

# Recent Trends in Translation Studies



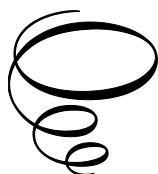
# Recent Trends in Translation Studies:

*An Anglo-Italian Perspective*

Edited by

Sara Laviosa,  
Giovanni Iamartino  
and Eileen Mulligan

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Recent Trends in Translation Studies: An Anglo-Italian Perspective

Edited by Sara Laviosa, Giovanni Iamartino and Eileen Mulligan

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## INTRODUCTION

SARA LAVIOSA, GIOVANNI IAMARTINO  
AND EILEEN MULLIGAN

The aim of this collection of papers is to offer a sketch map of current trends in translation studies from an Anglo-Italian perspective. To this end, it is appropriate to assess the state of the art of a discipline that, since its foundation nearly fifty years ago (Holmes 1972, 1988), has concerned itself with the description, theory and practice of translating and interpreting. Our overview begins in the 1990s, when translation studies established itself as a fully-fledged academic discipline, as evidenced by the rising number of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in translation and interpreting worldwide (Caminade and Pym 1998). This growth stimulated a considerable demand for academic publications issued from both commercial and university publishing houses: journals, book series, conference proceedings, anthologies, textbooks, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and abstracting services. Translation studies is characterized by a myriad of competing and complementary theoretical approaches and methodologies that have grown out of the cross-fertilization with new fields of studies as varied as pragmatics, critical linguistics, corpus linguistics, post-colonialism, gender studies and globalization. At the same time, consolidated conceptual paradigms such as polysystem theory, skopos theory, and poststructuralist and feminist approaches to translation theory continue to inspire translation research (Venuti 2000). In the 1990s, there was renewed interest in translation studies on the part of many scholars in Italian universities, who began to analyse new horizons in translation (Duranti 1998). Of particular note is the theoretical and applied research work conducted by Christopher Taylor, who gained international recognition with the publication of the textbook, *Language to Language: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Italian/English Translators* (1998). Another noteworthy international full-length book is David Katan's *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators* (1999). This volume introduces readers to the fundamental role of culture in constructing, perceiving and

translating reality, and provides a model for teaching culture for intercultural mediation.

By the start of the new millennium, translation studies was widely seen as “an international network of scholarly communities who construct research and debate across conceptual disciplinary divisions” (Venuti 2000, 334), and the general intention was to open and focus the scholarly debate on three important areas. The first, comparing and contrasting the variety of research models elaborated by the different approaches and theories of translation. The second, examining their relationship with existing paradigms and the third, assessing the extent to which they can be applied across the wide range of phenomena considered legitimate data for the discipline. These were the main themes of the first international conference devoted to Research Models in Translation Studies, held at the University of Manchester, in April 2000. This event brought to light not only the spread of methods of testing and of developing theories and producing and exploring new data – the very definition of research models put forward by Andrew Chesterman (2000) – but also revealed some important developments that had taken place in descriptive and applied corpus studies of translation.

During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, translation studies developed into a broad interdisciplinary and international field of scholarship, committed to engaging with non-Western perspectives and theoretical frameworks. In line with this orientation, which shares many of the concerns of postcolonial translation studies, leading scholars began to question the suitability of Eurocentric models for the study of translation across the world. They argue that the increasing multiculturalism of contemporary society, driven by migration and globalization, challenges the traditional view of translation as a phenomenon occurring among discrete languages and cultures belonging to separate nations and ethnic groups (Tymoczko 2007, 45-46). Another trend that emerged in those years is transdisciplinarity. Disciplines as varied as literature, social anthropology, history, critical discourse analysis, ethics, multilingualism, sociology and film studies begin to consider translation and interpreting a *τόπος* for addressing concerns relevant to their fields (Baker 2010). This new trend can be seen in the publication of special issues on translation by journals dedicated to forensic linguistics, public culture, language and literature, pragmatics, visual culture, social semiotics, theatre studies as well as travel, migration and multiculturalism in the German-speaking world, to name just a few (Baker and Saldanha 2009, xxi-xxii). In Italy, Augusto Ponzio and Susan Petrilli began to explore translation from a semiotic perspective and assembled a wide variety of papers in an edited volume titled *Translation Translation* (Petrilli 2003). This is a collection of 37 papers authored by renowned

translation scholars and researchers from different disciplines including semiotics, corpus linguistics, literary criticism, queer studies, philosophy, biology, and the medical sciences. All contributors discuss the problem of translation in the light of their own disciplinary fields and special interests. The object of study is composite and consists of translation processes across different natural languages, translation processes between different specialised languages forming one single natural language, translation processes between verbal and nonverbal sign systems as well as translation processes between nonverbal sign systems without the implications of verbal signs. From within the discipline, Italian scholarship contributed to areas of research as varied as intercultural mediation (Katan 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Translating Cultures*); corpus-based translation studies (Gavioli 2005; Laviosa 2002; Zanettin, Bernardini, and Stewart 2003); interpreting studies (Garzone and Viezzi 2003); audiovisual translation (Chiaro, Heiss, and Bucaria 2008); comics (Zanettin 2008); advertising (Torresi 2010); and history of translation (Rundle 2010; Sturge and Rundle 2010).

