

## INTRODUCTION

The literature in translation studies has traditionally been preoccupied with elaborating various types of dichotomies and taxonomies, and to some extent much of it still is. This volume attempts to orient the discipline away from dichotomies and taxonomies as much as possible, while recognizing that some may be embedded within a sophisticated and enriching discourse that is worth engaging with. On the whole, the work represented here assumes, implicitly or explicitly, that human behaviour is too complex and too dynamic to be streamlined into stable sets of choices that can be tied to specific textual or non-textual features. As a form of human behaviour, translation cannot be productively explained as a consistent choice between two or more discrete sets of strategies or options, however nuanced.<sup>1</sup>

Translation studies has come of age. So much so, I would argue, that we are now in a position to move safely and confidently not only beyond dichotomies and taxonomies, but also beyond the foundational literature and scholarly canon, and beyond reiterating and reasserting core assumptions, revisiting our institutional history, and defending our disciplinary agendas. While holding on to earlier achievements, we can now engage with innovative new research that is not necessarily indebted to the theories with which we are most familiar. We can afford to think outside the box. This collection is therefore deliberately prospective rather than retrospective in orientation. The material included in it has been selected to help us move on, to explore new ground, rather than pay tribute to and consolidate past achievements. It is meant to provide pointers towards the future and open up the field to innovative concepts and theoretical approaches, as well as to voices and perspectives from a wide range of traditions, beyond the dominant Anglo-Saxon world. Some of the material will already be familiar, but even there what is familiar has been combined with less familiar contributions in order to explore a range of themes that I see as key to moving the discipline forward. To this end, the emphasis throughout is on contemporary critical material culled from a broad range of sources, including but not restricted to sources in mainstream translation studies. Translation and interpreting being pervasive phenomena that have attracted the attention of scholars working in a variety of disciplines, some of which have a much longer history and

stronger disciplinary base than translation studies, it would have been odd – given the nature of this project – to ignore the wealth of innovative, critical thinking in these areas. Some of the articles included here are written by scholars of anthropology, literature, linguistics, pragmatics, sociology and film studies, among other fields. One (Casanova's) is translated from French specifically for this reader, and many of the rest, though written in English, deal with translation and interpreting in a variety of non-Western and minority cultures, including Japanese, Corsican, Arabic, Tamil, Croatian and Albanian.

### Themes and divisions

This reader consists of 25 articles, each preceded by a detailed summary, follow-up questions for discussion, and recommended further reading. It is divided into ten sections, as follows:

- 1 Politics and dynamics of representation
- 2 Modes and strategies: the language(s) of translation
- 3 Text, discourse and ideology
- 4 The voice of authority: institutional settings and alliances
- 5 Individual voice and positionality
- 6 Minority issues: cultural identity and survival
- 7 Translation in world systems
- 8 The making of literary traditions
- 9 Translation and war
- 10 Changing landscapes: new media and technologies

These divisions, and the order in which they appear, are based on thematic rather than chronological groupings and, importantly, they cut across modes and genres. In other words, the divisions are not based on the type of material being analyzed in each article. Some of the articles focus on literary translation, others on screen translation, machine translation, bible translation or the translation of official documents, and others still on one or other form of interpreting. Some engage with several genres simultaneously. This reader thus attempts to move not only beyond disciplinary divisions, but also beyond internal divisions within translation studies, the priority being to identify and give prominence to a number of pressing themes that merit our attention and that I believe we would do well to engage with in a sustained fashion. Most of these themes are reflected in the titles of the relevant sections and discussed in the introductory summaries of the articles in each section. But some cut across several sections and are worth highlighting here. They include the following:

- The relationship – past and present – between dominant European and Western societies and their many 'Others'. A number of articles explore and critique aspects of this relationship, including the type of representations that are generated through translation and that travel back to less dominant societies and influence their own processes of self representation, as well as the way in which translation is implicated in characterizing various rich literary traditions outside Europe in terms of what Selim (this volume) calls 'historical collapse and critical dystopia' by posing European literary genres and techniques as the

'standard' against which they must be measured. Articles that address this issue include those by Asad, Kahf, Jaffe and Selim.

