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# THE HISTORY OF TRANSLATION AND OF THE THEORY OF TRANSLATION IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

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## Abstract

In the present contribution to the History of Translation we consider critically the emergence and integration of Translation Studies as an academic discipline and the role of both Translation History and Translation Historiography. An analysis of what this discipline was before its acceptance into academia and proposals for what its role should be within a humanistic oriented curriculum for future professionals derives from the reception, clearly unsatisfactory, of its status as academic knowledge. Given the specificity of the Latin American situation (in no other region of the world translation has played a greater identitary role), we have added an appendix on the History of Translation in the region.

## Resumen

En la presente contribución al monográfico sobre historia de la traducción nos planteamos críticamente el surgimiento e integración como especialidad académica de los estudios de la traducción y el papel que en ellos deben desempeñar la historia y la historiografía de la traducción. Un análisis de lo que ha sido esta disciplina con anterioridad a su academización y unas propuestas de lo que debe ser su función en el interior de unos planes de estudios orientados a la formación humanística del futuro profesional son derivados de una percepción a todas luces insatisfactoria de su situación como saber académico. Dada la especificidad de la situación hispanoamericana (en ninguna

otra región del mundo ha desempeñado la traducción un papel más identitario), añadimos un apéndice sobre el estado de la historia de la traducción en la región.

**Palabras clave:** Historia de la traducción. Metodología investigadora. Estudios de la traducción. Planes de estudios.

**Keywords:** Translation History. Research methodology. Translation Studies. University Curricula.

## 1. The Babylonian exile of “historical reason”

To begin with and as a guiding idea for our discussions and proposals we would like to approach our subject etymologically, since it provides the epistemological boundaries within which our discourse will be displayed. Etymologists agree about the double or triple original value of the term “History”. It would come from the Greek ἱστορία derived from ἵστωρ, that would mean either “witness” (the person who is able to testify on something), or “referee” (the person who decides on a matter). Others insist on the verbal form, ἱστορεῖν, to which the meaning of “asking” is attributed.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the etymological approach presented, *semper et ubique* advisable, we must move into some History and Historiography, since it is our object of study. In contrast to the intense interest that both History (the study of the past) and Historiography (writing and researching about the past) have enjoyed, and in contrast too with the obvious social role that the research and narration of the past in our society play today—one should mention but a few examples of the so-called “historical memory” (all memories are historical) in Spain or the *Überwindung der Vergangenheit* in Germany (that has rather been oblivious of the past)—, it is easy to ascertain that the discipline took long to acquire the status of academic specialization.

Fortunately or unfortunately, history has been more present in the political arena than in the academic classroom. The cultural and literary space occupied by historians through all times (Herodotus, Thucydides, Julius Caesar, Polybius, Plutarch, Livy, Tacitus, Jerome of Stridon in ancient times; Bede, Isidoro de Sevilla, Ibn Khaldun, Díaz del Castillo, Alonso de Santa Cruz, Pedro Simón, Antonio de Solís and Mariana Ribadeneyra on intermediate times; and Gibson, Thierry, Ranke, Nieburg, Burckhart, Michelet, Renan or von Pastor and many others in recent times), did not receive official recognition from

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1. Thus, Herodote conceived History, this author of classical historiography, who in modern times, not without reason, would be the travel companion of Kapucinsky: «Historia voulait ainsi dire “information, recherche, enquête”. De même le verbe historeō signifiait “s’ informer, apprendre par soi même ou par les autres, être témoin” et le nom histôr, “celui qui sait, qui est témoin, l’ arbitre”» (Bizière & Vayssière 1995: 10).

“academy”. Neither Trivium or Quatrivium from medieval times nor curricula at Renaissance or Illustrated Universities ever considered something remotely near to a Historical Studies schema. We had to wait for the “scientific” renderings offered by great German and French writers on positivist historiography or for the contributions of the Annales School (Marc Bloch or Braudel), so that University authorities were convinced that History was susceptible of a systematic study and that it should make part of humanistic disciplines. Perhaps it was to this state of academic downgrading that Foucault (1966: 378) made reference when he stated the peculiar scientific status of the discipline:

On n’a pas parlé de l’Histoire, bien que elle soit la première et comme la mère de toutes les sciences de l’homme [...]. Peut être [...] n’a-t-elle pas place parmi les sciences de l’homme ni à côté d’elles. Il est probable qu’elle entretien avec toutes en rapport étrange, indéfini, ineffaçable [...]

This fate suffered by general Historiography seems to have been reproduced, at least partially, both by Historiography of Translation and by its study or historical knowledge, which is not surprising, mainly because Translation as an academic discipline has barely come of age. In any case, the experience related to the services that the histories of other disciplines (that of law, medicine and, above all, that of philosophy or literature) have offered for the understanding and practice of their respective specialties, could have avoided this delay, that affects both Translation Studies and Translator Training, from the curricula of which History of Translation has been absent.

## 2. System and history

In cognitive analysis of any human entity and activity there are two possible approaches: through the system and through history. System and history are the two axes that determine the nature and value of any reality. One without the other will “perceive”, but will not “understand”.<sup>2</sup>

Until the present, “essentialist analysis” of the process by which a text from a language A becomes a text in a language B continues to dominate Translation Studies. Today, the training of the translator pretends to get the aura of “exact” disciplines with preference given to the analysis of the system of the activity, so as to deduce operating principles presented with scientific and normative character: What are the functions of language? What is and what should be translation? Which attitudes and skills are required from

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2. The description of Human Sciences made by W. Dilthey, among other works, in *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung: Lessing – Goethe – Novalis*. (1929), can perfectly be applied in this regard.

those who practice it? Which conditions must the “product” meet in order to be faithful or at best, acceptable? Which translation techniques are used to transform the original text in a terminal text? In most curricula, the training of translation competence is reduced to the learning of theoretical rudiments (phases of the process, concept of equivalence, text types and strategies, the last ones often confused with techniques) which do not train the apprentice on the nature of his future professional activity but rather constitute the doctrinal corpus under the bibliographic epigraph of “translation theory”.

In the field of Humanities at universities (and Translation, despite current efforts against it, still makes part of the field), the synchrony and diachrony of a discipline must be inextricably linked when explaining its identity and when trying to communicate what the discipline is and what it has been to both the critic and the professional. Also, when it comes to creating a special professional conscience, that of the scholar, the sociologist or the artist. As proof of “comprehensive” virtuality of what is historical, it should be enough to bring forward the example of its social and cultural effectiveness: the literary canon. Could one effect of the translation so random and with such a diverse factorization as the admission of literary works into the universal canon be explained from a systematic and immanent study of the translation process? Could a precise and faithful version, e.g., that of Sheldon’s *Don Quixote* into English (1614), be proposed as the determining cause that introduced Cervantes into the canon of English Literature? If that is so, a decent version of a literary work should be enough for it to enter the heritage of universal literature, but it is not the case. Nor is the other way round: a work suffering one or more deficient versions (e.g., Filleau de Saint Martin’s *Don Quichotte*) enters the literary canon. Undoubtedly in this as in other matters of appreciative “valuative” dimension, that is to say, humanistic, a historical and transcendent study of the phenomena is a must: the social context, the styles of the epoch or the determinations of the printing industry, as well as the quality of the original work, will be critical terms of a possible study.