Over the last ten years, the physiognomy of translation studies has changed dramatically. As Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha observe in the introductory chapter to the third edition of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, the discipline “has expanded to the point of ‘splintering’ into what some might call subdisciplines” such as corpus-based translation studies, descriptive translation studies, interpreting, audiovisual translation, feminist translation studies, cognitive translation studies or critical translation studies (2020, xxiv). This claim echoes Andrew Chesterman’s view of translation studies as an “increasingly fragmented interdiscipline” (2019, 17). Moreover, interdisciplinarity, which is inherent in the very nature of translating and interpreting, is more evident than ever, since scholars are becoming acutely aware of the multitude of practices that are subsumed under the umbrella term ‘translation’. Indeed, as Susan Bassnett points out, “there is growing interest in seeing translation as a plurivocal activity, since many other voices than those of the translator and ‘original’ author combine in the actual translation process” (Bassnett 2017, ix). Similarly, Chesterman maintains that translation is “a quintessential lumpen concept, covering an ever-expanding range of activities” (2019, 17). Transdisciplinarity, which Edwin Gentzler (2017) names ‘post-translation studies’, is a growing trend that is enriching our understanding of the multifaceted phenomenon of translation and is expanding the boundaries of the discipline. The proliferation of reference works, such as those published in novel book series, or the founding of new international journals such as *Translation: A Transdisciplinary Journal* (founded by Stefano Arduini and Siri Nergaard in 2011) or *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual*

*Contexts* (founded by Sara Laviosa in 2015) reflect and promote this new trend. Their goal is to reach out to other disciplines and open a constructive dialogue that invites a greater exchange of ideas and methodologies. The convergent themes addressed by two international conferences held in Europe fully acknowledge this “Outward Turn”, as Bassnett names it (2017, ix). One is the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies (EST), “Translation Studies: Moving Boundaries” (University of Aarhus, 15-17 September 2016), and the other is the 29<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (AIA), “Thinking Out of the Box. Language, Literature, Cultural and Translation Studies: Questioning Assumptions, Debunking Myths, Trespassing Boundaries” (University of Padua, 7-9 September 2019). Italian scholarship in translation studies has achieved international recognition particularly in this decade, as testified by several publications in research areas within the discipline, namely audiovisual translation (Pavesi, Formentelli, and Ghia 2014); translation history (Lange, Monticelli, and Rundle 2021 forthcoming; Rundle 2014); corpus-based translation studies (Laviosa, Pagano, Kemppanen, and Ji 2017; Zanettin 2012); corpus-based interpreting studies (Russo, Bendazzoli, and Defrancq 2018); specialised translation (Scarpa 2020); research methodology (Zanettin and Rundle 2021 forthcoming); and intercultural mediation (Katan and Taibi 2021, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Translating Cultures*). Research across disciplinary boundaries is also gaining ground in transdisciplinary fields as varied as translation, humour and literature (Chiaro 2012a); translation, humour and the media (Chiaro 2012b); theatre translation (Bigliuzzi, Ambrosi and Kofler 2013); English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Taviano 2013); translation in language teaching (Laviosa 2014a, 2014b); translation and education (Laviosa and González-Davies 2020); translation and social practices (Ji and Laviosa 2021); and translation and semiotics (Kourdis and Petrilli 2020; Petrilli and Ji 2021a, 2021b).

Set within this background, the present collection of papers offers a snapshot of current perspectives on translation studies within the specific historical and socio-cultural framework of Anglo-Italian relations. The works presented in this book address research questions relevant to English historical, literary, cultural and language studies as well as empirical translation studies. The volume is divided into four chapters, each covering a specific research area in the field, namely historiography, literary translation, specialised translation and multimodality. Each case study selected for this volume has been conducted with critical insight and methodological rigour, thus making a valuable contribution to scientific knowledge in both descriptive and applied translation studies.

