



TRANSLATION HISTORY

What is Translation History?

A Trust-Based Approach

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Translation History

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

We have written this book collegially, allowing for our different perspectives to emerge and develop as part of an ongoing reflexive dialogue. The idea of this volume originated with Andrea Rizzi, who leads a research project on Trust and Cultural Exchange, of which Birgit Lang and Anthony Pym are Chief Investigators. We wrote first drafts of individual chapters based on our relative research strengths. Those chapters then went through an intensive feedback and revision process, including several oral conversations, written exchanges between the authors, and several rounds of co-editing. Several of those conversations are still ongoing, as indicated by the various points where our arguments lead to open questions, inviting our readers to join in the discussion. At many other points, though, our basic agreement is strong enough for all chapters to be attributed to all three of us as co-authors.

All three authors currently work in the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne, so there is a clear historical and cultural position from which we speak. This has its clear advantages—we can speak with each other face to face—and disadvantages—our perspectives are limited by place and local history. We bring to this intellectual adventure expertise in European, British, and American scholarship. Anthony Pym has a background in European translation studies and has published widely in the field, while Birgit Lang and Andrea Rizzi come to translation more from area studies: Lang is a cultural historian of Germany and Austria, with expertise in the interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge and émigré intellectual and cultural history, in which translation plays a critical role; Rizzi is a historian of the Italian Renaissance,

whose work explores translation in the context of early modern multilingualism. Our combined knowledge of languages is limited to Europe, and we remain very aware of that limitation: we mainly work with Ancient Greek, English, French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan, and write in English, German, Italian, and Spanish. We all negotiate translation in all aspects of our professional lives (and private lives for that matter). Anthony Pym in particular has been working with Asian scholars and students for more than ten years. The author team has known each other for several years, have published together, and all have taught translation history at undergraduate and postgraduate level, in part collaboratively. The most important networks the author team share are the Trust and Cultural Exchange group (Malcolm Angelucci, Heather Dalton, Jackie Dickinson, Ana Dragoilovic, Veronique Duché, Nick Eckstein, David Garrloch, Adrian Hearn, Karen Jones, Richard Kanaan, Tamara Kohn, Catherine Kovesi, Una McIlvenna, Peter Sherlock, and Stephanie Trigg) as well as the editorship (together with Belén Bistué, Esmail Haddadian Moghaddam, and Kayoko Takeda) of Palgrave's *Translation History* series, of which this is the first volume. Taking this book as a starting point, we hope to continue and expand the discussion with scholars and students interested in the role, ethics, and praxis of translators and interpreters in the past and today.

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Introduction: Towards a New Translation History

Abstract In asking what translation history is and how it might be written, we explore some of the leading concepts and approaches that historians (of literature, language, culture, society, science, translation, and interpreting) engage with when they encounter translation. We consider the conceptual foundations of translation history in order to propose a way forward.

Keywords Translation history • Trust • Methodology • Signalling • Intercultural mediation

This book is about translation history and how it might be written. In addressing these questions, we explore some of the leading concepts and approaches that historians (of literature, language, culture, society, science, translation, and interpreting) engage with when they encounter translation. We have written this book with historians in mind, as well as scholars and students of translation studies. In the present chapter we draw a long bow by considering the conceptual foundations of translation history in order to propose a way forward.

Before discussing what translation history can be, let us propose what we think it could best do: namely, address issues of complex social causation that enable or hinder intercultural communication.¹ We submit that

translation—by which we mean a spoken or written text-based interlingual transfer—is not possible without trust. By studying translation with reference to trust we can reach a clearer understanding of why translations were produced in the first place, and what challenges they appear to have ‘solved’.

In broad terms, we contend that rather than fine-tuning or even challenging key concepts from translation studies (for instance the resemblance and relationality between start and target texts), translation history as a field of inquiry needs to hone its own conceptual tools and methodologies. These more flexible resources, in turn, can build a stronger bridge between discrete disciplines, and foster a greater awareness of translation among historians, as well as greater methodological confidence among scholars of translation.

Our contribution to honing methodology and concepts is to place the concept of *trust* at the centre of translation history. Including trust in our purview complements and expands the value of approaches that have been recommended and studied for years: researching translators as people in addition to translations as texts; examining translation norms—since norm-adherence can be one of the bases of trust—and investigating translator-client relations, collaborative translation, and translation cultures. All of these matters have been studied before, so what does this book do that is new?