In spite of this fact, that should have advised the thinking minds of Translation Studies (for example, the bold Coseriu [1971], who, without ever having taught translation, pontificated about it, not always with success, or the ubiquitous Kiraly [2000]) to include the history of translation in the curricula of Translation Studies, the historical consideration of our field is “absent” from the training of translators. Holmes, in his famous tree or scheme of Translation Studies collected in “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” (1972), omitted any reference to the historical, which motivated Pym’s criticism in his *Method in Translation History*: “Yet the curious fact remains

that neither Holmes nor his commentators [...] explicitly named a unified area for historical study of translation" (1998:1).<sup>3</sup> We just need to weigh up the different curricula of our schools to confirm that in Translation Studies primacy has been given to explanation versus understanding; even more, we also witness the paradoxical situation that, while most practicing untrained translators "understand" translation although they cannot explain it, much of the (teachers) translation theorists can explain it without understanding it (and, often, without practicing it). The disregard of which the discipline has been the object in the specialty of "historical reason" proposed by Dilthey (1929) when dealing with the life of the mind has contributed to this void in training. Full of reason, this German thinker stated that all human reality product of "the life of the mind" (and the translation appears to be so) should be explained (*erklärt*) and understood (*verstanden*) from its intimacy and this can only be done through historical observation.

### 3. The ideal translation and translation "actually existing".

#### Or the complexity of a comprehensive description

This duality history/system, often applied in social and cultural criticism, was reformulated a few years ago when, in the midst of the crisis of the communist system that had long divided the world in two political hemispheres, an alternative of wide critical applicability was proposed constituted by what is essentially conceived and what actually exists. It was a highly effective pairing for social analysis. The "really existing socialism", as it was stated by one of the theorists of this conceptual pair (the economist and professor at Humboldt University in Berlin Rudolph Bahro, who died in 1997 after being co-founder of the "Green German Party"), contradicted in a certain way the results of the theoretical analysis of society proposed by the Marxist-Leninist system. The consideration and involvement of the historical realization in the analysis of socialism was what, according to Bahro, could prevent the divergence between "being" and "existence" of a political system that meant to be an improvement for human society. Applying therefore this formulation to our studies, it is proposed that the systematic consideration of Translation presents the ideal dimension thereof; and historical observation, the actual existing translation. Both are face and back of the same reality.

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3. But it is fair to say than in his work some mention in favour of the discipline is made.

#### 4. The translator, a man without qualities?

Emerging in a moment in which material techniques enjoyed maximum social prestige, born in a time when technique was being imposed on university programmes oriented towards professional and practical profiles, Translation Studies neglected entity values (the historical, the hermeneutical, the humanistic from a moral and ethical perspective) of reality, values that in the description of the discipline occupied a second place on the horizon of trainers that had arisen largely by spontaneous generation, *ex nihilo*, that is, without having either a theoretical foundation or an intuitive experience by means of translation practice. The void produced by the exile from that which is historical pretended to be filled with functional values (work effectiveness, career success, etc.). Two historical aspects fundamental in the training were lost for Translation Studies: the hermeneutical or interpretive virtuality and the didactic or “magisterial” effect. The first one, teaches us to interpret the present from the past and, the second, shows us the way to follow in the future to avoid past mistakes, as Cicero, not in vain, stated in his famous formula: *historia magistra vitae*. In this context the question arises whether the existing university education really gives the translator (theoretically a professional of Intercultural Communication), the rank and position of a humanist that by definition, tradition and vocation are his own, or rather it reduces Translation to the category of any common activity like that of a mechanic or a baker.

The unilateral or unidimensional approach of the Studies (and that unilateralism is proved by a brief analysis of both the content and the results of curricula) to which we make reference meant that the translator's competence suffered a severe shortage of training in general knowledge, knowledge that was assimilated by these variegated vocational training to which mercantilist and labour university (and we must remember that “labour university” was a concept in the educational hub of our recent past) is making room, by allowing the integration of a diverse non-academic teaching such as bakery or catering. Hostelry in college! An Ortegian spectator finally would realize that “(postmodern) imagination has come to power.”

The technician and/or professional model of our studies, unidimensional for the future translator, has eluded the competential “flexibility” of the translation apprentice and has relegated his profile to a mere technical, legal and commercial translator. It has been claimed for the translator the personality of that emblematic figure of modern acculturated civilization whose representation Robert Musil proposed in his equally iconic work: the unidimensionally specialized translator should look from the perspective of the slide rule and adopt the personality of Ulrich, the “man without qualities”. And there is



nothing more alien to this profile than the personality possessed by “historical reason”, a reason that must inform both the humanistic “knowledge” and the “know-how”. Neither interlinguistic equivalence nor the languages themselves are, in spite of modern science or terminology theory (Wüster called it *Lehre*), operations ruled by accuracy. The “essential” description of the nature of translation and the “normalization” of the activity produce its incomplete phenomenological analysis. Based on that analysis neither a critical system nor an integrative description of the anthropological phenomenon we call Translation can be built. The nature and character of Translation is exposed to analytical observation especially through the “comprehensive approach” of historical consideration. This consideration, for example, is the one that has guided, so far successfully, Literary Studies. Its History and not its theory is what has prevailed, as well in Literary Studies as in the Humanities in general.

### 5. A Tripartite proposal for Translation Studies

The double projection of scientific analysis, the structural one and the historical one, can be applied to Translation. To identify and appreciate both the essence and the value of it we will have to consider what it is essentially and what it has been historically. Essentialist analyses look forward to an ideal good translation or else coherent in its process. On this basis, schools today in charge of translation theory courses and that apply essentialist analysis to translation have been developing: that of Paris with its interpretive model, that of Heidelberg, with its finalist model (skopos or the brief), the manipulation school, etc. But, besides being good or bad, right or wrong —final judgments of any essentialist analysis—, translation is (or has been) operational or ineffective, immanent or transcendent, it has created an aesthetic reality or it has disturbed social order, etc., it has been an activity by means of which mutual attitudes of nations and peoples have been determined; it is also, and it is not a minor issue, an economical fact, with a specific diachrony that must include the fundamental economical principle, namely offer and demand, and on the basis of which the intellectual activity of an operator has to be placed that, even in the cases of Jerome of Stridon or Martin Luther, depends on the “potential” that such or such translation provides for his survival. Nor shall we neglect to consider the inner causes that motivate translations.

If we were to reduce the number of sub-competences —which in a somewhat exaggerated exercise and, up to a point, useless of a theorizing *pathos*,<sup>4</sup>

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4. The exaggerations leading to the release of a new discipline have made that, in the course of investigations relating to competences, their scope has been magnified. Some

have been identified for the professional of translation—, to a quartet of them (multilingual, cognitive, translational and instrumental competences), the specific weight and centre of gravity for the translator training should be on the translational sub-competence. This sub-competence, aimed at solving language and cognitive problems, and problems of textual restatement, should bear a preparatory character and be the basis for the training of future professionals. Well, that sub-competence must have a triple bind: theory (general and applied), history and translation criticism. If we were allowed to use a biological analogy, one might say that the first, theory, would give the structural knowledge, the statics of the system, the anatomy of translation; history, the dynamic behaviour of the system, i.e., the physiology of the process; and the third one, criticism, the description of the pathology that may affect the system. This proposal for translation competence is alien to the academic reality in which we move.

Therefore, and formulating it in a more drastic manner, translator training should begin by highlighting those translation facts that determine the social and cultural life of nations; it should begin by showing the apprentice that the activity to which he is going to devote was the textual basis for the religious and social culture of the West by means of Jerome of Stridon's *Vulgate*; that it divided Europe in two confessional poles through Luther's translation of the Bible; and that it helped provide universal justice through the interpreters that participated in the Nuremberg Trial. All that constitutes the historical consciousness of the profession, a consciousness alike to that which informs the spirituality of the monk, the ethical performance of the police, perhaps as important as its effectiveness, or the social struggle of a politician.

