

# Book Reviews

## On the translational turn: Translation Studies as a global project

**Titika Dimitroulia**

Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter (eds.), *A Companion to Translation Studies*. Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture, Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014, 654 pp., £129.00 (hbk), ISBN 978-0-47067-189-4; online ISBN 978-1-11861-350-4.

In the late 1970s, Translation Studies were struggling for their autonomy and legitimization. Werner Koller, for example, was stressing the 'legitimation crisis' they faced (1979: 10) and highlighted the main problems that remained unsolved, namely, the relationship between translation theory and practice, as well as that between Translation Studies and its source sciences. Today, as we pass through the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what is at stake is the translational turn in the humanities and social sciences. The multitude of university programmes, journals and book series, as well as the ever increasing number of reference works, encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks and companions to appear in the last twenty years, which approach translation from diverse perspectives, bears testament to the consolidation and growth of the field of Translation Studies. The weighty *A Companion to Translation Studies*, edited by Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter, is one of the most impressive recent additions to the steadily expanding constellation of reference books for translation. Its overall objective is to define what Mona Baker, right at the beginning, describes as the *changing landscape* of translation studies, in an age where, as Susan Bassnett puts it, in her 'Variations on Translation', the *translation consciousness* of societies is growing ever stronger through globalization. Intended both for the specialist, teacher and student, as well as for the general reader, the *Companion to Translation Studies* endeavours to map out the field of literary translation and theory in a manner that is attentive to its historical depth and its current configurations, and at the same time consistently focused on transculturality and interdisciplinarity.

Whether general or specialized, the volume's 45 wide-ranging articles, all written by distinguished experts in their field, are straightforward though never simplistic in their treatment of the subject, and frequently even eloquent. The *Companion*, as a whole, operates on two levels. First, it offers a historical retrospective in the field of translation, which, informed by Foucauldian archaeology, occasionally leads to focused conceptual analyses. Secondly, it postulates new approaches to the theory of translation, some of which are based on or emerge from genuinely intercultural comparisons.

The first Part (Approaches to Translation) focuses on aspects of the convergence of translation and translation studies with other disciplines, those with which it is traditionally linked, such as linguistics, both contrastive and computational, stylistics, comparative literature, sociology – what Holmes (1988:72) had called socio-translation studies – philosophy and semiotics, but also technology and the digital. The latter dimension, however, is represented by only two articles, one on Machine Translation and another on Localization. The radical changes brought into the field of translation from

recent developments such as networking, digital nomadism, web communities or computer assisted translation, could have been addressed more thoroughly.

The second Part (Translation in a Global Context), by far the most extensive, examines translation as the global-wide arena of a wide range of intercultural encounters, often on asymmetric terms, between languages and cultures. In this crucial arena, where individual and collective identities are negotiated and shaped, the disciplinary identities of comparative literature and of Translation Studies are also renegotiated, intertwining their respective problematics around the strategic role of a multi-accented concept of translation. Finally, the third Part (Genres of Translation) comprises a kaleidoscopic view of various types and sub-types of translation, including that of sacred texts, from fascinating and fresh perspectives. Particularly noteworthy is the extended reference to intralingual translation, which is quite often omitted by translation handbooks and companions, as well as to intersemiotic translation. Thus, the *Companion* covers all aspects of translation postulated by Jakobson.

The organization of the volume is highly effective, with the articles having a complementary relationship and being actively engaged in a dialogue among themselves, particularly within the sections. In the section 'Histories and Theories', for instance, all four contributors develop their individual insights into the history and theory of translation in a colloquium-like manner. This may initially surprise the reader, who will soon after appreciate the coherence and intelligibility afforded by this careful orchestration of the diverse authorial voices, as well as by the sustained combination of theory and practice in a way that ensures the user-friendliness of the volume.

The omission of certain important theoretical contributions in other languages, such as French or German, may seem inevitable in a work which is addressed to the English-speaking world. Evidently, the global spread of Translation Studies cannot possibly be exhaustively covered, even by a bulky volume of 654 pages. It is from such projects of high ambition and broad scope, however, that we expect a more daring and deliberate boundary-crossing.

## REFERENCES

- Holmes, James S. 1988. *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Koller, Werner 1979. *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*. Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer.

**Titika Dimitroulia** is Associate Professor of Translation Theory and Practice in the Department of French Language and Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Email: [tdimi@frl.auth.gr](mailto:tdimi@frl.auth.gr)