised to approach them as perennial instances of basic cognition.

1.5.3 Format

Histories are discursive constructs that adopt typical macrostructural formats as described in Section 1.3 of this chapter. The choice of a format solicits a number of well-thought decisions that may become a topic of debate and an object of exposure at the outset. To label and organise the outcome of historical research as a handbook, an encyclopaedia, an introduction, etc., invites for definitions, explicit principles of ordering, as well as comments on the handling of graphs, timetables, photographs, drawings, etc. (Assis Rosa 2018). Also, the mode of presentation is concerned here: should one narrate the history of translation studies or, rather, re-construct argumentations, compare ideas, interview witnesses, summarise life stories, quote diaries, or reproduce photographs and other first-hand accounts (as studied, e.g., by historians of interpretation, cf. Baigorri Jalón 2000; Torikai 2009)?¹⁰ Finally, even if the standard material format adopted by historical research continues to be the monograph, one also witnesses a growing pressure to turn toward shorter formats such as journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings (as mentioned in Section 1.2).

1.5.4 Metalanguage

Metalanguage is the terminology used by translation historians in order to name and describe historical facts and utterances: some of the terms already mentioned or commented upon in this contribution, such as ‘turn’, ‘change’, ‘continuity’, ‘influence’, ‘paradigm’, or ‘discipline’, have become part of the historian’s metalanguage and solicit further reflection as to their usability or adequacy (Delisle 2021). Therefore, the relation or correspondence between the terminology used in the object language (the primary material, i.e., the historical discourse under scrutiny) and the metalanguage (or secondary language) used by the historiographer requires specific care. This is of particular relevance when the latter language is also a different natural language, implying, thus, some kind of re-phrasing (through translation, paraphrase, analysis, etc.). Think of the many culture-bound tropes on translation that resist a simple ‘translation’ into the scholarly metalanguage. To give just one example, how should a translation historian transpose (translate, re-phrase, explain) in English the following set of slightly distinct concepts and metaphors originally designed in Brazilian by poet and critic Haroldo de Campos: *transcriçao*, *transluciferaçao*, *babelidioma*, *polipalavra*? (Knauth 2011).

1.6 Toward a history of translation knowledge

In its eagerness to establish itself as an academic discipline, translation studies, as we have seen, has been tempted to consign older ideas, theories, or methods to the domain of archived history, an archive being disconnected from present ideas and future challenges. Coincidentally, the Western trend toward scientification has left aside other forms of knowledge in and outside Europe or the West, as well as viewpoints that have remained unchanged over longer periods. As a matter of fact, many, if not most, historical studies devoted to past theories to date hesitate between two tendencies. Either they put a focus on changes (and turns in particular) in content and method to the detriment of the many other parameters that partake in scientific thinking. Or, by contrast, they aggregate theories that belong to different periods as a way of rejecting the idea of linear advances but also without turning persistence or continuity into proper topics of historical enquiry.

By way of a conclusion, I would like to present briefly a different view on the past – one that starts from the assumption that the scientific or disciplinary endeavour is but one part of a global knowledge structure from which it is not (and has never been) disconnected, on the contrary. I follow, here, the upcoming history of knowledge branch in French (*histoire des savoirs*), German (*Wissensgeschichte*), and Anglo-Saxon historiography (for an overview, see Burke 2016). A recent attempt to bridge modern and past knowledge in the domain of translation may be helpful in encouraging further investigations (D'hulst and Gambier 2018).

Reconsidering the place of the history of translation studies as an academic discipline within a broader frame of knowledge helps to neutralise typical dichotomies, such as between theory and practice or impartial and committed views, by showing that scientific knowledge co-exists and interacts with other knowledge, – such as technical and artistic or spiritual, political and legal ones – in addition to practical forms of knowledge or know-how. In other terms, the centre of gravity becomes the field of knowledges (in plural form)¹¹.

Like sciences, translation knowledges are approachable through various historical lenses, i.e., concepts, theories, methods, agents, institutions, etc. These do not need further presentation here. Hereafter, I will succinctly refer to the social dimension of translation knowledge, which is one useful way of bridging the past and the present. As recalled by Peter Burke, a ‘social history of knowledge obviously needs to be concerned with the ways in which different groups of people acquire, process, spread and employ knowledge’ (2012: 11). Translation knowledge belongs to ‘research’ – the activity that makes up the rich and socially mixed universe of knowledge production (Latour 1998).