A Translation Studies that does justice to its role in society over time and, conversely, to the role of society in translation must address all these factors that determine its social and historical reality. The history of translation is the discipline that should welcome such analyses and considerations, which are of a character more savant than operational.

Even as an auxiliary for a systematic study of translation, history can play an important educational role. An example from the history of translation can demonstrate the inadequacy of pure theory, i.e. the deficient character of what is systematic: The concept of functionality. For, where will this concept be better explained than in the thoughtful study of translation doctrine and practice of what Zuber called "*les belles infidèles*", an aesthetic translation current

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theorists have come to indicate over a dozen of skills and abilities that should be taught and trained for the future translator. But, when and how?

whose supporters —translators of the *grand siècle*— pretended to make of the original text a suit to their measure, and that contrasted with the doctrine and practice of another translator —also of the *grand siècle*, Mme Dacier defender of literalism—, makes visible the possible discrepancies that can appear when determining the relationship between the source text and the target text? Let's see a second example: wouldn't the exposition of techniques or procedures of translation, or else Nida's systematization, as well as Vazquez Ayora's or Vinay and Darbelnet's, require a mention of Cicero's, Maimonides' or Luis de Leon's texts in which these techniques or procedures were already discussed, if only to bring to students the awareness of the historicity of translation and of its age? And when Breitinger proposed the nature of version as an imitation or a portrait of the original (*Konterfei*), wasn't he formulating in the eighteenth-century terminology, that which Catford proposed in his linguistic theory of translation in the 1960s? A third example: text type, easily explained by the detailed statement made thereof by Katharina Reiss, wouldn't it require as a first step and more readily available to the understanding of the student, an approach to the fundamental text, not the founder, of translation typology: Schleiermacher's *Über die verschiedenen Methoden der Übersetzung*? Wouldn't it be wise to approach the concept of "text type" by submitting to the consideration of the student Jerome of Stridon's *Letter ad Panmachium* in which this distinction between "sacred text" and "profane text" as a typological fundamental pair is made? When Jerome states that he proceeds in a different manner when he is translating the Greek texts and when he is translating the Scriptures, he is practically proposing the title of Reiss's monograph: Text type and translation method (*Texttyp und Übersetzungsmethode*).

## 6. The return of history

But, it is true that after any Babylonian exile always a return occurs *sull' alli dorati*. Despite the current state of the omission of the historical from the studies of the discipline, it is fair to say that in the few years that have elapsed since the academization of translation to the present, the history of translation has experienced a marked improvement in its status as a university discipline, both in its practical dimension, that is, as an "active" writing of the past, as in its cognitive dimension, that is, as a "specialized study" of it. And we must recognize that what is being achieved in the field of research, i.e. in writing, gradually is transposed onto the training.<sup>5</sup> The beginning of

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5. Thus, for example, the University of Alicante has recently included as a fundamental subject in the curriculum for translator training a History of Translation course that

that improvement lies not so much on the more intelligent organization of the studies, which, has had its “blind spot” precisely in the history of translation, as in the overlapping and involvement in the process of planning and teaching translation of many philologists and professionals from other humanistic fields who in their investigations had practiced a historical study of literature or of literary reception. Anyway, the fact is that the situation has changed and now a number of general works, monographs and websites<sup>6</sup> are doing justice to the cultural dimension of the issue. The contributions of outstanding intellectuals from all over the world to the translational reflection have highlighted the historical projection that this must have. George Steiner, for example, has clearly seen the inalienable character of the history of translation when he says that a culture is a sequence of translations and constant transformations. This equation from the Anglo-Austrian philosopher, which is at the same time an apothegm, would carry implicitly a syllogism that we can perhaps state as follows: if culture is the sum of translations and (their) transformations, the study of culture will, among other things, be the study of the transformations of those translations. Here we have one of the tasks of the translation researcher: the study of cultural transformation through translation. It is fair to add, in support of the necessity of what is historical for the discipline, that if diachrony means adequate cognitive consideration of the transformation processes to which Steiner refers, the study of everything that is included in the cultural system (translation, among other things), should have a diachronic cognitive approach, i.e. historical.

In fact, it is indeed imperative to recognize that if a few years ago, the history of translation was almost still unborn, today there are already signs that something is changing in this regard: the consciousness of the academic world is perceiving both the need and the difficulty of a History and a Historiography of Translation. Since the early 90s a change in trend seems to be

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students have to take in the early years of the programme. In the Ph.D programme of the same University several specialized monographs were devoted to it. And for the past fifteen years the Institute of Modern Languages and Translators of the Complutense University have been devoting a cycle of twenty hours to motivate future scholars of translation to research in this field. Meanwhile, a MA in Translation at Ricardo Palma University in Lima includes two modules on the History of Translation, which is also the case for graduate and undergraduate programme at Universidad de Antioquia.

6. HISTRAD ([web.ua.es/es/histrad/](http://web.ua.es/es/histrad/)) from the University of Alicante or HISTAL ([www.grupohistal.es](http://www.grupohistal.es)) from Montreal University, very frequently accessed are examples of the opening of the discipline to general consideration. The Translation and Interpretation Department of the former university hosts a bibliographical and documentation Project, BITRA (<http://dti.ua.es/es/bitra-introduccion.html>), directed by Javier Franco, which makes visible the fecundity of the bibliographical *manifesto* “history of translation”.

registered. Both the cultivated society and the professionals of translation are realizing that there are two types of translation products that correspond to two aspects or utilities of their exercise: one that is fungible and that is consumed, more or less ephemeral (= functional) that gets exhausted by using it or that ends up in the shredding machine; and the perennial one, that once used, immediately acquires the value of a lasting document, a value that is stored in the file of humanity, say the library. If until recently the systematic-synchronic study of the discipline has been predominant, from the recent turn of the century, works that valued socially and culturally translation services to history and to the progress of mankind have emerged. Pioneers were the works by Henri van Hoof (1991) and A. Lefevere (1992), and the scientific meetings around the topic of Translation History at Leon University, dating back to the eighties. When in 1993 *Textos clásicos de teoría de la traducción* appeared in Madrid, there was only an anthology on the market, that of J. C. Santoyo, referring to Spanish theorists. A few years later, only in Spain, there were two more anthologies. It must be said that in this field Spanish researchers have been pioneers in what is now a trending topic of research. Studies such as those of J. Delisle, a title loaded with meaning, *Les traducteurs dans l'histoire* (1995), or L. Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), which includes the social destiny of the translator, appeared later. Next came Clara Foz's investigations on the School of Translators of Toledo (1998) or Nora Catelli and Marietta Gargatagli's (1998) on miscellaneous aspects of historical traductography. Contemporary to these works, the *General History of Literary Translation* by José Francisco Ruiz Casanova (2000) and Francisco Lafarga's (1999) referred to a very productive period of translation in Spain (1750-1830), are flagship work that denotes a depuration of the historiographical concept of translation. More recently, *La Historia de la Traducción en España* by Lafarga and Pegenaute (2004) has come to mark a milestone in Spanish bibliography, becoming a founding text of the discipline. The respective anthologies of theoretical texts published by Lafarga, Santoyo and Vega have provided some essential materials when researching the history of translation aesthetics. Besides these, many other monographs will serve in the future to support integrated enunciations.<sup>7</sup> Even the Spanish-Australian Pym has come to raise with much brilliance the issue of the methodological Historiography of Translation in his above mentioned *Method in Translation History* (1998).