By examining theories and practices of trust from sociological, philosophical, and historical studies, and with reference to interdisciplinarity, we outline a methodology that enables us to approach translation history and intercultural mediation from three discrete, concurrent perspectives on trust and translation: the interpersonal, the institutional, and the regime-enacted.² Further, we suggest the use of trust as both an object of study and an analytical tool for understanding intercultural mediation. This involves recognising that trust is not the ‘innocent’ concept it is often taken to be, but one requiring closer empirical and theoretical attention than it has so far received in translation studies. Trust describes social practices (including translation) and also constructs them.³

What might a translation history that includes trust look like? To canvass a reply, we address the following array of related questions: first and foremost, as we have already anticipated, what is translation history? Why is the trust aspect of translation history important, and what problems can it address? Who and what is trusted in translation and interpreting? What kinds of trust exist in translation? And, following from these questions,

how might we write interdisciplinary translation history that is trustworthy in its claims to represent a genuine, localised encounter between two or more disciplines?

Each chapter offers a response to these questions in a manner that began with self-reflexive enquiry. The authors of this volume work on translation from different and complementary perspectives: Andrea Rizzi is a literary historian, Anthony Pym is a translation scholar, and Birgit Lang is a cultural historian. In writing this volume we have each been brought to examine more openly our different perspectives on translation from these formative vantage points, appreciating ways in which our backgrounds have also conditioned our respective styles of writing. We have chosen to use the plural ‘we’ as the speaking subject of all chapters as a mark of our collaborative ethos, and to underscore our unity in diversity. We discuss and refine our positions and arguments not to find essentialist common ground, but to hone our ideas for the near future of translation history as a robust and incisive field of empirical research and dialogue.

We have not wished to write a book that insists on a narrow suite of norms or methodologies for the study of translation history. Our wish is to propose a new area for attention that can inspire historians and translation scholars to explore more closely the role of translators, interpreters, translations, and their clients in the history of intercultural exchange. As the first volume of the Translation History series published by Palgrave Macmillan, we hope that this contribution will mark the beginning of an enriching conversation about the role that translation history can play in enhancing our understanding of cultural mediation in the past, and in the present.

WHAT IS TRANSLATION HISTORY?

Since at least 1992, scholars have lamented a ‘lack of history in translation history’.⁴ At the same time, literary historians have engaged with philosophical and social theories to explain practices and theories of translation. For instance, literary historians Rita Copeland, Lawrence Venuti, and Marie-Alice Belle have adopted the Foucauldian concept of genealogy to identify and explain historical attitudes and to understandings of translation—fluency, transparency, progress, imitation, and assimilation, among others.⁵ The social turn within translation studies has brought key concepts from the work of French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour: social capital, habitus, and network are some

of the most significant ideas to have influenced studies of translation and translators over the past twenty years. In the last seven years, UK and North-American-based literary historians have contributed to more nuanced approaches to the study of early modern translation in Europe in the context of social and commercial changes. This scholarship calls for closer collaboration between literary and book historians by ‘situating translators at the interface’ between the production and consumption of texts.⁶

Meanwhile, trust—as a key socio-cultural aim and ambition for intercultural mediation—has remained underexplored in translation.⁷ Fundamentally, we propose, translators and interpreters exchange their trustworthiness.⁸ Over the past thirty years, scholars of literature, translation, and science have produced substantial histories of translation and interpreting in English.⁹ Historians have only comparatively recently engaged with interlingual and textual translation as the centrepiece of their research.¹⁰ In the literature on history and translation that has been published in the last fifty years or so, very few studies have offered what Julio-César Santoyo has called ‘a global or globalising vision of what the translation activity has been throughout its approximately four thousand, five hundred years of history’.¹¹ Here we understand Santoyo to be referring to histories focussing on practices of translation rather than theories, because there is no shortage of anthologies of ancient, early modern, modern, and contemporary statements on theories of translation. In these edited collections, excerpts from Marcus Tullius Cicero, Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus), Martin Luther, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and twentieth-century intellectuals tend to be anthologised chronologically, and according to the generally positivist understanding that changes in approach become progressively more sophisticated.¹² Most of these anthologies focus on Euro-American theories, but 2006 saw the publication of a trailblazing anthology of early modern Chinese texts presenting concepts and practices relating to translation.¹³