The first chapter is devoted to historiography. In his outline of translation studies, James S. Holmes (1972, 1988) envisages a dimension that does not concern the study of translating and translations but of the discipline itself in its three ramifications. He therefore earmarks three distinct areas of inquiry, namely the history of translation theory, the history of translation description and the history of applied translation studies, the latter being largely a history of translation teaching and translator training. In this volume, the chapter devoted to the historical dimension of the descriptive branch of the discipline opens with a paper by **Mirella Agorni**. The author argues that, while research into the history of literary translation is well established, other genres such as scientific and legal translation are lagging behind. Agorni underlines the need for more collaboration between historians and translation scholars to fill this important gap in translation studies. **Giovanni Iamartino**'s paper provides a peculiar case study that unpacks the story of James Howell who, being a prisoner during the troubled times of the English Civil Wars, tried to push a Royalist political agenda by translating books. Iamartino investigates Howell's choice of three Italian works by focusing on their paratexts. The chapter ends with a paper by **Angela Andreani** in which she discusses the English translations of the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius of Caesarea, highlighting their influence on the English language.

The second chapter deals with literary translation and opens with a contribution by **Marco Barletta**, who adopts a translational stylistic approach to the investigation of paratexts in the novels of Edward G. Bulwer Lytton (1803-1873) and in the Italian translations carried out by the Milanese historian Francesco Cusani (1802-1879). Drawing on the principles of Gideon Toury's descriptive approach and the concepts of translation adequacy and acceptability, **Eleonora Gallitelli** examines the challenges she faced when translating the literary biography *In Search of Mary Shelley* by Fiona Sampson, which she translated soon after the publication of the first English edition. **Eleonora Natalia Ravizza** focuses on the interrelationship between translation, migrant identities and self-narration in relation to two literary works that narrate their experience of migrant subjects living and travelling across the Atlantic, between Italy and the United States: Jhumpa Lahiri's *In altre parole* and Francesca Duranti's *Sogni mancini* translated by the author herself as *Left-Handed Dreams*. **Michele Russo** closes this chapter with another contribution that dwells on the complex relationship between bilingualism, translation and self-translation. His study analyses translanguaging as a stylistic feature of the autobiography of the Russian-American writer Gary Shteyngart, *Little Failure. A Memoir*.

The third chapter covers different aspects of specialised translation. **Giuliana Elena Garzone's** paper expounds on the principles underpinning the target-oriented approaches elaborated by Gideon Toury and Hans Vermeer, and discusses their impact on the conceptualisation of translation. The discussion focuses on broadly intended specialised texts, comprising essays, journalism, popular science and documents commonly in use in everyday life, as well as technical and scientific texts with various degrees of specialization. Within a descriptive and pedagogic perspective, **Emanuele Brambilla's** paper investigates the norms that characterize the Italian-English translations assembled in a corpus of fourteen Home Study Reports (HSRs). These are preparatory documents that are written and translated prior to the drafting and translation of the international adoption dossier for international adoption agencies. The HSR is drafted by the psychologist working for the adoption agency to preliminarily and succinctly inform authorities in the child's home country of various details regarding the prospective adoptive parents. While Brambilla's paper focuses on the terminological challenges faced by specialised translators, **Sara Castagnoli** explores the discursive feature of stance in a composite corpus of Corporate Social Responsibility reports. The goal is to assess whether CSR reports translated into English from Italian share the same discursive features as native reports or they are set apart by differences in the use of stance devices. In the closing paper of this chapter, **Francesca L. Seracini** adopts a corpus-based approach to translator education and illustrates how corpus-aided discovery learning (CADL) can be beneficial for raising students' awareness of the importance of phraseology in conveying subtle differences in meaning across languages with a view to improving the quality of their L1-L2 translations.

The fourth and final chapter is concerned with multimodality, broadly intended as the ensemble of various semiotic codes (or modes) that express meanings in unison. Within this burgeoning area of research, **Mariacristina Petillo** presents a study of linguistic materials taken from *Falstaff* by Giuseppe Verdi, based on Arrigo Boito's libretto. The aim is to reflect on the stylistically-oriented English surtitles of the opera that was performed in 2015, at the Teatro Alighieri in Ravenna, during the XXVI edition of the Ravenna Festival and was conducted by Riccardo Muti and directed by Cristina Muti Mazzavillani. From opera to football, **Francesco Meledandri's** contribution investigates how the Twitter accounts of some top Italian football teams translate live-tweets during matches almost simultaneously into English, and examines the interrelationship between the particular communication act and the peculiar features of the tool used. **Vittorio Napoli** analyses (im)politeness equivalence in audiovisual translation. The