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7. Collaborations in reviews like *Livius*, directed by J. C. Santoyo, or *Hieronymus Complutensis*, directed by M. Á. Vega, are an important source of knowledge and information that any researcher should take into account.

And it goes without saying that the *Diccionario Histórico de la traducción en España*, performed again by the *dioscuri* Lafarga and Pegenaute (2009) and where dozens of scholars collaborated, has not yet found its pair in any other European nation. Finally Baigorri's work, especially that of 2004, about the performance of interpreters in politics and society of the twentieth century has been the cornerstone to continue a construction that does not yet exist: the history of interpretation. It is imperative to make visible those who we could qualify as the hidden subjects of modern official communication: the *inter partes* or interpreters. On the other hand, the German contributions of Vermeer (1992) and Albrecht (1998), turned on the alarms on the "systematist" environment that prevailed among translation scholars and practitioners in Germany.

Therefore, a review of the already mentioned work by Delisle and Woodsworth, signed by Alex Gross (1996) and entitled (possibly referring to Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning*), "The History of Translation History", observed that turnaround:

By my count, nine useful books about translation history, specialized works aside, have been published over the last thirty years. It must say something about where this field is going that six of them have come out during the last seven years (and four since 1992). The latest such work, *Translators through History*, edited and directed by Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth.

In the Latin American context there is also an interest in the history of translation: the work of Iván Rodríguez Chávez (2003) on the translation in Peru, the many works by Gertrudis Payàs or Patricia Willson. The work undertaken at the University Ricardo Palma by the Peruvian Ricardo Silva Santisteban (an anthology of translation in Peru in four volumes), the research carried out at the Universidad de Antioquia by Ramírez, Montoya and Ángel on "Cuatro traductores colombianos" (2006), slowly shows a progressive widespread recognition that translation is and should be, a subject of archive, that is, of cultural human heritage. Even a small country with a great cultural tradition as Costa Rica is starting research in their translatable past at the National University of Heredia.

All of this is evidence that a historicist perception of translation as a cultural phenomenon is being produced, not so much by professors in the field, but rather by researchers anchored on Philology. And yet, despite its still relatively limited quantity, the historiography that is produced is seeing the need to unify criteria and establish a methodology for the scientific product of this research to have validity.

## 7. Horizons of a comprehensive and integrated historiography: pending tasks and problems

Indeed, the historical view of translation is getting stronger. But, what kind of history are we working on? That corresponding to the witness or the one corresponding to the judge? From father Thucydides it seems that in historiography the testimonial function was dominant until the 18th century, when place was given to the interpretative function: that of the judge. Herder, one of the founders of the term “philosophy of history”, wrote a substantial work entitled *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*. Based on this programmatic work by Herder, the question arises: the history we are making, is it directed to the formation of “humanity” in the translator or it simply aims at the testimonial function? Is it only informative or is it also formative? Both terms can be parallel but not necessarily convergent. That is the question. Let us put forward then some considerations about the requirements to be met by this new discipline of Translation Studies.

So, for the last twenty years we have witnessed the emergence of a new scientific subject. Previous essays, as the famous and already distant by Aimable Jourdain on the (supposed or real<sup>8</sup>) Toledo School of Translators or those by Pellicer and Saforcada (*Ensayo de una biblioteca de traductores españoles donde se da noticia de las traducciones que hay en castellano de la Sagrada Escritura*, 1778) and the one by Menendez Pelayo (*Biblioteca de traductores españoles*, 1952-53) about the Spanish-language translators, didn't have continuity and it seems that it is in our time when an ethereal environmental awareness of the cultural significance of translation gets materialized.

Despite the relatively positive perspective, it must be said that, up to now, attempts to the historicizing of translation have been limited by subjection and conceptual reductionism. These studies, that have made an important contribution to the comprehensive historical account of the activity, must be completed and must transcend, otherwise the new discipline will not explain the role of the activity in the cultural system of an epoch or a country, condemning the results of their works and analysis to ostracism. Among the subjections and limiting reductionism we would mention, especially the dominance of monograph work over a more generalist one. Many of the

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8. We won't get into the discussion recently promoted by J.C. Santoyo, one of the pioneers of modern historiography of translation in Spain, concerning the existence of a group of Toledan translators. In any case, the fact of the discovery of the apocryphal manuscript in *Don Quixote* by Cide Amete Benengeli precisely in Toledo talks in favour of a “translator school” there.

contributions made so far have had a monographic character, sort of “Bruni’s dispute with Alonso de Cartagena”, “Amyot’s translations”, etc. At this point, when there is sufficient documentary work, it is important to synthesize, to portray periods, to pour over the general history monographic contributions. We shall return later to the issue. It is true that to historicize translation could mean to lose perspective, to be unable to see the forest and only see endless trees. The diversity of data and facts, the enormity of the sociotranslative phenomena and the complexity of reception facts greatly complicate the task to guide the observer or the scholar through the tangle of events that are object of historical description. But the documentary contribution imperative in any historiographical work is not worthy without synthesis, without categorial order, even of philosophy (of history). The methodological precepts of the field hitherto proposed (who has been translated, from which language, what kind of texts, who has translated, when and where was the translation carried out, what started the translation, etc.) are not always sufficient, especially if in the historical deployment we want to get away from the cast, the chronic or the dictionary format. The selective nature of the facts and data relevant for traductography —how, when, why, etc.— that undergo trial and analysis is imposed by the large number and diversity of translative production. Indeed, the historian is forced to select, pondering the significance of the events he values, aiming at creating, as discussed below, a “portrait of a period” that fits its phenomenology. But that selection will be made at the risk of leaving out important and necessary translative facts. Therefore, together with the selective and exemplary, randomness is another pragmatic imperative of this historiography and possibly of all historiography that tries to avoid the dictionary format:

– Targeting, mostly critically, on the study of translations, not on translators. If history must have a magisterial effect we have to take as a departing point the human being that with his translative activity can inspire, enrich and in any case transform a society: the translation of the *Bible* at Wartburg or of the *Carmañola* in Venezuela, couldn’t be explained if we don’t take the act of will that puts the process in motion as the starting point. Pym is right (1999<sup>9</sup>) when he proposes as one of his methodological principles the

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9. “1. The first principle says that translation history should explain why translations were produced in a particular social period and place.

2. The second principle is that the central object of historical knowledge should not be the text of the translation, not its contextual system, nor even its linguistic features. The central object should be the human translator, since only humans have the kind of responsibility appropriate to social causation.” (Pym 1999: IX f.)



centralization of the study on the translator as a subject. This focus provides, as we have argued elsewhere (Vega 2008: 94), the exemplary nature of what is biographical:

The biographical method, which has had so much fertility in literary historiography [...] should break through in the history of our discipline as it [...] we must consider that behind every translation is a person whose curriculum, as black box Mental and whose social, complex result of many factors, determined, as in the writer or artist, the final product and the result of this .

Obviously, that which is biographical needs the analytical consideration of the period and the society that determines it. Because, who does the translation? Something difficult to determine, for it has polyhedral bounds: the author and the editor, the translator, scientific and literary trends, the public, all of them have their participation in the materialization of the product. It is imperative to integrate all these aspects in an interrelationship in which factors of creative writing, sociology of reception, economical politics and philological and cultural knowledge are implicated. Specific facts of a history of translation are also the official centres and the academic authorities that determine it or condition it.

