

**Hermans, Theo. *Translation and History:
A Textbook*. Routledge, 2022. 162 pp.**

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This welcome new addition to the fields of Translation Studies and History offers students and young researchers key ideas and developments in both fields and, above all, explores their complex relationship and provides methodological guidance. Theo Hermans opens with clear definitions of history and historiography while insisting on the need to recognize that the researcher's perspective is always anchored in the present. This emphasis on history is useful now when new generations are deemed to be losing a sense of history. Among the reasons the author gives for studying translation history are the fact that the present comes from the past, which the book will show is more complicated than it appears, that translation was done differently in the past, that this type of research sometimes results in surprises and that past practices can make us question current ones and think critically about the field. Hermans also insists on the importance for translation historians to listen to historians with four out of six chapters based on historians' ideas because those scholars are now taking languages and translation into account through transnational and transcultural outlooks. Students are, therefore, encouraged to think about the nature of history and historical knowledge, to learn about different types of history, to reflect on methods for researching history and translation, and to investigate practical applications. Each chapter is structured in a similar way, with three or four sub-sections followed by an annotated list of further readings and a bibliography. The book is chockful of excellent examples, many of them European but also from several Asian countries. The following review will not dwell on these, preferring to invite prospective readers to discover them for themselves by purchasing the book. Hermans recognizes a certain Eurocentric bias, for which, given his training and expertise, he cannot really be faulted, and hopefully other scholars interested in emphasizing the growing and productive relationship between translation and history will be inspired to follow up with material dealing with other parts of the world.

The first chapter, "Stories and Histories," begins with "Three Stories from the End of the World" as an ingenious way to introduce Hayden White's views on history and how they marked a *discursive turn* in the field of history (53; my emphasis). The stories are all about the Anglican missionary priest Thomas Bridges (c. 1842-98), his mission in Tierra del Fuego, and Yámana people. Hermans divides these tales, however, to demonstrate in turn how Bridges, the person, came to translate the Bible and create a dictionary, as well as the linguistic and cultural difficulties he encountered in his work; the second story introduces the Yámana people against the background of previous visitors to Tierra del Fuego, such as Darwin, and their biased view of its inhabitants as "savages of the lowest grade" (4). As Bridges continued his missionary work, he learned the language, took ethnographic notes about the people, and got them accustomed to wearing clothes. As elsewhere in the Americas,

the population rapidly declined because of tuberculosis and measles they contracted from the clothes. This becomes the subject of the third story: Bridges' denial that his civilizing efforts caused the decline despite the view of Paul Hyades, A French doctor who visited the area and determined that European contact was the cause. Bridges later resigned from the mission and employed the remaining Yámana people on his farm. These stories are an effective way to introduce the notion and the basics of narrative in the next sub-section. In explaining how "to cut the historical cake," Hermans shows that structuring a sequence or a plot is a matter of selection and interpretation, and that historiographers need to be aware of the value judgments carried by authors and narrators, as Roland Barthes argued before Hayden White. Referring to the opening stories, the author uses their building blocks as examples of how the historical account is a construct. Barthes called presumed objectivity "referential illusion," a pretense of transparency, which has now become the focus of criticism by Indigenous scholars and others working toward decolonization. Mohawk Marie Battiste from Canada, for one, has used this concept to denigrate the "Eurocentric illusion of benign translatability" in colonial understanding of Indigenous cultures (79). The chapter concludes by introducing Martha Cheung's notion of "pushing hands" or *tuishou* not as a theory or method but as a dialogic model of engagement for translation historians to negotiate oppositions and undo binaries.