study focuses on requests in English film dialogue and Italian dubbing and examines how (im)politeness, conveyed through direct/indirect realization strategies and mitigation/intensification pragmatic modifiers, are successfully relayed in the target language. Still within the field of audiovisual translation, **Francesca Raffi** presents a comparative study of the transcribed original Italian dialogue of Federico Fellini's *Le Notti di Cabiria* and the English subtitles of the UK version of the film (dating back to 2009 and distributed by Optimum Releasing Ltd). Raffi shows how the use of dialectal and colloquial expressions in the film as well as the social and cultural asymmetries depicted through the use of standard Italian vs. Roman dialect are (re)constructed in the English subtitles. Moving on from Italian dubbing and English subtitling to the translation of comics, **Laura Chiara Spinelli** analyses the strategies employed by the Italian translators of *Linus* within the historical background of the late 1960s. Finally, **Luca Valleriani**'s concluding paper explores the translation techniques that were adopted to render the upper-class accent in the Italian adaptation of the Netflix TV series *The Crown* (2016-present) in two audiovisual modalities, i.e. dubbing and subtitling. The study reveals how prosodic and lexical compensation can be crucially important when translating regional and social varieties.

The papers selected for this collected volume are authored by both young and seasoned researchers. Together they show the variety and vitality of English translation studies in the thriving Italian academic community today. We thank the publishers and contributors for having worked with us on this novel editorial project with conscientiousness and genuine enthusiasm.

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**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**HISTORIOGRAPHY**

# TRANSLATION HISTORY: JUST ANOTHER STORY?

MIRELLA AGORNI

The importance of translation history within the discipline of translation studies has still to be fully recognized, in spite of the fact that a growing expansion has been registered in recent years. The geographical boundaries of the traditions under consideration have been considerably widened, but several genres of translation activities (particularly the non-literary ones) deserve greater attention. For instance, the history of scientific translation is a subfield that has been recently brought to the attention of the translation studies community thanks to the contribution of scholars working both in the field of translation studies and in the scientific areas. But this example appears to be rather an isolated or exceptional case, rather than the rule, as far as the history of non-literary translation is concerned. Research on the history of legal translation, to mention another non-literary genre, is still underdeveloped.

Translation historians have also to tread the delicate path among translation, history and historiography. Their expertise on notions such as transfer and mediation appears to be an invaluable contribution to the ongoing debate on historiography, which will be shortly illustrated in this contribution. Specific questions concerning periodization, representativeness, narrativization and self-reflexivity, to name just a few, have become central issues in the debates of both translation studies and historiography. As a consequence, translation and history should be conceptualized as complementary fields of research, reinforcing each other's methods and promoting common objectives. Today, collaborative research between these two fields appears to be an unavoidable necessity, rather than a choice.

## **Introduction**

Translation history has a story as long as human civilization. Yet its importance has hardly been acknowledged within the discipline of translation studies – at least until two decades ago, when a growing

expansion has been registered in terms of methodological reflection as well as the geographical areas under consideration (Myriam Salama-Carr 2019).

According to Pym, translation history does not appear “as a unified area for the historical study of translation” (1998, 1) in Holmes’ seminal paper (Holmes 1988) which marked the launch of translation studies as an autonomous research area and its gradual acceptance in the academy. Both the descriptive and the theoretical branches envisaged by Holmes could in fact be fertile grounds for translation historians, as diachronic research lends itself to productive investigations in the two areas. An historical approach is indeed subsumed under the “descriptive” label, split between the “product-oriented” descriptive research area – taking into account existing translations (in the present as well as in the past) – and the “function-oriented” descriptive area – analysing translations’ function in the receiving pole. Another splitting awaits translation history when the theoretical branch of the discipline is taken into account, that is when Holmes defines his “time-restricted theories” as “having to do with the translation of texts from an older period” (Holmes 1988, 76). As a consequence, historical approaches to research on translation appear to be segmented and dispersed into a series of rather self-contained areas, as Pym has aptly noticed, apparently envisaging no space for future developments of a historiography of translation.<sup>1</sup>

However, in the very last paragraph of this paper, Holmes does mention a historical “dimension” which would apply not so much to research on time-restricted translating methods or individual translations, but to research on translation as a distinct field of studies. In his own words:

In each of the three branches of translation studies, there are two further dimensions that I have not mentioned, dimensions having to do with the study, not of translating and translations, but of translation studies itself. One of these dimensions is historical: there is a field of the history of translation theory, in which some valuable work has been done, but also one of the history of translation description and of applied translation studies (largely a history of translation teaching and translator training) both of which are fairly well virgin territory. (1988, 79)

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<sup>1</sup> As Pym (1998: 2) has put it: “The Holmes map also omits a few areas of possible interest: it delineates no ground for any specific theory of translation history, nor for historiography as a way of applying and testing theories”.