Indeed, the translations of Harry Potter, which ultimately have required the expertise of the individual know-how of a translator, cannot be explained in their “why” focusing its emergence exclusively on the translator. To fully interpret them, there should be included, perhaps equally, studies on the translator, on the society that asks for the translation or on the publishing house that is getting profits from the publication, as well as of the *élan* which caused their original writing and that responds undoubtedly to a very specific idea of the implied reader, even a foreigner. We believe that the fundamental objective of the history of translation is to portray a period involving elements of the translational “universe” that have shaped it and, conversely, the determinant effect of translation on the environment. It is clear that the events selected must be reduced to conceptual schemes, to categories such as trends, periods, styles, traductographical vectors etc. Always having as its final objective the history of reception, the history of translational aesthetics and of the social history of the group/language that translates, given that translation as an anthropological activity is aimed at generating in the target culture new ideas and projects, new knowledge and sensitivities, modifying the target polysystem, that is to say, everything that constitutes the cultural history of a country. Moreover, being the history of translation, not the sum of the history of translations, but the history of all the factors involved in the production of a translation, a work translated and received, must in part, include the

history of its publication. Sometimes you cannot separate one from the other, let alone the fact of the mutual dependence of the binomial terms: a translation does not exist if it is not edited and published; and publishing houses could hardly survive without translations, the survival of translations makes reprinting one of the keys to survival: In Spain, for example, the reediting of Julio Gómez de la Serna's *Las flores del mal* (Baudelaire) made long ago, covered large editorial needs in this important section of French literature of the nineteenth century and a proper history should address the issue that makes the survival of a concrete translation;

– Literary bondage.<sup>10</sup> This is perhaps the most important limitation of the historiography of the field, which has been so far closely linked to the history of literary reception. As historians and critics of translation, we can specify, applying essentialist criteria, the linguistic validity of the translation of Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano* by Boscán and the one by Garcilaso and their influence on the literary system: it could be determined whether it is correct or not, whether appropriate or not. But to measure its entity, we must also know whether the translated text has caused a stylistic effect in Spanish to imitate the elegant effect or if the original Italian, as Ambrosio de Morales said in his *Discurso sobre la lengua castellana*, Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano* spoke in Spain as finely as in Italy, where he was born. We can and we must also investigate whether the proposed humanistic ideal in *Il Cortigiano* had a social impact in the circle of friends that surrounded Charles V in Toledo, where Castiglione would die. If, for example, it is found that, influenced by "courtiers" ideals, the Duke of Alba had put its principles into practice in the government of the Netherlands, it would be demonstrated once again that a translation, as the case of Castiglione's work, read by Álvarez de Toledo, was perhaps one element of influence in the moral and political conduct of a person who had an impact on an entire people and on the historical era in which he lived. The investigation of these and many other issues could be the object of Translation Studies focused on humanistic criteria. The sociology of translation is given to us primarily in its history. And without sociology we shouldn't be very much interested in its essence. If a historiographical consideration of a translated *Il Cortigiano* ignores the socio-political context that put the translator Boscán in relation to the author Castiglione, the vision of the social effect of the translation will be limited and, conversely, the social dependence of translation. Only philologists and literary critics take note of the bibliographical

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10. A different case is the work of J. C. Santoyo, who has oriented his research on the history of translation towards legal, political or commercial texts.

product we call translation. Even though the translation of the Bible by Luther may have an enormous interest as a result of a personal philological confrontation of Luther with the sacred text, the importance of his work will focus more accurately if, regardless of his skills as a translator, his work is considered as cause and origin of a political and religious division in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The same could be said about a historiography devoted to the importance of translation by the time of Conquest and Colonization in America, and in many other chapters of world history in which translation is an interpretive key.<sup>11</sup> It is now time to give translation what is due to translation, and to philology what is due to philology. And it should also be added that the historiographical exposition of translation activity should be made from a qualitative perspective —accurate/inaccurate translation, positive/negative effect on the cultural system of the receptor, intrinsic quality of the translation regarding its own aesthetics, etc.—, but not reducing the horizons of the discipline, as if quality parameters which are considered the boundaries of the historiographical work would transcend into the field of translation criticism. Moreover, to orient the history of translation to the achievement of a canon of literary translation would impoverish the process of the discipline, as it would introduce a monographic literary perspective that would challenge its autonomy and one of its fundamental principles: interdisciplinarity. To value traductographical currents on the basis of the translation theory applied would render an inaccurate result, because frequently, it does not let see through, it only allows to suspect. Furthermore, the result would be quite poor, since the aesthetics leading the process fluctuates in the narrow margins that the aesthetics of “fluidity” allows, a “postulated” aesthetics (in the sense of *petitio principii*) rather than a supported one.

## 8. Advantages and problems of a broad-spectrum Historiography

A History of Translation thus understood could perhaps straighten Translation Studies, theoretically hypertrophied from Mounin onwards during the half-century from 1950 to 2000. The History of Translation considers what the activity is and what it has been; theory considers what it should be but perhaps it is not. The importance that the new scientific subject thus focused may have for the historiography of the rest of cultural disciplines and, in general, of history is huge. The Ciceronian saying *historia magistra vitae* has here also its compliance. It matters then to approach the study of the diachrony

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11. This fact has been highlighted by Miguel Ángel Vega (2004) in one of his articles on translation and interpretation in the Conquest of America.

of translation to its “magisterial” effects. That’s why the consideration of this new discipline should take into account both its nature and its anthropological function, values that will be basically given to us in a history of broad spectrum. Translation as an activity that provides communication between peoples and individuals and provides, at least half of the written cultural heritage of a language or country will be the reference that conditions the results to look for in this discipline. János Petőfi has made a very precise formulation of the departing point for the History of Translation: the relationship between different cultures: *La traduzione è il modo più esplicito e produttivo di comunicazione linguistica e di interazione culturale*.<sup>12</sup> The immanent perspective to remain at the exclusive consideration of the target texts in the target microsystems, without passing the border of the social, political or cultural effects that they produce, wouldn’t be valid. When the documentary images of the Nuremberg trial are viewed and the Nazis can be seen listening on their headphones to the prosecutors accusations and to the allegations of their lawyers, translation can be perceived as an activity that is fundamentally determining the lives of individuals and peoples and, of course, of international justice. We do not know whether interpreters that were in Nuremberg booths did their work according to the canons set today by translation theory. We do know that their work was considered valid and that it was effective enough for war criminals to be sentenced and to pay for their crimes. Consideration of these historical facts has more significance than the critical analysis of the adequacy of the final text of an English *Quixote* and its model. The fact that in England *Mein Kampf* continues to be reprinted or that the film *Harry Potter* creates a political problem that demanded a Catalan version in Catalonia, is informing us that translation can cost or save lives, improve them, complicate them or worsen them. And here the importance of translation lies. When sociologists, historians, the nations and the world realize that without weighting and valuating the interlingual and intercultural communication process which precedes or accompanies any historical episode —e.g. Pizarro meeting Atahualpa—, we cannot explain the history of the past; when they realize that without translation, without translators, given the present situation, despite the babelic lingua franca on the planet —let’s hope that it lasts and is not erased by the voracity of the Anglophone Koiné—, we could not live and maybe not even co-exist, then perhaps all those receivers and users of

12. *La traduzione è il modo più esplicito e produttivo di comunicazione linguistica e di interazione culturale e appare, tanto più nel mondo de oggi, come operazione primaria ed essenziale per indirizzare ad un reale progresso le attuali, spesso difficili relazioni tra civiltà diverse.* (Petőfi 1982)

translations —sociologists, historians, international institutions, etc.—, will pay more attention to the communicative phenomena between languages and cultures, perhaps they will understand their own general history better and, finally, why not, would yield greater consideration and even economic importance, to translators.