The second chapter, simply entitled "Translation History," develops the notions introduced by the previous stories along the lines of periodization and geography, and delves into joining the dots, deciding on settings, determining agents, and choosing an angle. The key issues discussed are the goal of project, the fact that history and translation need not be exclusive nor in opposition, and that research questions need to lead to evidence-based answers and involve issues of social significance. Obviously, formulating questions requires some previous knowledge of the field, which will help researchers "distinguish between what they are looking *for* from what they are looking *at*" (28; emphasis in the original). The point is made that translation tends to be invisible in bibliographies and that archives are not neutral. Hermans provides useful examples of available tools, such as databases and websites, and cautions readers not to idealize translators' work. Periodization should be a conscious choice and it is suggested to include potential drawbacks to the list of temporal possibilities, such as broad divisions, dynasties, reigns, eras, national histories, technological change, or generations. In terms of space, a choice must also be made among regional, national, transnational or global histories. Hermans notes that the default is often the modern state but that it is necessary to consider multilingual states with a range of officially recognized languages, and that geography is tightly bound to time, as in colonial times, for example. The point is that heterogeneity is difficult to map but accounting for the dynamics of change is necessary. While some translations set new trends, most reveal tastes of their time and the translation historian must be aware of the variables of historiography, such as, for example, the positioning of translators and whether the account will be text-based and highlight the relative prominence of certain features. The chapter concludes with a discussion of discourses about translation, or what Erich Prunč calls translation culture, which is like a social system and includes practices along with conditions of production. Context is vital to translation historiography because it is a reminder that words on a page cannot be taken at face value.

Chapter 3 deals with “Questions of Scale” in various kinds of history, starting with microhistories and ending with big data. Hermans points out several issues with microhistories, which emerged in the 1970s, such as opacity and examples of prejudiced translations in historical records. As several scholars have argued there is a need for thick description (Gilbert Ryle, Clifford Geertz, and Kwame Anthony Appiah) and thick translation. The author notes the link of this approach with New Historicism, partly because the issues of locating sources can legitimately become part of the narrative, thus adding a self-reflexive dimension. Although the findings are not usually generalizable, there are advantages for translation historians who can give vivid accounts of lived experience, but it is necessary to remember that context is essential and to recognize the alienness of the past. The 1990s saw a “scaling up” of history in a move to transnational, transcultural, and global contexts, and growing feminist and postcolonial research, with developing trends against eurocentrism and methodological nationalism. The centre/periphery binary was undone, and the focus shifted to “connections, circulation, circuits, interactions and networks” (61). For example, the notion of circulation applies to goods, people, technology, and languages, so global microhistory focuses on itinerant lives, including those of merchants, diplomats, soldiers, spies, missionaries, interpreters, etc. A sub-section is devoted to “entanglements” and deals with “histoire croisée” or “entangled history”. *Intersection* and *reflexivity* are keywords in this approach, and it is useful to show that translations took place within temporary constellations, meaning that it is contingent on the complexity of the world. This kind of history has given rise to actor-network theory, which traces the connections, and features the non-human world on par with human actors. Scholars consider translation in a non-linguistic sense, and investigate how things take shape, drawing attention to relations and processes, to interactions, intersections, networks, nodes, webs of relations, including those of the researcher. As a consequence, different criteria are articulated for world history periodization, and emphasis is put on cross-cultural interactions, and on questioning the global prevalence of English with more works being translated from it than any other language. These developments have also led to a digital revolution that facilitates the collection of big data, an increase in the scale of quantitative studies and corpus studies.

Concepts are introduced in chapter 4, following a brief introduction dealing with the link between translation and politics in the early British translations of Thucydides’ relation of Pericles’ speech on democracy (5th century BCE), in which the concept of democracy was transformed. Hermans’ point is that Britain, and early Modern Europe in general, did not favour a view of democracy as a form of government by the people, which the Greeks championed. This chapter discusses Edward Said’s “cultural archive” and the issues encountered in conceptual history, such as the ambiguity that may be caused by polysemy, the fact that concepts change over time, a possible lack of words for new concepts, and the existence of different concepts in different cultures. As illustrated by the opening example, conceptual historians have been mostly interested in political discourse, and translation can be problematic although it is rarely mentioned. The German and British schools of conceptual history of European modernity are examined through their representatives, Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner, respectively. Koselleck identified four features: the temporal dimension; the context of political arguments; the way it entered public discourse; and the fact that it

is abstract enough for ideological worldviews. Skinner used Austin's theory of performativity of utterances and does mention that "[t]ranslation doesn't guarantee equivalence (84)". The chapter then moves to Korea to explain their take on transnational conceptual history as being comparative and global. Western concepts were reshaped to fit the local context when they entered Korea via Japan and China. This approach, therefore, is more focused on translation. Hermans notes that not all comparative studies use translation at the primary level, perhaps because the translation of concepts is so difficult. Vincente Rafael, in his study of sovereignty in the Philippines, has shown that "in the cross-cultural study of concepts, language is irreducible and translation a very slippery tool" (88). The chapter concludes with a look at Lydia Liu's work on the Chinese character *yì*, which has been problematically translated as *barbarian*. As Hermans reminds us, Liu is one of the few translation history scholars recognized by historians and her study serves to highlight the fact that concepts only travel through the intermediary of human actors and historical conditions surrounding their translation. For Hermans, "[t]o understand translation historically means to recognise its role as one part of a much broader dynamic and to bring that dynamic into view" (94).