So, historical research on translation and, presumably, its methodology were contemplated by Holmes, albeit as a second thought, and qualified as uncharted territory, at least as far as the history of translation description and translation pedagogy are concerned. But how far has the historical study of translation moved forward since Holmes' programmatic paper?

Nearly five decades separate us from the onset of translation studies, and considerable progress has been made by research in this area in all its facets: theories and methodologies have branched out to match growing interest in new research objects, technologies and applications. Yet, one of the fields to be left behind, regardless of its central role within the discipline, is just translation history. This remark needs to be qualified, though: research on the historical nature of translation phenomena has been produced uninterruptedly, before as well as after the emergence of translation studies in the 1960s. The problem is that it has been produced in an array of different disciplinary areas, very often unaware of each other's endeavours. For example, case studies on the reception of specific translations, particularly when the original is a canonical text, abound in literary and cultural studies. These works, however, tend to be circumscribed to the oeuvre of specific authors and their influence on other authors or literary movements, and usually fail to take into account the specificity of the act of translation itself.

Translation in the scientific field, which will be better illustrated in the next section, is another case in point. In spite of the fact that the transfer or mobility of ideas plays a crucial role in the field of science, the very activity that enables scientific ideas to overcome time, place and language barriers, that is translation, has seldom been studied per se. Thus, it is all the more significant that one of the most productive definitions of translation has been advanced in a volume entitled *Science in Translation* (Montgomery 2000). Here translation has been defined as "the process of transforming the specific piece of one language (commonly a text of some sort) into another language" (Montgomery 2000, 4). Simplistic as its author admits it to be, this definition has a series of advantages, starting from the most important one, so precious for linguists and translators alike: translation is meant primarily as a linguistic process. We should tread carefully on this terrain, though. This definition is not meant to go against decades of scholarship on the importance of culture and the situational or cultural contexts in any translation analysis. As a matter of fact, Montgomery himself appears to be aware of such potential objection, and argues that the advantage of his approach is that of "underlining the creation of a true cultural product, and of posing the important question: What happens to knowledge when it is given a wholly new voice and

context?" (Montgomery 2000, 4). Hence, translations are meant as cultural and linguistic products since the term "translation" is not used in any metaphorical sense, but it rather implies a material product, or a material transfer process.

This point is particularly significant from a historical perspective, which resists the widespread poststructuralist tendency to consider translation as a practice devoid of a specific materialist grounding. Translation activities and their products have been materially involved in the construction of languages, cultures, societies as well as collective and individual identities since the beginning of time. Current poststructuralist drifts in such diverse disciplines as ethnography, philosophy and cultural studies, which use translation in a highly metaphorical fashion, run the risk of undervaluing the historical impact of translation precisely because they overlook the complexity of linguistic transfer processes. Hence, it seems more productive to adopt a rather straightforward definition of translation, adaptive and concrete at the same time, to be aptly used in historical research:

"translation" defines a process of communication every bit as varied as writing itself and no less central to what we commonly call "civilization", built as it is by movements of knowledge from one people to another. (Montgomery 2000, 4-5)

In conclusion, it has to be admitted that the centrality of translation history has been thwarted at least in two ways. On the one hand, the fragmentation of the studies produced in different disciplinary areas has made it difficult to produce a systematic view of the role played by translation throughout history. On the other, current tendencies to consider translation in a metaphorical sense end up by reducing, rather than foregrounding, the importance of translation activities. As a consequence, the pivotal role of translation in the course of history is hardly discernible.

However, this state of affairs has begun to change in recent decades, and today translation history seems to fare better on the agendas of translation studies scholars. Not only have scholars started to investigate the history of translation more analytically, but also attempts have been made to set up a coherent working methodology (D'hulst 1995; Delisle and Woodsworth 1995; Pym 1998; amongst others). Also, the spatial boundaries of historical research have been expanded thanks to the contribution of new, pluralistic approaches to the study of translation phenomena. As a result, translation history has widened its perspectives, challenging its prevailing Eurocentric bias in favour of undeservedly neglected traditions. Martha Cheung's works are a case in point, both for

bringing to the international public's attention an extremely rich, yet uncharted tradition at the time of publication (2006), and for introducing new creative methodological approaches, such as the pushing-hands method of research on translation history (2012; Robinson 2016), which will be outlined in the final part of this paper.

## **The Numerous Faces of Translation History**

Today the “spatial turn” of translation history is well under way, but further research needs to be done not only by widening the geographical boundaries of the traditions under consideration, but also by taking into account different kinds of translation activities. Until today, studies of canonical literary genres make up the lion's share of research on translation history, but over the centuries translation activities have by no means confined themselves to the field of literature.