But we would not do justice to the subject if we didn't mention the difficulties of such historiography. The first and foremost is the determination of the ranking criteria and documentary classification: how are traductographic facts sorted and integrated? On what basis will "the portrait of a period" be built, that allows us to talk, for example, of Baroque translation or Romantic translation? There is much thought to be given concerning this aspect. The division of historical exposition by periods —roughly equivalent to the literary one—, nations and disciplinary groups, as H. van Hoof (1993) has done, does not seem wrong, but in any case, it is not the most appropriate for an argument that seeks to consider translation as an activity that responds to specific economic and social conditions, regardless of preconceived classifications.

An important part of the historiographical work will be to parcel the chronological flow of events conceptually, i.e., in "periodization". This periodization in the Historiography of Translation should tend to use intradisciplinary criteria of its own; criteria that may not coincide with the overall general history or the history of culture and which in any case must be both specific and interdisciplinary. In this sense, the "atomized" history prevailing since the seventies should be connected with the concept of total history proposed by Braudel, one of the fathers of the Annales School. For example, for the period of French history during which a kind of translation called *les belles infidèles* was practiced, we may talk about "translation of absolutism" according to the period registered and the treatment accorded to the original text —subsidiary, in part, of the concept of history and grandeur of French culture then in vogue—. But we can hardly apply this category to translation in Germany, given the dominance of rationalism during the early eighteenth century for both linguistic and translative conceptions in this country. Nor could that period be designated with the heading "the period of Louis XIV", as the phenomenological features that in a unitary manner the exercise of translation shows would exceed the limits of his reign. It would be much more functional, using as a conceptual frame large and imprecise period demarcations of general history (seventeenth century, for example), to consider the division of the historical flow related to, for example, France, in the largest possible number of categories, in minor thematic "units", such as

- translation in administration
- translation in the Colonies
- reception of European literature
- reception of ancient literature, the *querelle* and *goût*, the *belles infidèles*, etc.

Thus, a compromise between atomized historiography and global historiography would be, at the moment of periodicizing, a methodological desideratum that would connect disciplinary history with the general history.

No less difficult is the linguistic duality or the linguistic plurality of a nation or a group. Clearly, a “history of translation into Spanish” will not be the same as a “history of translation in Spain” —the latter would have to include Basque, Catalan, Galician, Bable, etc. and would have to neglect translation in the linguistically sister countries of Latin America. Given that both perspectives are valid and complementary —the national one and the linguistic-cultural one— from the point of view of scientific effectiveness the second vision would always seem more appropriate. A history of translation in Canada should be the determining fact when building a cultural framework of the country, but at the same time, it would mean a double derivative when tracing French-speaking history of translation or Anglophone history of translation. In this sense, we should not only include, if we may say, aboriginal translations, but also native ones: In globalization times translations by Ricardo Silva Santisteban at the Catholic University of Lima have a reception effect, if not by the Spanish general public, at least by the specialist reader in Spain, Peru and Chile. The translations of Alberti in Buenos Aires or Hermann Broch in the United States, don't they make part of the intellectual history of Spain and Germany, respectively? In Spain, for years German Nobel laureate G. Hauptmann has been read by Spaniards in editions published by Losada, from Buenos Aires (publishing house founded by a Spanish exile of the same name) or, conversely, in Mexico today Spanish translations from Spanish publishing houses such as Cátedra or Alianza are read. Needless to say, that immigrant translation as in the case of multinational languages also modifies the cultural landscape of a country.

## 9. As a (long) Conclusion

Summarizing, the proposals for a valid academic discipline would be:

a) The design of the various successive phenomenological frames that the translation activity has delineated over time, integrating all its determinant aspects. For this, all the elements involved such as cause, reason, condition

or explanatory effect, should be taken into account in research related to the traductographical production throughout history. These are:

- The economic, social and cultural context in which translation is performed. From this point of view, history of translation depends on the knowledge provided by the history of ideas, sociology, —the public of the target culture, their cultural level, their level of reading— and the political history of the people/language that receive the translation.
- The external agents that condition translation: the role of literary agencies, internal or external governmental aids, censorship, book fairs, etc. The latter, which are not a recent invention, account for a decisive impulse for the exchange of bibliographic material and consequently for the intrinsic traductographical promotion from the tenets of quality and marketing. Few historiographical productions so far have involved this factor. Only by way of example, think of the importance of FIL (International Book Fair) in Guadalajara (Mexico) in promoting the translation of recent American Spanish Literature in Europe. The role that political power can play in traductographical production, until recent times minor but important, since the emergence of the global village, in which each of the small linguistic villages seeks to make active part of globalization, also through translation, would be a fact of great significance when explaining the causes for the transmission and reception of national literatures.
- The assessment of the effect of translation activity achieved in the historical portrait of its period; the multiple social, cultural, literary purpose of translation in the target audience. The translation of a work like *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, what doubt is there that it would not have had the same effect (among others, economic), the same criticism, the same reception in the 1950s Spain, when Catholic culture existed, than in the present moment, in which an irreversible process of secularization has been accomplished by the Spanish culture, and for which that translation would only be the object of scientific or philosophical curiosity?

b) Fixing terms /concepts / categories with historiographical value, user-friendly for the discipline. “Humanistic translation”, “translation during the Reform period”, “belles infidèles”, “School of Translators of Toledo”, “Abbasid translation” are categories, proposed mostly in monographs and epistemologically useful, although nuances are disregarded, instead there is a gain in the handling and unity of the translational phenomena studied under those

headings. In any case, the value of many of these terms should be subject to review and get consolidated when it is appropriate. Santoyo's negativistic thesis on the School of Toledo is a case that shows the need to set the historical value of epigraphs.

c) The establishment of a cast of translators that mark each "portrait of a period" and that appears in its own right in the history of translation and possibly in the general history by the number, quality or effectiveness of their translations.<sup>13</sup> The so much mentioned invisibility of the translator has led on occasion to build histories of translation or general monographs, mostly dedicated to the translation activity of the great writers that sometimes *pro pane lucrandum*, sometimes as stylistic exercise or, finally, as an alternative in times of spiritual drought, act as translators. An authentic history of translation should try, conversely, to rescue, from anonymity and for the history of translation, that cohort of practitioners of a literary culture who fulfil their role of mediation between peoples and languages. These would give primacy to the history of translators in the context of the history of translation, which could also include author-translators. That history will include a series of