- The intricate negotiation of dominance and resistance in many acts of translation and interpreting, and the many (textual and non-textual) forms that resistance can take. Domination is never absolute, and some of the articles in this reader redress the emphasis on power and hegemony by exploring the dynamics that force power itself to generate modes of resistance which undermine and question it. They suggest that streamlined accounts of unidirectional influence and absolute dominance – whether in postcolonial contexts or in the context of modern war – are unsatisfactory and fail to reflect the full complexity of the encounters they examine. See articles by Baker, Israel and Selim.
- The shifting and ongoingly negotiable positioning of translators and interpreters, and the unease to which it can give rise among those who rely on their services, as discussed in several articles, especially those by Tymoczko, Stahuljak and Rafael.
- The relationship between power, ideology and mediation. Mason (this volume), defines mediation as 'the extent to which one feeds one's current beliefs and goals into processing a text'. Mediation, as defined here, can be conscious or subconscious, and several of the articles included in this volume discuss instances of both. See especially Kahf, Mason, Baker, Nornes, Inghilleri and Stahuljak.
- The relationship between minority, globalization and the power of English, and the role that translation plays in suppressing or resisting this power. This is an extremely pressing issue that concerns practically all languages, rather than just those we might normally think of as marginalized. As Cronin (this volume) puts it, 'the hegemony of English in the fastest-growing area of technological development means that all other languages become, in this context, "minority languages"'. The articles by Cronin, Raley, Asad and Venuti address different aspects of this theme.
- The role played by translators and interpreters in suppressing or authorizing the 'voice of the lifeworld', i.e. the voice and narrative of the individual, as opposed to the voice of authority, of the dominant institution, be that an organization such as the United Nations, a medical establishment, the asylum system, a religious society, or a powerful discipline such as anthropology. The articles by Jacquemet, Davidson, Israel, Inghilleri and Asad all address this theme, to a greater or lesser extent.
- The growing importance of the role played by translators and interpreters in the context of armed conflict, and in dealing with the aftermath of conflict. For reasons to do with the spread and intensity of armed conflicts since the early 1990s and the increased visibility of translators and interpreters that accompanied this development, scholars both within and outside translation studies have begun to engage with various aspects of this issue in a sustained manner. For example, the Languages at War Project launched in May 2008 by two universities (Reading and Southampton) and the Imperial War Museum in London is headed by a scholar of French history, rather than translation studies, and devotes much attention to language policies and practices and to the role played by translators and interpreters in the liberation/occupation of Western Europe (1944–47) and in peacekeeping in Bosnia (1995–98). Articles that address aspects of this theme here include Baker, Rafael, Stahuljak, Jacquemet and Inghilleri.

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- The ethics of translation and interpreting, and the moral dilemmas involved in attempting to ‘do right’ by various parties in the interaction: the source author and culture, the target reader and culture, various parties in an interpreted encounter, or a particular political or social cause. This theme runs through most of the articles included in this volume but is addressed explicitly in the articles by Asad, Sturrock, Venuti, Inghilleri and Cronin.

Many more themes can be traced across several articles in this volume. I have tried to alert the reader to these where appropriate, and to link them to other relevant issues raised in material not included in this reader.

Finally, this collection may be prospective in orientation today, but it is bound to appear dated in a few years. As I have argued elsewhere, no object of study, including translation and interpreting, stands still while we elaborate ‘better’ theories of it; ‘it changes because the world changes, and our theories have to follow that dynamic’ (Baker 2008:26). Perspectives and issues prioritized here are thus not better or more important, in absolute terms, than those prioritized in other readers and contexts, but it is my hope that, at least for the time being, this collection might succeed in relating meaningfully and productively to the way in which translation and interpreting function in our societies today.

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February 2009

#### Note

- 1 As I have argued elsewhere (Baker, 2009), scholarly research cannot completely avoid drawing on some form of categorization. This is therefore a question of the extent to which we rely on discrete categories in analyzing acts of translation, and to which we recognize and highlight the unstable nature and shifting boundaries of such categories.