Works on the history of interpreting – an activity which predates the invention of writing – are quite recent. This is only in part due to the fact that historical records of interpreting practices are scarce, consisting very often only in autobiographical material such as diaries, letters and memoirs. The other reason at the basis of this neglect is represented by the tendency to consider interpreting as a sort of ancillary activity to another, more important activity, and very often some kind of business or diplomatic negotiation. Interpreters, like translators, have usually been deprived of their voice and social status. Even worse than translators in fact, as the end products of all interpretation processes are normally less tangible than those of translation. In other words, interpretation is even less visible than translation, particularly so from the point of view of history.

However, after Francesca Gaiba's volume (1998) on simultaneous interpretation at the Nuremberg Trial, publications have appeared in the following decades in a more systematic manner (Wilss 1999; Pöchhacker 2016), spanning from the origins of simultaneous interpretation in the West, (Baigorri-Jalón 2014), histories of East Asia and Chinese Interpreting (Takeda and Baigorri-Jalón 2016), up to a recent volume on wartime interpreting (Laugesen and Gehrman 2020), to cite just a few remarkable examples.

A similar optimistic scenario appears to be still far ahead when other types of translation activities are taken into consideration, particularly as far as specialized or technical translation is concerned. As in the case of interpreting, specialized translation is often considered only as a secondary or support activity to aid interlingual communication in such specific fields as medicine, the business and economic sciences, or law. As one



would expect, scholars working in these fields usually pay scant attention to translation processes. In translation studies, on the other hand, applied research in specialized translation is growing steadily, but the historical bases of these genres of translation are rarely taken into consideration.

The history of scientific translation is a special case, as it counts some interesting publications, probably due to the indisputable authority of research on the History of Science (Montgomery 2000; Saliba 2007; Wright 2000; etc.). Translation studies journals have recently dedicated special issues to the topic of scientific translation: *Meta* (Vandaele and Boulanger 2016), *The Translator* (Olohan and Salama-Carr 2011) and *Annals of Science* (Dietz 2016), are a few examples. Yet, the vital role of translations of scientific texts in the development of science should be further investigated.

Montgomery (2000) provides a book-length historiographic account of translations of scientific works from and into the classical languages, together with an outline of a number of non-European traditions of scientific translations into Persian, Hindu, Arabic and Japanese, among others. The crucial part played by translators in shaping scientific discourse throughout history is the main theme in this volume: translators are considered powerful cultural agents and very often their works have not merely reflected, but rather moulded scientific discourse into a myriad of specific traditions. In many cases, particularly in early manuscript culture, translations were exposed to additions, deletions and other kinds of manipulation, and eventually took on a new life within their target language and culture. In his overview of translations of European scientific works in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Rupke steps in the same direction when he writes that “a translation is not merely a medium of transfer, but more importantly a mental meeting point where barriers of language and culture are crossed” (2000, 20). On top of that, Montgomery argues that the language of science itself is not as objective as is generally believed: in order to be disseminated, it is always subject to a certain degree of adaptation. Needless to say, this becomes especially apparent when works are moved from and into different languages and cultures. Scientific knowledge has experienced innumerable transfers and relocations over the span of history, allowing scholars to speak of an actual “mobilization of knowledge” (Montgomery 2000, 2).

This argument takes us to the most fascinating notion of the transnational character of science, which has been so well brought forward by Olohan (2014). Transnational models of science are increasingly focused on notions of intercultural transfer and mediation practices. All knowledge travels, and all the more so scientific knowledge, mainly by

means of adaptation and translation. Hence, by studying scientific translations and their trajectories in the course of history, we could have a better apprehension of the development of scientific thought, a path full of crossings and integrations. According to Olohan, translation scholars could provide a substantial contribution to the History of Science, as we, as translation practitioners,

are keen to understand the significance of the choices we and others make in weaving transnational historical narratives around translation, whether in literary, cultural or scientific domains. (2014, 20)

If some degree of interaction between translation studies and scientific fields is slowly set in motion, the same cannot be said vis-à-vis the legal disciplines. On the contrary, scholars such as van Gerwen (2019) and Lavigne (2006) have lamented the fact that both in the field of translation as well as in the legal disciplines scant attention has been paid to the history of legal translation. A growing interest in specialized translation and interpreting in judicial settings has been registered in recent research, but these types of studies are customarily focused on contemporary practices. A systematic view of the function of legal translation throughout history appears to be necessary to bridge such a conspicuous gap. This would enable us to gauge the influence of legal translation activities on large socio-cultural processes. As van Gerwen (2019, 107) has aptly put it:

legal translations, being intrinsically authoritative and normative texts, have influenced social, cultural and political aspects of history, for instance in the standardization of legal language and the emancipation of minority language groups. The decision to translate (or not) important legal texts (legislation, codes, constitution, etc.) has had a true impact on people's lives. Legal translation enables official communication between language communities in (trans)national contexts and allows the circulation of crucial information on citizens' rights and obligations. It has also played a role in the development of participatory citizenship in multilingual and democratic contexts, by linking the need for translation to the issues of publicity and transparency.