To date, most contributions to translation history can be described as collections of essays or monographs on translation theories and practices from a particular region, language, or period.¹⁴ Fortunately, research during the past three decades has produced studies that seek to chart the history of translation in the east and west beyond specific nations or regions, and across centuries.¹⁵ Now there are also available edited collections and dedicated journal issues that foreground specific aspects of translation and interpreting: methodologies (Pym, Lépinette, and Alcalá), travel and

translation (De Biase), policy and translation (D'hulst, O'Sullivan, and Schreiber), translatability (Budick and Iser), gender (Agorni, Ferguson), science (Olohan and Salama-Carr, Dietz) collaboration and translation (Bistué, Cordingley and Manning), and retranslation (Deane-Cox), among others. Tellingly, most of these works do not pay attention to trust.¹⁶ Some translation scholars have discussed trust with reference to translation, but marginally, or as part of a wider discussion of the ethics of translation.¹⁷ Trust has remained an elusive subject in translation studies, even if, to quote Finland-based translation studies scholar Andrew Chesterman,

[t]ranslators, in order to survive as translators, must be trusted by all parties involved, both as a profession and individually. [...] Without this trust, the profession would collapse, and so would its practice.¹⁸

What waits to be written about translation and history? Some scholars have recently asked what audiences translation histories should be written for.¹⁹ The accepted view is that translation history is by nature interdisciplinary, but it is not clear what kind of interdisciplinarity should be undertaken or at least fostered by translation historians. We return to the topic of interdisciplinarity in Chap. 4. Here we simply note that, in practice, the parameters for creatively productive relationships between translation history and translation studies, as well as other discrete disciplines, have not yet been tested.

How, then, might translation history help to refresh fundamental questions and suggest new paths for future research? As part of envisaging what translation history could be in the near future, let us take a step back and examine what it has been. The importance of 'knowing the past [...] for the [translation and interpreting] profession' can hardly be underestimated. Knowing the past has the potential to contribute to the broader histories of literature, philosophy, and ideas.²⁰

Obviously, not everything automatically comes under the purview of translation history. Here we maintain that what we study involves some kind of translational *product*, a text, be it written, spoken, or graphic. And we further restrict our object to the kinds of products that are the result of *mediated* intercultural communication. The presence of a third party in the exchange, transfer, or appropriation of material or non-material goods does not necessarily change the outcome of the transaction (although it often does). Interpreter Doña Marina, 'La Malinche' (c. 1500–1527) was

instrumental to the conquest of Mexico by her lover Hernán Cortés. Her role as interpreter of Nahuatl for the Spanish colonisers played out in several complex ways. Evidence indicates that she took a decision-making role on behalf of Cortés and his Spanish army, and mediated between the Spanish and different Mayan, Tlaxcalans, Totonac, and Aztec communities. Studying the mediatory agency of such figures and their intercultural roles can shed light on what was bartered, sold, appropriated, or lost, and on the cultural, political, and linguistic dynamics underpinning the end result (in this case, the fall of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan, and the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire).²¹

For the translation history we have in mind it is crucial to understand the diversity of roles and strategies employed by the mediators and clients in their transfer and reception of translation.²² As a third-party player, any kind of intercultural mediator (translator, interpreter, editor, publisher, or patron) needs to build trust with at least one other party. The need to build trust works from various degrees of distrust on the part of clients or patrons. Comprehending these degrees of trust or distrust can illuminate the inequalities that underscore intercultural transfers (as in the case of Doña Marina) and the consequences of such relational dynamics: colonisation, foreignisation, gender discrimination, misunderstanding, lack of communication, or silence. Thus, trust is fundamental in transfers involving three parties or more, and is more problematic there than in dyadic transactions. Although, in George Simmel's phrase, the third party may be an 'egoistic exploiter of the situation', a great number of ancient or early modern interpreters were slaves or low-class subjects forced into mediatory roles as a means to survive.²³ Yet, even when the mediator is anonymous or invisible, trust in the third party is a 'deal-maker' or a 'deal-breaker'.

Especially since the 1990s, several scholars of translation studies (and a couple of cultural historians) have been involved in a lively debate about the relationship between history and translation. Pym, and Europe-based Lieven D'hulst and Sergia Adamo have variously argued for the need to include more history in the study of translation and translators.²⁴ Jean Delisle has claimed that it is necessary to 'write history like historians do'.²⁵ In Adamo's view, translation scholars should develop their 'historical awareness'. This would surely be useful, but, frequently, it is just as probable that historians are lacking *translation* awareness.²⁶ While scholars working with written texts (literature, archival documents, archaeological artefacts, or scientific data) often deal at some point with a translation, a