With a view to re-constructing the coming into being of a given field of knowledge, and later on a scholarly discipline, one of the first steps to take is heuristic and consists of *collecting* information on how people, over time, have shaped and transformed concepts and tools to understand, name, define, practice, or teach translation. Those concepts feature a wide variation in space, time, content, and terminology, yet, at the same time, it is no doubt possible to achieve semantic clusters, e.g., around notions of similarity, difference, and mediation (Stecconi 2004); such clusters might be of benefit to the provisional ordering of such clusters. Further, because the translation category is historically fluid, it is commendable to collect additional information on adjacent concepts such as indirect translation, pseudo-original, or pseudo-translation, and on the semantic extension of the translation concept beyond the linguistic realm, as occurred in past models of semiotics as well as in modern understandings of translation as transfer.

Second, *mapping* knowledge is not reducible to the previously mentioned mappings of the discipline since Holmes (1972/1988). It is a dynamic process that has since long developed in

layers: from conceptual embryos to full-fledged theories, from ordering the phases of a learning process to classifying types of translation, and to tailoring knowledge for concrete formats such as treaties, essays, theories, handbooks, conference proceedings, etc. One may hope that the historical analysis of mapping will more than ever find assistance in bibliometric tools such as network analysis or citation analysis – these resources may help to re-construct the mapping of past knowledge over longer periods in a much more nuanced way than has been the case so far.

Further, knowledge on or about translation *circulates* within and across linguistic and geopolitical borders, over long periods of time. Before and after nationalism, knowledge has spread beyond single language communities, notably under the control of large hegemonic regimes, be they cultural or political, as exemplified by those spreading within and across Europe from the colonial period until today. Which contents, methods, or individuals circulate or not depends on numerous other factors such as chance, individual charisma, training, institutions, isolation, censorship, etc. How knowledge moves and transforms is an equally fascinating issue: concepts, theories, ideologies, as well as techniques are transferred and translated, with adaptations, through discursive and, for the most recent period, also multi-media transfer modes, including blogs, video interviews, web lectures, or video conferences.

Finally, translation historiography uses a large number of *tools* with the purpose of classifying, describing, comparing, or synthesising whatever aspect of past translational reflection – be it about translation processes and translations, translation criticism, ideologies and world views, or the ‘implicit’ knowledge of translators that is stored in their translations. These tools are partly borrowed or adapted from other disciplines and frequently from the historical branches of these disciplines: sociology, ethnography, linguistics, literary studies, and legal history, and some more provide historical tools that have proven useful within their own disciplinary realm and may continue to be resourceful for a historical analysis of past ideas and other aspects of translation. Obviously, interdisciplinary crossings have a long history by themselves, and so the history of these crossings (as between rhetoric and translation, or grammar and, later on, linguistics and translation) better becomes an integral part of translation history.

Collecting, mapping, spreading, or analysing are but a handful of actions to be distinguished within a socio-historical approach of translation knowledge. A long road is waiting ahead, even if some conditions are now conducive for an improved account of historical perspectives: a further and accelerated technologisation and management of knowledge, a growing and more acknowledged interdisciplinarity by both donor and target disciplines, the broadening of the scope of translation studies, the development of a transnational and transcontinental dialogue, an increased accessibility to knowledge. To what extent, according to which timescale and in which language or languages these trends will evolve in the coming years is unforeseeable. What may be hoped for, at this point, is a growing agreement on the need for a proper translation historiography, an activity that could be defined as the branch of translation history that deals with the understanding of the evolution of the many sorts of translation knowledge and know-how, including translation studies in its short modern shape. After all, it is not less engaging to see how the past, present, and future interact with each other than to observe their attempts to segregate from each other¹².

Notes

- 1 I am indebted to Yves Gambier and Chris Rundle for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this chapter.
- 2 This chapter deals with translation studies not with its counterpart interpretation studies. However, because part of the history of both domains or disciplines is shared, it would be commendable to look for parallels and divergences (see e.g., Gile 2017).