It has to be said that institutional translation policies in specific historical periods are increasingly drawing the attention of translation scholars (Delisle and Otis 2016; D'hulst 2014; D'hulst and Schreiber 2014; Wolf 2015), but more comprehensive outlines of the field are less than a handful (Dullion 2018; van Gerwen 2019).

The breadth of application and the potential impact of research on the history of specialized translations should have become apparent even in a

general overview as the one provided here. There is still scope to investigate specialized translation in all its genres, as translation should gain more visibility as one of the primary interpretive frames for research on the situatedness of knowledge, particularly across different historical periods.

Furthermore, the general tendency to see translation as incidental to the development of the disciplinary fields it applies its communicative power to is evidently deceptive. In fact, translation can be instrumental in shaping and circulating specialized discourses, as in the case of scientific discourse, or can exert a specific influence on socio-cultural practices, as in the case of legal translation. After all, translation studies as a subject area appears to be especially suited to the exploration of themes such as the mediatory processes of intercultural transfer and, in this respect, it connects seamlessly with recent historiographical interest in modes of mediation, as will be seen in more detail in the following section.

## **Translation and History**

The relationship between translation and history has been a thorny issue since the inception of translation studies (O'Sullivan 2012). Recently a number of publications have appeared addressing this topic and raising methodological questions concerning both the field of history proper and that of translation. Pym's seminal work *Method in Translation History* (1998) was one of the earliest calls for greater attention to be paid to translators, rather than texts, as the principal object of study in historical research on translation. He also insisted on an empirical methodology based on the collection of quantitative data, which could give immediate visibility to translation activities produced in specific historical settings. More recently Pym, together with Rizzi and Lang, has settled on the concept of trust as a primary concept in translation history (Rizzi, Lang and Pym 2019). Cultural transactions and the functions and roles played by all agents involved deserve special attention, together with questions about reliability and trust. Trust is identified as a sort of defence strategy against the degree of uncertainty that characterizes any translation activity. More than any other communicative act, translation implies a series of shifts (among contexts, languages, referents, etc.), which may vary in terms of kind and degree. Trust is therefore the answer to the anxiety of potential misunderstandings that very often find their origin in the act of translating. According to Pym, research informed by the model of trust enables scholars to get an insight into the mind-set as well as the peculiar contexts the various agents involved in translation have been working into.

Transfer and mobility of objects (texts, technology, and materials) and subjects (authors, translators, patrons, printers, and suchlike) in time and space are also issues to be closely monitored by translation historians. As already pointed out, not only translation, but also cultural history is increasingly drawing attention to the ways in which information and knowledge move from place to place, and how the dynamics of circulation themselves materially affect moving texts, as well as any other cultural material. These new developments are modifying the way in which not only translation, but history in general is viewed.

Historical studies of translation are extremely diversified, in terms of objects analysed (different genres of translation, for example), periodization and methodology, and it is very difficult to provide a comprehensive overview. For example, St. André (2009, 134) has proposed two different perspectives to group together enquiries on translation history. On the one hand, scholars could work on the “history of translation theory and criticism”, and, on the other, on the “history of translation practice”. However, this distinction opens up a dichotomy – corresponding to the traditional separation between theory and practice – which can be particularly difficult to handle in historical research, when theoretical reflections (for example in an explanatory preface) may be strictly intertwined with the practice of translation.

Dichotomies seem to have characterized the development of translation studies from its early stages: original vs. translation, author vs. translator, literal vs. free translation, domesticating vs. foreignizing, are just a few examples. Translation history makes no exception and a recent polarity is that between translation and history, or, more precisely between the methodological and theoretical bases of translation studies and those of history, as argued in Rundle 2012.<sup>2</sup> According to Rundle, a clear-cut line separates research on the history of translation – based on translation studies in terms of methodology – from research on “translation in history” (conceivably meant as the study of the effects of translation in specific historical periods) – which is historically-based. However, this seems to be a largely provocative stance, which has originated a fruitful and stimulating debate. Translation cannot exist outside history and analyses of translation phenomena must necessarily take into consideration the complex contexts shaping them, distinctively qualified - as historical, socio-cultural, linguistic etc. – according to the theoretical approach adopted in any single study. Translation and history should be

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<sup>2</sup> Rundle himself has later appeared to revise his position, or at least the binary and exclusive features of his proposal, in favour of a collaborative and flexible interdisciplinary approach to the study of translation history (Rundle 2014).

better conceptualized as a mutually enhancing combination, rather than in terms of a binary opposition (Delabastita 2012, 248). Along the same lines, Hermans (2012, 244) has observed, “Without knowledge of the history of translation we cannot understand translation in history.”