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13. The translator must never be socially transparent. There has been a marked tendency for the anonymity of the translator, a fact that makes the historian's task very difficult, and also the social visibility of the translator. Many publishing houses avoid including the name of the translator. Espasa-Calpe, a publishing house that has edited, and we have to give it credit for that, hundreds of foreign titles in the Austral Series, has often forgotten the name of the translator, or has included his/her name in a very small font size that nobody reads. The same is the case of publishers Diana in Madrid or Bruguera in Barcelona. Facing the magnitude that the publishing activity acquires during the 1950s in the world and, correspondingly, the translation activity, the translator loses opacity and the publisher as well as the reader seem to forget the figure and activity of the translator. Only the authors that sometimes act as translators are used to complain and appear on book covers and brochures. In the case of theatre, where translations are also adapted, the situation is more serious. We know very little about those linguistically responsible of pioneer theatre performances such as the representations of *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* by the austro-hungarian Ö. von Horvath (actors that participated may be kept in the memory of the audience) or *Reigen* by Arthur Schnitzler in Madrid "*de la movida*". It is necessary to open a new line of research related to translators whose work is not meant to be published. The work done by ACEtt (Literary Translators Association), directed by Esther Benítez was decisive in the sense of demanding publishing houses to include the name of the translator on the front page of their catalogues. However, still today many catalogues neglect the fair mention of the names of the translators. In this context of depreciation of the translator activity—Ortega even called the translators poor-spirited—, we can include the abandonment of the prologues that in the past exposed the translators to describe the how and the why of their translation. The biographical aspect of the translator: origin, cultural and philological background, literary experience, etc.



names that otherwise would be condemned to oblivion, intending to avoid at the same time, the culturally classist character of historiography. As an example of a translation functioning as a proper text in the target language we can mention with honours Cernuda's translation of Hölderlin, although the anonymous translator who rescues the scientific work of a biologist or a mathematician from oblivion is equally worthy. But if in the history of translation we disregard the criterion of excellence and of aesthetics (which Venuti calls the aesthetics of fluency, which pretends to read the original text as if it had been produced in the target language); if we pretend that the history of translation be the history of intercultural communication of the written text, socially effective and existing in reality, we will have to leave aside that dulia attitude of bondage to the great writers who, besides writing, have been translated or adapted. It doesn't mean to ignore them, but not to make them protagonists of the story. Conversely, translators that have occasionally dedicated to writing in any format (essays, poetry, etc.), and whose works didn't overstep the threshold of literary canon, have contributed at least to project their own name as translators and should see this activity included in the traductography of their historization. The original works of Cipriano Rivas Cherif, brother-in-law of the president of the Second Spanish Republic Manuel Azaña, or Luis Araquistain, Spanish socialist politician of the 30s, are not great literary titles but they help to explain the translations they made (St. Francis' *I Fioretti*, the former; Schnitzler's *Anatol*, the latter). It is high time that the history of literature devotes space to the genre "translation" and that this is explained in their environments and contexts.

d) The establishment of translational aesthetic frameworks, that determine to which extent, formal, stylistic and structural components are repeated on the target texts and if from them results, first, an adequate or inadequate translation relative to the taste of the time and, second, a translational approach that has determined the *modus operandi* of the translator. At the same time that coherent translation aesthetics thoughts are being identified —the case of the *belles infidèles* in French or the enlightened *Wörtlichkeit* in German—, couldn't we build other conceptual frames that might appear as classificatory units of historiography?

e) An opening or expansion of the term "translation": translation act, throughout history, has not only taken the traditional binomial form ST = TT, but it also has presented a dual multiple nature in which TT has been a "reduction" (the gastronomical sense may come in handy) of a cultural or linguistic context not yet textualized, without textual support. The formula

of the translation process in this case would be the following: PtCc = TT (pretextual cultural context = target text). That was, for example, the version of the “Colombian” *Yurupary* (from the indigenous people of Vaupés) of the Italian Ermanno Stradelli: a multiple environmental orality, by “translation reduction”, produced a text. And in this sense, for example, a place should be given in the history of American translation to ethnographical texts that reduced Aztec, Maya or Inca oral mythology culture to a corresponding foreign language and to a text. Perhaps the work of Bernardino de Sahagún or the *Spanish-Mexican Dictionary* by Alonso de Molina, were acts of linguistic and cultural mediation or, more recently, the version made by Arguedas of *Dioses y Hombres* by Huarochiri. For, isn’t a lexicographic work a translation work, in which the oral lexical patrimony of a language is first fixed textually and later reduced to a text in another language? We propose in this case the term “asymmetric translation” (one in which the term *ex quo* and the term *ad quem* have different magnitudes) or cultural translation, although the latter could be misleading.

f) Data collection and documentation on the role played by translators through (cultural, literary, political) national history. When talking about the *Weltliteratur*, Goethe was referring to the silent work of translators that he qualified as factors of world literature. However, to reach this great construction of world literature the houses inhabited by small national spirits must be built before, each one contributing to world history... through translation. In this sense, the history of translation is still a task to perform, because almost none of the countries of the Western world have an overview of their traductography. It would be interesting to do this work in nations where translation has had a function in the configuration of a national identity, more specifically in Latin American nations, in which their translators (the Inca Garcilaso, the missionary Bernardino de Sahagún or Francisco Ximénez, the revolutionary Antonio Nariño or politicians such as Bello, Sarmiento and Mitre) were important characters in the corresponding national definitions. Neither in Colombia nor in Argentina, for example is there a handbook that gives satisfaction to the questions that the issue might arise. Patricia Willson’s excellent work (2004), indeed fails (and we suppose it wasn’t her intention, despite the title) to present what could have been a National History of Translation in Argentina.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, there are countries in which, as it can be seen through

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14. To the particularities of the History of Translation in Latin America we dedicate an appendix at the end of this paper.

the documentation found on *Index Translationum*, in the 40 years covered by the systematization of the traductographic production in the world, vast quantities of titles have been produced that allow the publishing industry to keep going, and, more importantly, we have seen the readership increase out of a general public. Time would do justice to those who have contributed substantially to a country's culture through reading. "They read, so we Translate," is the motto of a Spanish translator association. The history of translation should make clear the dependence that the spirit of a people, their national identity and their international projection have had on translation.

In this context and as a support to that historiography, we consider that the task, still "horizontal" (that is to say, hosted on a future horizon), is urgent, to create translation documentation centres, museums and the like.<sup>15</sup> The storage of "manuscripts" would be a minor problem in the age of electronics. Translator Houses, also historifiable objects, could be a support for such institutions.

g) Another more intricate matter has to do with the possibility of assessing morally —taking into account democratic and humanistic principles and values—, the role that translations (some translations) have played in the progress of societies and human groups. We say that it is an intricate issue, because it would border either the freedom of expression or the burning of books. But wouldn't the translation (not the translator) of historically "infamous" texts, e.g., the *Malleus Maleficarum* in its time (to avoid the typical examples with a more convincing force as *Mein Kampf*, for example) deserve a historical moral judgment? It is a question that we leave open, but we do not exclude as a task to be carried out by a comprehensive historiography of translation.

The historiography of the discipline must tend currently to integrity, it must get out of the immanent perspective and highlight the reciprocal causality between translation and social and cultural reality; it must weigh up its output to the progress of periods and societies and, especially, to the role of the translator in history. If all culture is a series of translations, a comprehensive analytical, holistic culture will have to take into account, in a nuclear manner, the history of translation.<sup>16</sup> And in that context, the historian of

15. Elsewhere we have enunciated the proposal for the creation of a Museum of Translation Why doesn't the idea arise any interest?

16. To confirm what we say it would be enough to formulate and answer a simple question: could we historicize properly, that is to say, could we weigh up the genesis and function of nazism and communism in the interwar period in Europe without taking into account the translations of the "sacred texts" of the corresponding movements, namely, *Mein Kampf* and the *Komunistische Manifest*? Nevertheless, how many historical statements of that time and of those movements leave this mention absolutely aside?

translation should be “un experte et un arbitre qui peut être consulté pour démêler le faux du vrai” (Bizière & Vayssière 1995: 10).