Memory is the topic of chapter five. As someone who once wrote that memory may be "the dark side of history in spite of also being an integral part of it" (Malena 2016), I very much appreciate this inclusion in the textbook. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, memory concerns the act of remembering, so it can be defined "as history actively remembered" (100). Both personal and collective memories can be said to be constitutive of identity. In the late 20th century, memory studies became interested in the significance of the past for the present. Since translation brings past discourses into the present, it should follow that memory scholars would be curious about translation. But the interest about the point of contact between memory and translation is only recent. Memory is highly selective and subject to affect, so collective memory can be contested, and it helps to think of memory not as a product but as a process. With the constant improvement of technologies, memories are maintained using various media, which enables remediation and implies translation. The transcultural turn in memory studies has meant that interest in translation increased. Astrid Erll argued against Pierre Nora and for the fluidity of memory; she identified five dimensions in memory's dynamics: (1) human carriers through travel and migration; (2) media; (3) contents often gleaned from images and narratives; (4) practices, such as rituals repeated in various places; and (5) forms or transportable images symbolizing a world event (105). Not surprisingly, the Holocaust serves as the prime example to discuss the role of translation in memory studies. While it has been recognized as an unspeakable experience, testimonies were gathered in at least 20 languages. Hermans lists several features of the translations of Holocaust documents, among which are the issue of authenticity with regards to the testimonies and the ethical imperative for the translators to preserve it. In this context, the translator acquired the status of a secondary witness. Some Holocaust survivors became self-translators and did not show the kind of creativity usually manifested in self-translation. The chapter ends with the mention of the Russian invasion of Crimea in which Ukraine was labelled as a fascist threat, a self-legitimizing and propagandist move that was repeated, of course, when Ukraine was invaded in February 2022.

Chapter 6 is entitled “Translation as History” and deals with temporal layers and the question of how to historicize translations. Paul Ricœur and his idea of semantic autonomy is brought in to point out the distance between writer and reader, making the utterance separate from the author’s intention. This provides the basis for historicizing translations since the translation is distant from the source text, which is itself further distanced from the researcher. Reading translations, therefore, implies reading for traces of layers of time and determining whether the texts are addressing current issues or contributing to a debate. Hermans lists eight different kinds of traces according to Armin Paul Frank’s work in the early 1990s: relations to the source text; earlier translations; receptor’s language usage; intertext; translators’ experience or knowledge; translators’ attitude; translators’ working conditions; and pressure from controlling bodies. Each entry gives the author the opportunity to remind the reader about some of the examples discussed in earlier chapters as a form of illustration of different traces. The chapter ends with a detailed discussion of translation as intervention through the close examination of several studies, including Kate Sturge’s *The Alien Within* (2004) and Martha Cheung’s “The Discourse of Occidentalism? Wei Yi and Lin Shu’s Treatment of Religious Material in their Translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” (1998). These scholars worked with keywords and eventually built a web of interconnecting concepts.

The conclusion is brief and opens with the famous quotation in L. P. Hartley’s novel, *The Go-Between*: “The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there” (139). While it may be a tired quotation it also serves to point out the similarities between history and translation. Historians can show the uniqueness of a particular episode just like translators bring to light an original that might have been forgotten otherwise. Historical accounts and translations are both representations dependent on interpretation. Finally, it can no longer be said that historians ignore translation because, as this textbook aptly demonstrates, transnational studies need both translation scholars to examine cross-lingual and cross-cultural phenomena, and historians to show that translation is a part of much larger contexts. It is, therefore, highly recommended, that this textbook be adopted as part of the curriculum for upper level translation programmes. It could be a useful addition in a history of translation advanced course where, perhaps in conjunction with Anthony Pym’s *Method in Translation History*, students could undertake practical projects.

REFERENCES

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