- 3 One may, for instance, refer both to the idea of a ‘Copernican Revolution’ (Assis Rosa 2010: 98) provoked by the shift from a source-oriented to a target-oriented approach and to the effects of the ‘digital revolution’ (Cronin 2003: 105) on the understanding of text and translation.
- 4 Even for the first half of the twentieth century, we lack reliable bibliographies and other sources of information.
- 5 ‘After centuries of incidental and desultory attention from a scattering of authors, philologists, and literary scholars, plus here and there a theologian or an idiosyncratic linguist, the subject of translation has enjoyed a marked and constant increase in interest on the part of scholars in recent years, with the Second World War as a kind of turning point’ (Holmes 1972/1988: 67–68).
- 6 Original: ‘[...] ni les ouvrages consacrés à l’histoire des traductions, ni les manuels destinés aux (futurs) traducteurs, ni les nombreuses introductions à la discipline ne réservent une place à l’histoire des termes principaux qui ont constitué, au cours des siècles, le champ sémantique de l’activité traduisante et de ses agents’ (Pöckl 2016: 12).
- 7 The third edition (Baker and Saldanha 2020) has removed this part, which ‘will be available as free access material through the *Encyclopedia’s* legacy website, on the Routledge Translation Studies Portal (2020: xxv)’. On the other hand, it has added chapters on ‘History of Translation’, ‘History of Interpreting’, and ‘Historiography of translation’.
- 8 ‘[...] la règle de son jeu [du bricoleur] est de toujours s’arranger avec les “moyens du bord”, c’est-à-dire un ensemble à chaque instant fini d’outils et de matériaux, hétéroclites au surplus, parce que la composition de l’ensemble n’est pas en rapport avec le projet du moment, ni d’ailleurs avec aucun projet particulier, mais est le résultat contingent de toutes les occasions qui se sont présentées de renouveler ou d’enrichir le stock [...]’ (Lévi-Strauss 1962/1966: 27).
- 9 For an example of thorough use of archival sources, see Paloposki (2017).
- 10 Such examples may help to convince historians of translation studies and interpreting studies to join efforts.
- 11 Not to forget, of course, that science itself is not a uniform domain: ‘[...] la science n’est pas la même chose pour un philosophe, un physicien du C.E.R.N., un militant écologiste, un homme politique, etc’. ([...] science is not the same for a philosopher, a physician of C.E.R.N., an environmental activist, a politician, etc.;) (Pestre 1998: 100).
- 12 Cf. Hall: ‘The changed world in which we now live, and the new conceptual frameworks we have been able to develop, allow us to critique the writing of previous generations and indeed of our own earlier selves, to see their, and our, “blind eyes”. Subsequent generations will reflect back on us. An imaginative engagement with the alterity of the past can help us to grasp how the lives they lived and the conceptual frameworks that were open to them produced distinctive ways of seeing. And it can help us to see our different but connected present’ (Hall 2017: 262).

Further Reading

Burke, Peter (2016) *What Is the History of Knowledge?* Cambridge, Polity Press.

This book is a luminous presentation of the history of knowledge, a new field of research that is of particular relevance for translation history, as it avoids a strict delimitation between knowledges and science. It provides a wide array of examples.

Chalvin, Antoine, Jean-Léon Muller, Katre Talviste, and Marie Vrinat-Nikolov (2019) *Histoire de la traduction littéraire en Europe médiane. Des origines à 1989*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

This volume contains an overview of literary translation and ideas on translation evolving over a long period in a rarely studied plurilingual cultural area, i.e., Middle Europe. It shows how practices and views on translation move across language borders and help to shape this cultural area across local and national borders.

Frank, Armin Paul (2015) *Auf eine kopernikanische Wende? Übersetzungsbegriffe Französisch, English, Deutsch – 1740er bis 1830er Jahre*. Göttingen, V&R unipress.

This small volume offers a rare case of historical comparison between translation theories. It gives a detailed account of the history of some of the central translation concepts occurring in three Western traditions (French, English, and German) during a period of intense intellectual debate.

Rundle, Christopher and Vicente Rafael (2016) 'History and translation: The event of language' in *Border Crossings. Translation Studies and Other Disciplines*, Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslaer (eds). Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins: 23–47.

This article provides in-depth insights in the delicate balance between history and translation studies. It reveals the high potential of an adequate interface between both, while discussing the limits and pitfalls of comparison. It offers practical tools to help those engaging in an ambitious exchange between the two disciplines.

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