But the question of the relationship between translation and history becomes even more intriguing if we shift the focus and ask how translation fares within History with a capital letter, that is, how much awareness of translation phenomena do historians generally possess? How much attention is paid to translation activities in mainstream historical research? Delabastita does not seem to be pushing the argument to an extreme when he claims that “hardly any historical reality exists without translation.” (2012, 248). In Section 1 a strong awareness of the centrality of translation practices has been noticed in a text on scientific translation by a geologist with a background in English and History.<sup>3</sup> Montgomery recognizes translation as one of the principal driving powers of “human civilization”, but, unfortunately, he seems to be the exception, rather than the rule, as far as historical research is concerned. Translation is hardly, if ever, recognized in its capacity as a motor force of cultural development, as historical narratives of progress have traditionally privileged the centre, rather than the margins, of national or cultural systems. In fact the centre is always forged in opposition to external forces, perceived as extraneous, and potentially undermining the autonomy of any cultural formation. Transfer, interference and translation phenomena, which embody the life-giving core of all cultural practices, generally tend to be repressed in historical accounts. As a result, transfer processes are to be found at the margins of cultural systems, in those “intercultural spaces” (Pym 1998) or “contact zones” (Pratt 1992) which are breeding ground for movements sustaining the vitality of cultures by keeping them up to date with historical contingencies. It is certainly not by removing translation from History that the primary function of the dynamics of transfer and circulation will be recognized. On the contrary, as Delabastita (2012, 248) has neatly pointed out, History, and “‘historians’ require more rather than less of the expertise conventionally associated with ‘translation scholars’”.

## **Translation History and the Debate on Historiography**

The debate on the relationship between translation and history does not only concern the disciplinary perspective researchers choose to adopt –

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<sup>3</sup> Scott L. Montgomery, University of Washington, Seattle:  
<https://jsis.washington.edu/people/scott-montgomery/> (last accessed August 2020).

whether translation studies – historically – or, more comprehensively, interdisciplinary-oriented. There is another important question to be taken into consideration, that is the position of translation history vis-à-vis the lively discussion on historiography, which has been carried out by historians since the 1960s.

Sales (2019, 33) has recently referred to a dated, but still stimulating work by Delisle (2008, 83), where the Canadian scholar claims that translation historians should engage in a kind of historiography that should not merely be a list of translations, autobiographical material or historical records related to translation activities. Researchers should rather search for “meaningful connections over long periods of time between the translational acts in question, and the social, cultural, political, and/or economic conditions in which they were ensconced” (Sales 2019, 33). Delisle appears to refer to Braudel’s distinction of *longue durée*, *moyenne durée*, and *courte durée* (Sales 2019, 24-25), defining the temporal frame of historiographical models, but does not delve into the complex issue of periodization, which his argument seems to be referring to.

The time element in history, or the problem of periodization, is a vexed question, debated by translation historians such as D’hulst (1995), Foz (2006) and Herrero López (2019). Not only does periodization affect the structure of any historical analysis, but also its scope and results. The time-limits researchers base their work on are selected according to the sources and records brought together in the course of each investigation, as well as by the interests at stake in any research project. Foz (2006) was one of the earliest critics to point out the subjective and artificial character of periodization systems, which generally embrace a linear or developmental view of time, positing it as universal. Herrero López (2019, 51) has thoroughly discussed this topic and has claimed that:

Periods are not only tools; they contain at least implicit arguments. The apparently simple selection of denominations for our periods already comprehends a vision of history and its divisions, for “all period concepts carry connotative, not just denotative, meanings” (Postlewait 1988, 318).

Linear progress appears to be a generalized assumption in historiography, but translation history has been resisting it. Belle’s (2014) argument against outlines of linear progress, all too often simplifying and anachronistically based on isolated case studies, is another case in point. New critical interest in the fuzzy character of the linguistic, socio-cultural, and, above all, material aspect of translation phenomena has challenged teleological approaches to historical studies. Belle (2014, 45) invokes Venuti (1991, 2004), who has described the linear progress narrative “as