## 10. Appendix. A particular case: the history of translation in Latin America

If we engage in the study of cultural and literary history in Latin America, we must give a prominent place to translation. When and how the translation activity starts, which were and have been the most productive translation periods, what have been the historical and cultural contexts in which these translations were produced, how have the translated works influenced the formation of a literary canon, of aesthetic trends, of political and religious thought in the target contexts, how have translations contributed to create interest and to motivate the understanding and the need for knowledge of the source cultures: these are questions whose answers would begin to outline a history of translation.

Although pre-Columbian societies were multilingual, and surely there was a very intense activity of interpretation among them, we could only talk about the emergence of translation activity, at least in writing, from the moment of the “encounter” with Europeans. In the first place, as a matter of survival at the time of the conquest; later, for the settlers evangelization purposes. We could say that the interest in translating and understanding each other was reciprocal for both Spanish and indigenous people, the need for the Spaniards to make themselves understood was clear, the need for Indians to understand newcomers is reflected in the speed with which they learned Spanish. Translation as a communication act is already represented here.

In Latin America, Translation Studies gradually starts to make part of the literary, linguistic and political histories, of our countries. However, a history of translation is still in the making. Besides, comparing texts and analysing the various translations that have been made of the same author (as is, for example, the case of the many versions of Victor Hugo), when we study Latin America it is important to note the relationship of translation to the political movements of certain periods of the Conquest, the Colony and the Independence.

*Pre-colonial period.* In recent traductography regarding Mexico, Gertrudis Payàs (2010), in her book *El revés del tapiz. Traducción y discurso de identidad en la Nueva España (1521 – 1821)*, seeks to relate translation, as a cultural phenomenon, to the construction of an identitary discourse, using varied translation material by means of which she proposes to describe and explain the interethnic and intercultural dynamics that allowed the construction of

identities at the time. The author outlines three translation projects that participated in the constitution of what is Mexican, “the recovery of languages and indigenous practices for assimilation (the founding myths), the assimilation of the native to the great myths of Western classical culture (classical continuity) and the production of science that legitimates the Mexican nation (modern high culture)” (Foreword by Clara Foz in Payàs 2010:19). In Peru, the research group on Translation Studies is carrying out this line of research led by Rosario Valdivia at the Universidad Ricardo Palma, and in Colombia the same happens at the Universidad de Antioquia. Translation in this work is seen as an engine of development and as a means to legitimize new identities.

*Post-colonial period.* Ricardo del Molino García (2007), in his book *Griegos y romanos en la primera república colombiana*, presents translation as a tool for political analysis that helps understand how the first glimmerings of emancipation came to America, highlighting the political uses of classical Antiquity. In one chapter of his book entitled “La *Translatio republicae*” the author recalls how Miguel Pombo (a native of the city of Popayán), born of a Spanish father and a mother from Popayán, translated the Declaration of Independence and Federation of the U.S. in 1811, thus formulating “a true *Translatio republicae* to the republican Nueva Granada” (Del Molino García 2007:163), one year after the wars that declared independence.

Much more focused on translation is the recent book by José María Rodríguez García (2010) *The City of Translation* (translation into Spanish under way). The author takes as a central point translation production to analyze the nineteenth century in Colombia, —a century that sees the construction of the Republic—, by means of the study of “poetry and literary translation, grammar and philology, jurisprudence and political theologies” (Rodríguez García 2010:xvii). Focusing on Miguel Antonio Caro (1843-1909), an important and controversial literary and political figure in Colombia in the nineteenth century, the author manages to make a criticism of Colombian politics, presenting the emergence of a multicultural and multi-ethnic urban society, the expansion of public education, the development of trades and professions, and above all, the development of a literature of their own, independent, consolidated, which manages to get integrated into Universal Literature.<sup>17</sup>

*Contemporary Period.* Patricia Willson’s book (2004) *Constelación Sur. Traductores y traducciones en la literatura argentina del siglo XX*, accounts for

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17. See Juan G. Ramírez Giraldo (2012), Review of “*The City of Translation: Poetry and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* by José María Rodríguez García (2010)” in *Translation Studies*, DOI:10.1080/14781700.2012.727633

the interest and need for translation history in Latin America. She supports her analysis on the polysystem theory, according to which translated literature functions as the possibility for extension or modification of a repertoire of literary forms. The book opens with the issue of the publication in 1947 of *Ferdydurke* by Witold Gombrowicz (of Polish origin) by the Buenos Aires publisher Argos, a literary work written (translated into Spanish) by a group of enthusiasts: Carlos Mastronardi and Eduardo González Lanuza, and the Cuban poets Virgilio Piñera and Humberto Rodríguez Tomeu. This translation (writing) has raised thoughts on Argentina national tradition: can *Ferdydurke*, literature written in Argentina, be considered as national literature? Or in the case of Faulkner's *The Wild Palms* translated by Borges, can Borges' translation be considered as pertaining to the literary tradition of the United States? Patricia Willson calls then "refunctionalization" the fact that the translation affects the original work, when shifting to the context of the target culture, and when the translation becomes more important than the original. She is interested in what she calls "a translation approach oriented towards incoming literature" (Willson 2004:20). The author raises the possibility of stating a critical discourse on translation and rescues the practice of comparison, so criticized by contemporary translation scholars, arguing how through journal publications, in this case, *Sur* magazine, which published translations with a specific orientation, the development of local or national literatures is constituted to a greater extent. These conditions occur in three major cases, when a literature is young and is in the process of consolidation, when a literature is "peripheral" and when a literature is affected by crises of literary models or by the absence of them (Willson 2004:33).

The presence of translated literature in the Brazilian polysystem has led Translation Studies scholars and writers to question the boundaries between the national literatures and those adopted by the target culture in translation. One of the books in which we can study this relationship is *Literatura Traduzida e Literatura Nacional*, where Guerini, Torres and Costa (2008) bring together a series of articles in which it is debated whether both literatures should be integrated into the system of national literature, and this in two directions, in the sense of the literature translated into Brazilian Portuguese and in the sense of the Brazilian literature translated into other languages.

Gregory Rabassa's *Latin American Literature. A Translator's Visible Legacy* by Maria Constanza Guzmán (2010) (translation under way) gives an account of the current Latin American image created from Gregory Rabassa's translations. She studies the socio-historical perspective in which translated texts get inserted and she also discusses how these translations function as a means of

virtually institutionalized documentary material that represents an imagined Latin America, oftentimes not so close to reality. And this specifically, but not exclusively, from the English translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Rabassa has translated many other works by García Márquez; he was actually the sole translator into English until Edith Grossman masterfully translated *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Furthermore, Rabassa has translated many Brazilian authors, Jorge Amado among them. As Patricia Willson would say, here we have a “refunctionalization” of the original work, which when translated “imposes” a literary canon on other literatures, but also, beyond the scope of literature and aesthetics, achieves political and social influence as far as their current representations.

This brief overview pretends to give an introduction to the traductographical work that is being carried out in Latin America and on Latin America, studying translation activity from the conquest and colonization, through independence, up to the present time. There is still much to study, much research needs to be done. But from now on, we could say that translation here has played a role of a magnitude of which we are not yet fully aware, given that, that which is being translated into Spanish in Latin America (and we mean not just literature), exercises an impact on a whole continent, including a country like Brazil, whose latinoamericanized Portuguese is so close to the Spanish we all talk around here. The turn to be taken by the study of the history of translation in Latin America, articulated to the different national histories, will (this is our hypothesis) shed a new light on many of the categorizations under which Latin American history, Conquest and Colony have been studied and taught.

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## BIONOTES

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